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The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

Logos and Psyche in Plato's Phaedo

A Dissertation in

Philosophy

by

Jesse I. Bailey

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I argue that, according to the *Phaedo*, the ψυχή should not be understood as a reified, quasi-physical entity which can travel to another τόπος upon separation from the body; that is, the soul should not be understood as what came to be called a “spiritual substance.” Rather, I will show that the *Phaedo* presents the proper ontology of the soul to be based in an understanding of its characteristic *activity*. I will argue that this activity is revealed to be the gathering of multiplicities (‘parts’) into the intelligible unities (‘wholes’) which we experience. This gathering occurs in accord with the λόγοι in which the soul has been educated; that is, it is on the basis of our παιδεία that we gather the ‘many’ of bare perceptual experience into the meaningful ‘ones’ of our world. Attention to this characteristic ἔργον constitutes the root of virtue.

Attending to this activity will reveal that, initially and for the most part, humans find themselves in a state of internal multiplicity, conflict, and cognitive dissonance. This internal dissent is not to be *ultimately* explained with reference to ‘parts’ of the soul. I will argue that the *Phaedo* reveals this internal multiplicity to be far greater than a ‘tri-partite’ theory can explain. Rather, we need to attend to the disharmonious nature of the λόγοι to which we adhere, and through which we gather the world into an intelligible order such that we are called to *act*. Ethical responsiveness to the world will be shown to be rooted in *ontology*. That is, it is in light of the way the world appears to us as a meaningful environment that we are called to *act* and *respond* ethically.

When this world is fractured by internal dissent – that is, specifically, by conflicting opinions within the soul as to what is *best* – ethical action becomes difficult, and self-mastery is necessary. This self-mastery, however, is only necessary in the *absence* of internal harmony; when the self has undergone a process of gathering itself to itself – into a unified whole oriented toward the good – the soul as a unity is drawn toward the good, *akrasia* appears impossible, and the violence of self-mastery becomes unnecessary.

The first step in the development of this harmony is a *recognition* of the essential, defining activity of the ψυχή. Only on this basis is it possible to ‘care for the soul.’ This basic ontology of the ψυχή must first be understood; the centrality of the *condition* of the soul to the way we experience the world must be recognized. On this basis we can begin to *examine* the λόγοι through which we gather the world, *and our own selves*, into intelligible unity; only then can we begin the difficult process of developing a *harmony* in these λόγοι which can give rise to unified, ethically and rationally directed actions and responsiveness to the world. The initial step in the development of the *defining* human ἀρετή is *turning the soul toward itself*.

The development of this ontology, self-knowledge, and harmony of the self *is* the essential defining work of the philosopher; it is only on the basis of this proper ontology of the soul, and subsequent development of self-understanding, that care of the self can be grounded. That is: In order to know the self, it is essential to understand the nature of the ψυχή; to understand the nature of the ψυχή, it is essential to understand its defining activity. The development of excellence (ἀρετή) of the soul is rooted in a proper understanding of this ἔργον.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Questions of the Self	20
Chapter 2. Λόγος and the Minotaur	54
Chapter 3. Arguments for Immortality	91
Chapter 4. Perception, Unity, and the Activity of the Soul “Itself Through Itself” . 151	
Chapter 5. Recollection and the Activity of the Soul	184
Chapter 6. Ασπονία	235
Chapter 7. The Turn to the Λόγος	289
Chapter 8. Forms and Participation	355
Bibliography.....	388

Introduction

1.1 The Twin Pillars of Platonism

The connection between the separation of the soul from the body and the transcendence of the forms is well attested. The *Phaedo* has often been taken as a *locus classicus* for these “Twin Pillars” of traditional Platonism. In the introduction to his translation of the dialogue, R. S. Bluck writes: “. . . the theory of the Forms and the theory of the immortality of the soul are mutually interdependent; and we may take it that Plato was anxious to justify his belief [in both] before going on to apply his Forms to a wide range of problems in the *Republic* and later works.”¹

However, in this dissertation, I will offer a reading of the text which shows that Socrates’ arguments for the immortality of the soul are *intentionally* inconclusive. Further, I will argue that the presentation of the *hypothesis* of the existence of the forms is *intentionally* incomplete. This reading will open the question for us: If the goal of the *Phaedo* is not to prove these twin pillars, what is at work in the arguments and actions depicted in the *Phaedo*?

Before turning to a preliminary account of how I will answer this question, it is necessary to describe what I take to be the character of the work of interpreting a Platonic dialogue.

¹ 1955, p 2

1.2 Reading Plato

In the second paragraph of the introduction to their edition of the *Phaedo*, Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem write:

. . . we would do well to pay close attention to the *Phaedo* in our pursuit of the question, “Who is Socrates, and was he blessed or happy?” In the *Phaedo* the philosopher Socrates “meets his end.” He does so in the double sense of the phrase: He reaches the termination of his deathbound life, and he reflects, in the company of his friends, on the deathless intellectual vision to which his life has been devoted. *To pay serious attention to the Phaedo, then, is to do more than investigate what Socrates talked about and did on the day he died. It is to pursue the question that underlies and pervades all the dialogues of Plato: Who is the true philosopher, and is he really the most blessed and happiest of men?*²

But how should we read the dialogue in order to discover the answer to this question?

What does it mean to attend to a dialogue in a way that does more than investigate what Socrates and his interlocutors talk about?

In this dissertation, I intend to *perform* an answer to this question by reading the dialogue closely; however, in preface, I will try to make my “method” of reading more explicit. I will do this in part by showing how this method is in accord with trends in recent scholarship, in which it has been argued repeatedly that we must attend not only to the arguments, but also to the “dramatic elements” of the texts.³ Further, I will also follow the Straussian concept of “logographic necessity,” assuming that Plato wrote nothing by chance; we will assume that Plato chose everything we find there, every example and every seemingly-off-hand comment, carefully and with conscious intent.

² Brann, Kalkavage, Salem 1998, pg 1, emphasis added.

³ On the importance of attention to the dramatic elements to proper interpretation of the dialogues, see especially Sallis 1996, Burger 1984, Brann 2004, Davis 1980, Gonzalez 1995, 1998, and 2009, Miller 1980, 1991, Gordon 1999, Hyland 2004, Klein 1965, and Dorter 1982, as well as the works of Seth Benardete, Leo Strauss, Harold Bloom, and the “Straussian” school of interpretation.

In order to initially approach the *Phaedo*, we have to become clear about the nature of a Platonic dialogue. As a student of Socrates, who refused to put his “philosophy” in writing, Plato was suspicious of written texts. Plato chose the dialogue form in order to attempt to avoid the problems that he and Socrates perceived in communicating philosophical ideas through text. By looking at what those problems are, we can develop an approach to the dialogues which might be more in accord with Plato’s reasons for using the dialogue form.

Plato, in the *Seventh Letter*, states clearly that the dialogues are not his own philosophy written down for us to decipher and condemn or endorse. They are, rather, a portrait of Socrates grown “young and beautiful.” We will turn in a moment to what this might mean; for now, let us look very briefly at what the character Socrates says in the *Phaedrus* at 275c-e concerning the problems of writing. He says that a τέχνη cannot be “left behind” in writing. No one, he says, can hope to discover something “distinct and solid” (σαφὲς καὶ βέβαιον) from written text; Socrates says the mistake is thinking that written λόγοι can do more than “remind” (ὑπομνήσαι) someone who knows of the things written about (275c-d).

Socrates’ first specific complaint about written λόγοι is that they are like paintings of living beings which do not answer when we ask them about something. He says we might think that a written λόγος can “speak with some understanding (φρονοῦντας), but if you ask them about the things said, wishing to learn, it indicates (σημαίνει) some one thing only, and always the same.” (275d) With this in mind, I argue that Plato must have been attempting to design a mode of writing in which the text speaks

differently to the reader when the reader returns to read it more than once. Further, questions raised in initial readings must be “answered,” or at least addressed and pressed further, in subsequent readings; this must be the case if the text is to “respond” to us when we approach it with questions.

When we read the *Phaedo*, we are immediately struck with doubts about the sincerity of the proofs for the immortality of the soul. We might then want to ask of Plato, “Are these arguments in earnest?” It is as if the dialogue is able to reply, for when we return to the text with this question in mind, we find many subtle indications that the arguments are *not* meant to be taken at face value. We might then ask, “To what end do you present such arguments, if not to convince?” Here, too, we will find that in returning to the text *with this question in mind*, we are given answers that further drive our questioning.

The implication of this observation is that *we are not to take any reading as final*. If we couple this with Plato’s statement that the dialogues are not an account of his “philosophy,” we find that the conclusions we might be inclined to search for in our interpretations are not, in fact, Plato’s beliefs. As Sallis says, “to propose to write a treatise on the philosophy of one who wrote no treatises is, to say the least, questionable.”⁴ Toward what “end,” then, are we searching when we find questions raised by the dialogues and return to them to find “answers”? I can say in preface, with reference to the *Republic* (at 518c-d), that Plato does not intend to put the power of discernment into our souls, but to turn us toward questions, and let us work through the

⁴ 1996, p 1

questions ourselves; with this power, we return to the dialogues not for Plato's *answers*, but for his *questions*.

Socrates' second complaint in the *Phaedrus* is that the writings can "roll around everywhere," being read by people to whom it ought to speak and those to whom it ought not. The result of this, Socrates says, is that it can be unjustly reviled by those who do not understand it, and thus needs the defense of its "father."⁵ At 271a ff Socrates gave an account that states that the rhetorician has to be able to understand the different kinds (γέννη) of souls, and to present the right kind of λόγος to each kind of soul on the basis of an account of what kind of soul is persuaded by what kind of λόγος. The failure of writing is, then, that it is unable to make this judgment, and instead speaks the same to all people. The dialogues would, then, have to overcome this defect by attempting to *speak differently to different kinds of souls*. If this were the case – if it were the case that Plato attempted to overcome the defects in writing which he obviously was aware of in composing the dialogues – then we must not expect the dialogues to have the same meaning for different people.

These considerations certainly place the interpreter in a difficult position. In what way are we to understand how the dialogues are intended as tools for *teaching* – first teaching the members of the Academy, and then the rest of us? In what way are we to

⁵ It is interesting to note the term "father" here. It could lead us to the image of Socrates as barren in the *Theaetetus*, but as the one capable of delivering others of their wisdom. The dialogues thus can be seen as performing the function of a midwife, and thus being, again, the image of Socrates. Also, we could turn to the *Symposium* to look at the "levels" of ἔρως that seek natural offspring (an issue conspicuously suppressed in the *Phaedrus*'s account of generation) at one level, and poetic offspring at another.

understand that Plato intended the study of these texts to make us better people? Again, we can turn to the dialogues themselves for some clues.

What we learn from looking at the *Meno* (as I will argue in Chapter 5) and elsewhere is that it is not words and arguments that make men good; in this sense, it is as impossible to teach virtue as it is to teach self-knowledge. This is the heart of the conflict between the sophists – who claim to teach virtue – and Socrates and Plato. What we find in the dialogues, rather, is Socrates leading by *example*. It is not merely the teachings, but the *presence* of people that influences us to act in certain ways. As I will show, in the *Meno*, Socrates is being ironic when he claims the poet Theognis is contradicting himself at 95dff. In the first passage Socrates quotes, Theognis speaks of *living* with good people, drinking and eating with them, and so “from good men you will be taught good things.” (95d) In the second passage Socrates quotes, Theognis claims that “by teaching you will never make the bad man good.” (95e) We understand that there is an enormous difference between teaching someone with words and arguments – λόγοι that could be written down – on the one hand, and spending time in each others’ company, on the other. We teach by example and by sheer presence, drawing people toward the good or away from it with our influence. With this in mind, it is easy to see that Theognis is not contradicting himself. Socrates is drawing our attention to these passages, and this tension, in order to draw into the light the unspoken influence the people with whom we surround ourselves have on our values.

In short, there is a recognition of our social nature; Plato draws our attention to the fact that we come to act in ways that mirror, in a variety of ways, those around us.⁶ It

⁶ Cf *Alcibiades I* 133a; Socrates calls for Alcibiades to look to his reflection in the eyes of others.

is clearly the case – looking to the *Republic* and the *Laws*, especially – that Plato further recognized the importance of having good models to mirror and aspire to in *poetry*, as well as in life. This might be the very sense in which Socrates claims to have been engaging in the greatest poetry without ever writing anything down. That is, it is possible that in his dialectic work with his friends and students Socrates was creating an image of virtue and of the courageous pursuit of self-knowledge and wisdom; perhaps in Plato's eyes he was creating in his life a work of art to rival the creations of Homer.

If we take this to be the case with Socrates' self-conception – or more likely with Plato's conception of Socrates – then we could postulate a further dimension of our approach to the dialogues: We are, in the dialogues, supposed to spend time with Socrates.⁷ This may help us make sense of Plato's comment in the *Seventh Letter* presenting the dialogues as an image of Socrates grown young and καλός – beautiful and noble. In reading the dialogues, we are being presented with a beautiful/noble ideal, and we spend our time – sometimes considerable amounts of time! – in the company of his spirit, in addition to his λόγοι.

I will show that these observations have a deep connection to Plato's conception of philosophy as presented in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere. Specifically, we will find that a “philosophy” is not understood there as a self-consistent system of beliefs, or doctrine. It is *essential* that we not take Socrates to be Plato's “mouthpiece” presenting Plato's

⁷ Gadamer notes: “As Nietzsche has so aptly put it, this figure of the dying Socrates became the new ideal to which the noblest of the Greek youth dedicated themselves instead of to that older heroic ideal, Achilles.” (1980, p 22) Cf Davis 1980: “Throughout the *Phaedo* Socrates' apparent praise of death is, beneath it all, a praise of a certain kind of life. In that sense he is competing with the *poets*.” (p 567, emphasis added) As Oliver Goldsmith put it: “People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy.”

“doctrine” to the readers of the dialogues. Rather, we will find that philosophy is depicted as a kind of *life*, dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom, courage, and justice – philosophy is always questioning, underway, and in between wisdom and ignorance. This will mean that we must not take our own *ὁδός* to be the only way, neither for other people, nor for ourselves given *time*. This will also indicate to us the necessity of choosing those who we surround ourselves with. Louie Simmons – the guru of power lifting – says that if you want to get strong, surround yourself with strong people. Plato will be sure to warn us that we had better surround ourselves with people dedicated to the pursuit of truth, rather than of wealth, fame, or power. In the *Protagoras* Socrates laments that people will seek out doctors and nutritionists to learn what to take into their bodies, but will take any old thing into their souls.

While these observations place the commentator in an *extremely* difficult position, I want to stress that it is *not* the case that the dialogues are empty of “positive assertions.” These assertions are hidden in subtle ways as often as they appear explicitly in Socrates’ mouth, but they are there. These assertions are *always* to be taken with a critical eye, and *never* to be simply or immediately accepted as Plato’s “teaching” or belief, but they are there. The comments above indicate that the reader must take an *active* role in the reading the dialogues; we become *engaged* in the conversation, answering differently when we disagree, and carrying our thinking beyond the text.⁸ As Klein says, we must be *active*

⁸ Cf Gordon 1996b: “Whereas one always stands outside the given object and experiences it qua object, a literary text requires the participation of the subject inside of the object in order to constitute the aesthetic experience.” (p 260) Drawing on the work of Wolfgang Iser, Gordon offers an excellent analysis of the “phenomenology” of reading the dialogues. Specifically, she performs an excellent analysis of the work of the engaged reader in dealing with the “indeterminacy,” “interruptions,” and “negations,” in the text, which she describes as working

participants in the dialogue: “lacking such participation, all that is before us is indeed nothing but a book.”⁹ Thus, while the *Phaedo* will be discovered to have *much* to say about the nature of the soul, the claims presented in the dialogue are always incomplete. Thus, the *Phaedo* demands of *us* the work of clarifying their foundations and consequences.

1.3 Λόγος, Ψυχή, and the Self

In this dissertation I argue that, according to the *Phaedo*, the ψυχή should not be understood as a reified, quasi-physical entity which can travel to another τόπος upon separation from the body; that is, the soul should not be understood as what came to be called a “spiritual substance.” Rather, I will show that the *Phaedo* presents the proper ontology of the soul to be based in an understanding of its characteristic *activity*. I will argue that this activity is revealed to be the gathering of multiplicities (‘parts’) into the intelligible unities (‘wholes’) which we experience. This gathering occurs in accord with the λόγοι in which the soul has been educated; that is, it is on the basis of our παιδεία that we gather the ‘many’ of bare perceptual experience into the meaningful ‘ones’ of our world. Attention to this characteristic ἔργον constitutes the root of virtue.

Attending to this activity will reveal that, initially and for the most part, humans find themselves in a state of internal multiplicity, conflict, and cognitive dissonance. This

toward ‘synthesizing the meaning’ of a text. On the importance and difficulty of unifying the meaning of a dialogue, see also Russon 1995. In light of the apparent inconsistencies in the dialogues, and the “ambiguity” inherent in the dialogue form, Russon argues that “these features of the text require of us that we approach the dialogue with the question, ‘How can this be a coherent articulation of a unitary content?’” (p 401) Russon shows that this participation of the reader in finding a *unity of meaning* is at stake in the *Phaedo* at multiple levels. (Russon 2000)

⁹ 1965, p 6

internal dissent is not to be *ultimately* explained with reference to ‘parts’ of the soul. I will argue that the *Phaedo* reveals this internal multiplicity to be far greater than a ‘tri-partite’ theory can explain. Rather, we need to attend to the disharmonious nature of the *λόγοι* to which we adhere, and through which we gather the world into an intelligible order such that we are called to *act*. Ethical responsiveness to the world will be shown to be rooted in *ontology*. That is, it is in light of the way the world appears to us as a meaningful environment that we are called to *act* and *respond* ethically.

When this world is fractured by internal dissent – that is, specifically, by conflicting opinions within the soul as to what is *best* – ethical action becomes difficult, and self-mastery is necessary. This self-mastery, however, is only necessary in the *absence* of internal harmony; when the self has undergone a process of gathering itself to itself – into a unified whole oriented toward the good – the soul as a unity is drawn toward the good, *akrasia* appears impossible, and the violence of self-mastery becomes unnecessary.

The first step in the development of this harmony is a *recognition* of the essential, defining activity of the *ψυχή*. Only on this basis is it possible to ‘care for the soul.’ This basic ontology of the *ψυχή* must first be understood; the centrality of the *condition* of the soul to the way we experience the world must be recognized. On this basis we can begin to *examine* the *λόγοι* through which we gather the world, *and our own selves*, into intelligible unity; only then can we begin the difficult process of developing a *harmony* in these *λόγοι* which can give rise to unified, ethically and rationally directed actions and responsiveness to the world. The initial step in the development of the *defining* human *ἀρετή* is *turning the soul toward itself*.

The development of this ontology, self-knowledge, and harmony of the self *is* the essential defining work of the philosopher; it is only on the basis of this proper ontology of the soul, and subsequent development of self-understanding, that care of the self can be grounded. That is: In order to know the self, it is essential to understand the nature of the ψυχή; to understand the nature of the ψυχή, it is essential to understand its defining activity. The development of excellence (ἀρετή) of the soul is rooted in a proper understanding of this ἔργον.

The ψυχή, upon self-examination, initially discovers itself to be in a condition of internal dissent and disharmony. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says “[I would rather] examine (σκοπῶ) not [myths] but myself, whether I happen to be some wild animal more multiply twisted (πολυπλοκώτερον) and filled with desire (ἐπιτεθυμμένον) than Typhon, or a gentler and simpler animal, having by nature a share in a certain lot that is divine and without arrogance (ἀτύφου).” (230a) Typhon was a mythical beast with a body composed from various parts of snakes and birds and beasts of many kinds. Socrates is asking if he is himself a harmonious whole, or if his own multiplicity is that of the beast, filled with ἐπιθυμία and excessive pride. Socrates calls for unity and harmony in the self in many of the dialogues, as I will show, and often connects this harmony to virtue. Most famously, in the *Republic*, this internal multiplicity is figured as rooted in three different ‘parts’ of the soul which are initially in conflict with one another, but which can, ideally, be brought into a harmonious order (justice). However, Socrates explicitly calls for a “longer path” of inquiry into the nature of this internal multiplicity in the ψυχή. In this dissertation, I will be reading the *Phaedo* as presenting one possible

approach to that “longer path” to understanding the soul – specifically, the “longer path” to understanding the nature of the internal multiplicity of the self.

1.4 Outline of the Argument

In Chapter 1, I begin with an analysis of the implications of the first word of the dialogue: *Ἀυτός*. By attending to this opening lines of the dialogue, I establish that the nature – and specifically the *unity* – of the self is a central theme in the text. I argue that the process of questioning into the nature of the *ψυχή* begins in the existential awareness of the need to ask: “Who am I?” Thus, I connect the nature of *ψυχή* to the nature of the “self.” I then develop an account of how to understand how the concept of “self” was functional in Athens in Plato’s time; specifically, I warn against, and find ways to avoid, importing a modern conception of self into the text.

In Chapter 2, by continuing to attend to the opening lines of the dialogue as a path to understanding how Plato frames the conversation on Socrates’ last day, I show that the mythological context in which Plato places the dialogue points to *misology* as a central danger in the text; specifically, this supposed “digression” at the center of the dialogue is revealed to be *central* to the text. Coming to *know* the self – and thus the initial ethical act of *turning* to the self – is intimately connected to our stance toward *λόγοι*. Developing *harmony* within the self and harmonizing our *λόγοι* turn out to be deeply interconnected enterprises. I argue that developing the proper *τέχνη* of trusting in *λόγος* is essential to the philosophical *life*.

In the third Chapter, I demonstrate that the arguments for the immortality of the soul presented in the first half of the dialogue are not intended to be taken as Plato's "doctrine." By attending to the *context* in which Socrates presents these arguments, it will be clear that Plato was *fully* aware of the insufficiency of the arguments. Thus, we are forced to pose the question: Why does Plato have Socrates present such bad arguments? The *specific* failings of these arguments frame the way the dialogue wants us to pose questions about the self, the nature of the ψυχή, and the philosophical life. Specifically, I show that these arguments indicate that the ψυχή should *not* be understood to be a "thing" which, entombed in the body, 'escapes' and travels to Hades after our death. The specific failings of these conceptions will lead us toward a deeper understanding of the self, and the place of λόγος in the *activity* of the soul. Recognizing that Socrates is himself not convinced by his arguments, we are further forced to ask: What is the source of his courage in the face of execution, if it is not a *certainty* that he will continue to exist after death?

Further, I will argue that the search for "purity" (εἰλικρινής or καθαρός) of knowledge – a search which Socrates projects onto the "true-born philosophers" – is discovered to be an impossibility; thus, the attentive reader of the *Phaedo* is driven to develop an epistemology which is not based in the 'pure' contact of the soul, 'purified' of the body, with the 'pure' forms. That is, an understanding of *human finitude* will be essential to the epistemology of the *Phaedo*. I argue that the activity of *knowing*, as gathering multiplicities into intelligible unities, is the essential ἔργον of the soul; thus, the development of an epistemology rooted in *essentially embodied, finite human beings*

– which we will find to be the purpose of the second sailing and its turn to the λόγος – is essential to self-knowledge, care of the soul, and thus philosophy as μελέτη θάνατος.

In Chapter 4, I begin to articulate the essential activity of the ψυχή by turning to a brief reading of the *Theaetetus*. I focus on the passage where Theaetetus and Socrates articulate how the soul “itself through itself” determines the “being and benefit” of the things we encounter. I begin to show how knowledge attaches itself to *unities* that arise out of, and are not ontologically identical to, the parts. The determination of these unities is preliminarily connected to the *good* of the beings we encounter. Further, I establish the centrality of our own individual histories, political situations, and ‘education’ (παιδεία), in the activity of determining the “being and benefit” of the unities we encounter. The importance of λόγος to this process, and thus to the problem of ‘the one and the many,’ or part and whole, is emphasized. I further emphasize the way that the soul has to hold the *whole* in view, in some sense, *prior* to physical perception for meaning and understanding to be possible. This observation will lead to a discussion of *recollection*.

In Chapter 5, I turn to an account of the argument from recollection. I will show that the account of the kind of knowledge proper to an embodied being placed in the mouths of the “true-born philosophers,” which has been taken to be true to Plato’s “doctrine,” is faulty. Specifically I will show, with reference to Socrates’ argument concerning seeing two equal sticks or stones, that perception does not simply reveal physical objects, materialistically understood; rather, in perception, *through* the body, we perceive beings in their *striving*, in accord with our λόγοι.

I make a short digression into the account of recollection in the *Meno*. There, I identify that the purpose of the “theory of recollection” is not to communicate Plato’s

belief to the reader that the soul existed prior to birth; rather, this theory is presented in order to get Meno to begin a process of self-examination. I show that Meno's failing is in "taking refuge in λόγοι," and focusing on developing eristically powerful *propositional* accounts of virtue, rather than in developing a virtuous condition of his own soul.

Returning to the *Phaedo*, I will continue to develop an epistemology proper to finite, embodied beings which does not take knowledge to be paradigmatically pure contact of a pure soul with the pure forms. I argue that perception – for example, the perception of these two sticks as 'equal' – involves not only an unconscious synthesis in order to hold the objects together as unitary individuals, but also a *world* and a *context* in which the perceived object derives its meaning. By attending to what is necessary in order for the soul to make the identification that, e.g. "These two sticks are equal," we will discover the way *any* perception involves the activity of the soul, and cannot be considered a simply *passive* reception of sensory data. Thus, I demonstrate that the perception of anything as equal, or good, or as a 'this,' is only possible due the *activity* of the self drawing the multiplicity of a phenomenon together into a unitary 'this,' in accord with λόγος. In so doing, the self determines the "being and benefit" of everything it encounters. Plato shows us that this determination happens in accord with the λόγοι that the individual making the judgment accepts as true, as well as with their own erotic, social, and interpersonal history. Thus, the perception of anything will be shot through with 'recollection,' based not in a time before birth, but rather in our παιδεία, and in the λόγοι to which have a 'wondrous' hold on us.

In Chapter 6, I turn to an account of ἁρμονία, to Simmias' argument that the soul is a 'tuning,' and to Socrates' response. I show that a close reading of these passages

points to the necessary embodiment of the ψυχή. I show that the soul is *not* something simply distinct from the active and living body of an animal, but rather is the animate principle of a physical body. To understand the soul is *not* to attend to something otherworldly – as the “true-born philosophers” contend; rather, to understand the soul is always to attend to the active principle of a living thing.

In this Chapter, I argue that the activity of the soul in drawing the multiplicity of phenomenal field into ‘beings’ is identical to the structure of identifying a *harmony* as a unitary ‘this’ beyond a simple conglomeration of parts. I show that Socrates’ response to Simmias is specifically attuned to countering the tendency toward misology that he warns against immediately prior to responding. Specifically, I show that a central aspect of his response is an account of how we should hold to λόγοι, and his call for a *harmonization* between our λόγοι. I discuss the connection between harmony and virtue, and show that it is with respect to λόγοι that Plato wants us to consider the nature of internal multiplicity; thus, it is with respect to the λόγοι in our soul that we must seek internal harmony.

I then turn to a brief digression into the *Republic*, and specifically, the account of the “tri-partite soul.” I show that the *Republic* does not present this theory as *Socrates’* own belief, let alone that of Plato. Attending to the failings of that account to explain human internal multiplicity and cognitive dissonance, I point to the “longer path” to understanding the soul; I argue that the *Phaedo* presents one possibility of following this “longer path” by connecting internal multiplicity to the diverse and conflicting λόγοι in our souls.

In Chapter 7, I turn, finally, to the second sailing itself. In this chapter, I draw together into a unity the many threads of discussion that arise in my interpretation of the dialogue. I offer an analysis of the fear of death revealed by Cebes' image of the soul as a "weaver," and show how that fear poses a threat to our trust in λόγος. Thus, in response to the danger this fear poses to our rationality, Socrates offers an account of his own method of investigation in order to explicate the proper τέχνη of λόγος. I attempt, with reference to secondary discussions of these passages, to articulate the 'first sailing,' as described in Socrates' autobiography, to which his own method would be a 'second.' I thus carry out a lengthy analysis of Socrates' search for the αἰτίαι. Specifically, I show that his fear of blindness does not come from looking to φύσις simply, but rather is a response to the "excessive brightness" (ὑπερήφανος) that he found in the materialism of "natural philosophy," (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν). Thus, I argue that it is not that Socrates simply turns away from φύσις, but rather away from a specific form of inquiry into nature, and the nature of things.

I then argue that the problems that Socrates finds himself puzzled by – how one and one come to form two, why one man is bigger than another, etc – all point to the activity of the soul. It is the soul that holds these objects together into unities, and into the dyad present in any act of comparison. I show that recognition of this power – which places Mind at the "center" of the whole – is the reason why young Socrates was so excited to hear the works of Anaxagoras, who claimed that Mind was the cause of all things. Further, I demonstrate that *how* the soul engages in this activity is determined by the λόγοι that we adhere to. Thus, to turn to the λόγοι *is* to turn to the soul, and to the way the soul articulates and names the unities which we experience. This is also true of

the *self*; that is, the self that we discover in self-examination appears as a unitary object *only* through the λόγοι that we tell ourselves about ourselves. We gather ourselves to ourselves in the λόγοι we tell – about our pasts, our goals in life, and about what it means “to be a man,” or how a “real woman” behaves, what it means to be Athenian, or a patriotic American, etc. This will allow us to see how Plato is offering the dialogues, and the character of Socrates in particular, as a new image of the ideal man to transform the images of human ἀρετή in the poets.

In my explication of the turn to the λόγοι, I pay special attention to the way Socrates’ second sailing is designed to reveal the *truth* of beings in light of their *good*; the materialistic accounts of the ‘natural philosophers’ blind us to the connection between good and being. This is also, of course, true of *self*-knowledge; that is, in attending to our own selves, it is essential that we attend to the good. In the case of human beings, however, this good is, in part, *self* determined. We do not simply seek the good itself the way a plant grows toward the sun; we must be conscious and active in the pursuit of our uniquely human τέλος.

In Chapter 8, I offer a *very brief* account of the ‘method of hypothesis,’ the hypothesis of the existence of the forms, forms as αἰτίαι, and the final argument for the immortality of the soul. My discussion draws heavily on the enormous amount of discussion carried out in the secondary literature. In this literature, there is little agreement about what Plato’s purpose was in presenting these arguments. I give an account of the basic outlines of the debates surrounding these passages, and show what is lacking. Specifically, I will show that the a critical lynch-pin to the argument – an account of the meaning of “participation” (μέθεξις) – is *completely* absent.

I argue that the myriad secondary accounts of this passage do not approach the text in the proper way. First, they take this passage, and the final argument, in radical isolation from the rest of the dialogue. Secondly, they assume the process of harmonizing λόγοι Socrates calls for is a logical analysis of arguments, mistaking the nature of λόγος, and the connection between λόγος, ψυχή, and human virtue. Thirdly, they assume that Plato believed in “the forms,” without being critical enough about what this belief means, what the εἶδει actually are, and what their relation to particulars is. As such, they assume that, since this is Plato’s “final word” on the soul in the dialogue, and since the argument uses the existence of the forms as a hypothesis, the argument must have been intended as valid proof.

I end the dissertation by pointing to what I have *not* said. Specifically, in this dissertation I give an account of the soul and its connection to λόγος; I say nothing about νοῦς. It is in and through λόγος that the philosophical life happens, and it is never “free” or “rid,” or working in and through λόγος. However, “rubbing accounts together like fire sticks” is not simply an end in itself, but is intended to give rise to a noetic vision of the truth of beings. Thus, the account of the method of philosophy presented in the *Phaedo* is limited in that it does not articulate the “upward way” (which I argue, is *dialectic*), does not distinguish it from the “downward way” of the ‘method of hypothesis,’ and thus the dialogue does not, finally, give a full account of philosophical inquiry.

Chapter 1

The Questions of the Self

§ 1. Αὐτός

The *Phaedo* begins with the word “αὐτός,” “itself.” This word is used within the Platonic texts, and in the *Phaedo* in particular, to refer to what are often called the “forms”: Beauty *itself*, Courage *itself*. However, here it is used to refer to the character Phaedo himself; Echecrates is asking if Phaedo “himself” was present at the death of Socrates.

This first word raises many questions which echo throughout the dialogue.¹⁰ I will work through several of those questions as points of ingress into the issues I will be drawing out of the dialogue. I will show that the issues raised in the opening word already point to the second sailing as the “heart” of Socrates attempt to rescue his friends from the Minotaur of misology. As indicated in the Introduction, it is necessary to be on

¹⁰ For examples of commentators who see the importance of reading the first words of a Platonic dialogue carefully, see Burger: “The attempt to reinterpret the meaning of “separation,” . . . is, one might say, the fundamental intention of the *Phaedo*. The clue to this intention is provided by the very first word of the dialogue – αὐτός. The very expression that will be used to designate the “idea,” that which is “itself by itself,” refers at the outset to the individual and identifies the self with the living being, without implying any separation of ψυχή from body.” (1984, p. 7). Sallis notes this fact about the *Phaedo*, as well as noting a similar fact about the first word of the *Republic*: “Of all Socrates says in the opening of the *Republic*, what is most telling is the very first word of the dialogue.” (Sallis 1996, p. 315) The opening sentences of both of these dialogues are carefully worded by Plato, and we would do well to attend with care to these implications. We see here Burger pointing to the central theme of my reading of the *Phaedo* by reading the first word with this care. We will find this care warranted not by some prior decision made about our “method” of reading, but rather by the way such reading bears out *insight* into the deeper implications of this difficult and complicated labyrinth of a dialogue. The “proof” lies in finding oneself able to *return to the dialogue* with fresh eyes opened to new levels of questioning. Cf. Brann, Kalkavage, Salem 1998, p 2. See also the first words of the *Gorgias*: “πολέμου καὶ μάχης,” and Sallis’ comments on them 1996, p 166.

guard against the tendency to read the dialogues in light of what has come to be known as “Platonism.” In order to avoid this tendency it is advisable that readers take their direction for reading the text *from the text itself*. Plato has taken great care in the opening lines of this dialogue to prepare the reader to think through the text in the proper spirit, and to attune us to a set of issues which will be central to this dissertation. As such, attention will be focused on the opening lines of the frame dialogue between Phaedo and Echechrates as providing the context in which to properly receive the arguments presented in the text.

1.1 Presence and Λόγος

First, the reader should attend to the central sense of the question as Echechrates most explicitly means it: Was Phaedo present, physically, at the event of Socrates’ death, or did he hear about it from someone else? This issue of presence – that is, of being a first-hand observer and witness – is a frequently repeated theme in the dialogue.¹¹ Often, this theme appears when the dialogue shifts from Socrates’ discussion with his friends on his last day to the frame-dialogue between Phaedo and Echechrates.¹² In many of these

¹¹ Cf. Friedlander 1969 p 36.

¹² See 102a and 88c-e. On the importance of the “interruptions” of the dialogue effected by these shifts to the frame-dialogue, see Sallis 2004: “These two interruptions serve also to delimit the λόγος with which the dialogue attains, in philosophical significance, its pinnacle. In the interval between the interruptions, Socrates presents two λόγοι in behalf of λόγος, first, a defense against misology and then, more significantly, a discourse on how he came to philosophize as he does, on how he came to launch – as he calls it – his second sailing. In launching his second sailing – as in the absence of wind sailors take to the oars – Socrates carries out the decisive turn by which a new beginning is inaugurated. In this move he turns away from things, takes distance from them, and does so primarily by turning to λόγοι, by having recourse to them. On his second sailing he forgoes directly investigating things as well as their causes and instead, taking refuge in λόγοι, “looks in them for the truth of beings” (99e). *Thus the form of the Phaedo, that of a λόγος set at a*

shifts, explicit mention is made of the different stance of Echebrates toward the λόγοι that Phaedo recounts and the stance of Phaedo, and of anyone else who was present to hear the conversations. Significantly Plato does not count himself among that number, since he was feeling too sick to be with his teacher, mentor, and friend in his last hours! This is a very strange passage which should give us pause; it is likely that Plato is being ironic here. Phaedo can't even claim to be sure about this absence, saying he "thinks" Plato was sick, at 59b. It is probable that Plato knew his readers, especially within the Academy, were aware that Plato was, in fact, present. As such, this line further draws attention to the issue of presence at a λόγοι, in addition to many other issues regarding authorship and authority.¹³

The *Phaedo*, as will be demonstrated, is in many ways a λόγος about λόγος. While many of the arguments are explicitly about the existence of the soul after death, I will argue that there is much to be learned from them about the proper place of argument and thinking in our lives. When Socrates speaks of his second sailing in search of the cause of things, he speaks of the turn to λόγος as second best to an idealized, but ultimately impossible, direct access to 'things.' As the concept of λόγος is explored in this dissertation, the reader should keep in mind the initial reference to presence and

distance from the things of which it speaks, matches perfectly the figure of the second sailing that is drawn at the high-point of the dialogue." (p 154, emphasis added). Sallis here identifies the connection between the *form* and *content* of the *Phaedo* that I argue is present in the very first word, and further identifies λόγος (and the distance and separation implied in attending to beings through the mediation of λόγος) as central themes in the *Phaedo*.

¹³ Hackforth's "guess" is that these passages indicate that Plato was in fact not present, and this is why Phaedo is chosen as the speaker, since he must have been the one who told Plato about the events of that day; he further says that there is no reason to doubt that the "factual framework" of the conversation that actually took place is substantially different from what is represented in the dialogue. (Hackforth 1955, p 13) I argue that these observations misunderstand the nature of the dialogue form, and contribute to an interpretive stance which impairs the ability to read the dialogues properly.

absence brought forth in the first word. It is λόγος that allows Phaedo to report to Echebrates many years later how Socrates met his death; it is, indeed, λόγος that allows Phaedo to *remember* how Socrates met his death. There is a wondrous, ὑπερφυσῶς, even daimonic power of λόγος. It can carry ‘knowledge’ from one person to another, reporting “what happened” concerning the λόγος and ἔργον of an event distant in time or space. The power of λόγος allows a speech or an argument to be passed around for all to hear.¹⁴ This power is to be marveled at, and it is to be noted that it places us at a distance from the things we hear about. I will argue, in my discussion of the second sailing, that while this distance creates the possibility for deceit, it is also the grounds for the possibility of truth itself. It would be best to be there “ourselves,” to have un-mediated access to the πράγμα; as things stand with human beings, the second best way of λόγος is all that is accessible. The reader is reminded of this by the very first word of the dialogue, by the fact of the bare existence of the dialogue, by the dialogue structure itself, and again by Plato’s rare mention of himself as absent.¹⁵

¹⁴ cf. *Phaedrus* 274d-276a

¹⁵ In addition to the discussion referenced above of distance and λόγος in Sallis 2004 (p 154-156), for a good discussion of the “distancing” effect of the narrative frame of the *Phaedo*, and of several other dialogues, see Johnson 1998, p 577-598. Johnson argues that the narrative distance between the truth of what was said, and the memory or report of what was said is used by Plato to call to mind “not only the remove between written representation and the doing of philosophy, but also the remove between perceptible and Ideal world as suggested in Plato’s vision of the Ideas.” Cf Pruffer 1986: “That the itself-by-itself (auto kath’ hauto, 100b4-7) is mediated to soul by (true) logos is itself mirrored by the dramatic form of *Phaedo*, the recollection of the last day of Socrates by Phaedo, who was himself there, to Echebrates, who was not there, but who would gladly hear what Socrates said and how he died.” (p 547) Panos Dimas expresses a standard interpretation of this distance: “Plato says that he was not present at that conversation (59b10). We cannot therefore expect an exact reproduction of what Socrates said, as he said it in these last hours of his life. By thus removing himself from the actual scene, Plato creates sufficient dramatic space in which he may present philosophical ideas that are not Socrates’, but his own, and at the same time also to portray the philosophical life and activity of this influential teacher, in the language that Plato, himself now reaching maturity as a philosopher, is beginning to develop.” (2003, p 179) One central tenet of much literature on the *Phaedo* claims that, as a “middle period” dialogue, it is an example of Plato presenting his *own* doctrine, as opposed to

1.2 Identity, Time, and Λόγος

The second point I note about the first word, αὐτός, is that it raises an issue that we might call a question of “personal identity.” Is the Phaedo of the frame-dialogue, conversing with Echecrates many years after the execution, the “same” Phaedo that sat as a young man and watched Socrates drink the φάρμακον, and so meet his end? In what senses can one speak of Phaedo as the “same” person? In what senses can one speak of him as different? How is the passage of time brought to the fore by this question, and how is human temporality thus connected to a concern with “self”?

The *Phaedo* is commonly considered to be a dialogue about the separability of the soul from the body, and the continued existence of the personal soul after death. The question of the possibility of *personal* existence after death inevitably raises the issue of what the “self” is. Am I my *soul*? Am I, then, a pure being entombed in a physical body and plagued by its base desires? Am I essentially a body plagued by a fiction of an immaterial soul sprung from fear of death and hope for eternal life? Or am I an essentially embodied being, whose ψυχή is the principle of life and conscious extension of that body, but is not describable in simply reductive materialistic terms? The answers one offers to these questions provide the ontological basis for developing an answer to

repeating what he had heard from Socrates (see Bluck 1955, Hackforth 1955, Akrill 1973, Allen 1991, Bedu-Addo 1979, 1991, Vlastos 1969, and many others). Thus, it is claimed, the distance created by claiming to have not been present allows Plato to go beyond what the historical Socrates might have said on his last day, and insert his (Plato’s) own ideas into the conversation. I side with Sallis, Burger, and others, who realize that the dialogue form does not distance us from what the character says, but rather distances the *author* from the conversation; thus, the levels of distancing seem to serve the opposite effect, and take us further from the traditional stance of treating the dialogue as an expression of Plato’s own doctrine. Most importantly, this observation is borne out by a reading of the dialogue itself, as I will show.

the explicit question of the dialogue concerning the existence of the personal soul after death.

One certainly would, *prima facie*, have reason to believe that *if* she is essentially her body, then she is not the same person she was as a child. Our bodies suffer the same uncertainty, in terms of maintaining identity over time, as Theseus' ship, referred to at *Phaedo* 58a-b; there, Phaedo says that Socrates' execution had been delayed while waiting for the return of the sacred ship from its mission to Delos. During this time, the city is to remain "pure" and hold no public executions. The ship is said to be the same one Theseus sailed to Crete. However, Phaedo notes that it is only according to what the Athenian "say" (φασιν) that this is the identical ship that Theseus set sail on (58a-b).

This λόγος, told and retold by the Athenian people, holds the ship together; it is this λόγος that gathers it together as one and the same ship in the face of the ravages of time, wearing the ship away board by board, until nothing physical of the original ship is left.¹⁶ At 87e, Cebes argues that *if* the body is constantly in flux and constantly being worn-away during life, then the soul must continually re-weave what wears out (ἀεὶ τὸ κατατριβόμενον ἀνυφαίνου).¹⁷ Noting how this problem is subtly brought to light in the first word of the dialogue, and following the issue into a reading of the later passages, as we demonstrated here, a subtle connection begins to emerge between self, ψυχή, and λόγος: It is the λόγος of the Athenians that weaves the threads of the story which claims that this ship is the *same* ship on which Theseus sailed, just as the soul continually

¹⁶ This is, of course, the same philosophical problem that has come to be known as "Locke's Socks."

¹⁷ Plato has seemingly coined a very uncommon construction in the word ἀνυφαίνου. In forming this construction he has used φαίνο, which draws our attention to the way the soul's weaving is thought by Cebes to be what brings the body to *appear*. The visibility of the body is thus contrasted with the cause of the visibility which is itself invisible – or at least invisible to human beings, if we take what Cebes says at 79b into account.

weaves the body together, gathering it together into a whole in the face of its constant dissolution.¹⁸ These considerations propel the reader beyond the materiality of physical flux to look for the stability that allows us to say “the same” *of the self*. I will argue that one of the central threads of the *Phaedo* is an understanding of the importance of *self-knowledge* to the goal of developing *harmony* in the self; this harmony, according to the *Phaedo*, must be based in a proper ontology of the self grounded in an awareness of and engagement with the activity of the ψυχή. Here, we begin to see the possibility that our soul weaves together the self through the λόγοι we tell *about ourselves*, in our accounting both to ourselves and to others, which presents our life as a *unitary object* that can be the object of care and reflection. Turning the souls of its readers toward care of the self will appear as one of the central purposes of the *Phaedo*, and indeed, of Platonic philosophy.

This concern for the basis of the sameness of a self over time can lead to the postulation of the existence of something beyond the material body as the locus of selfhood. This postulation seems necessary in order to guarantee, and theoretically ground, the fact that I am the same person I was ten years ago – a fact which we consider experientially obvious. However, the issue might not be as simple as it first appears. In the *Symposium*, at 207d, Diotima says

For in the eros of beasts, in terms of the same argument as that concerning men, the mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be forever and immortal. Mortal nature is capable of immortality only in this way, by generation (τῇ γενέσει), because it is always leaving behind another that is young to replace the old. For while each one of the animals is said to live and be the same (τὸ αὐτό) – for example, one is spoken of as the same from the time one is a child until one is an

¹⁸ Later, in our discussion of the argument from recollection, we will find reason to attend to the place of λόγος and ψυχή in any attribution of “sameness” or “equality.”

old man; and though he never has the same things in himself, nevertheless he is called the same – he is forever becoming new in some respects as he suffers losses in other respects: his hair, flesh, bones, blood and his whole body. And this is so not only in terms of the body but also in terms of the soul: his ways, character, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, each of these things is never present as the same for each, but they are partly coming to be and partly perishing.¹⁹

Here, Diotima's speech makes it clear that there is a connection between the desire for immortality, the explicit theme of the *Phaedo*, and the question of the "sameness" of a person with himself over time. In light of this passage from the *Symposium*, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the naïve position that while the body changes, the soul remains ever the same, unchanged and ἀθάνατος, and is the locus or source (the αἰτία) of one's being the same person from childhood to adulthood. However, Diotima should not simply be considered a mouthpiece for Plato, and the reader should beware of importing conclusions from other dialogues into our discussion of the *Phaedo*. Suffice it to say that these issues clearly appear to be connected, and the reader should keep in mind this passage, and how it bears on the discussion of the *Phaedo* regarding the issue of personal identity and personal identification with the body, the soul, or recognition of the embodiment of all knowing. At this point, it seems clear that the first word opens the question of the sameness of a person with herself over time, and that this issue bears on questions of immortality.

These observations show that the opening lines of the dialogue attune the reader to the possibility that there is a multiplicity within "identity" – which demands that we *wonder* at how the ψυχή grants unity to the "self." I will argue that, according to the

¹⁹ Translation modified from Benardete 2001.

Phaedo, this unity does not lie in a physically or metaphysically present entity which underlies the changes in experience. Rather, this unity will appear as a *possibility* for the self based in a certain activity of the soul which will draw the self into unity and harmony (ideally). The healthy condition of the soul is the harmony of the salient parts of a person's identity at any given time. We will see that the interlocutors are driven into confusion by conflicting drives within the self. One way to understand this diversity is simply in terms of the body and the soul struggling against one another. If we look to the *Republic*, we see that this is not the only way to understand this diversity, and that different vocabularies and ontologies of the soul are deployed at different times and in different dialogical contexts in order to illuminate the nature of this diversity, and in order to drive the reader toward *developing* harmony and unity in themselves.

1.3 Ethics and Identity

The first word thus prompts the question: "What am I?" The reader is led by the dialogue to provisionally structure answers to this question in terms of body, soul, or embodied being. Further, it becomes clear that this answer will bear on how one would consider one's ethical life to be structured. For example, if I see myself as a pure soul entombed in a body, I will conceive of temperance as the soul being plagued from "outside" itself by the desires of the body. Temperance, then, will be "me" fighting against a set of desires that find their cause in the "not me."²⁰ If, on the other hand, I think

²⁰ We will find that many of the answers Simmias and Cebes give, and many of the positions ascribed to the "True Philosophers" in this dialogue, point to a desire to push responsibility for "base" desires away from the self and onto something "other," absolving themselves of the responsibility for not being temperate. Cf Burger 1984, p 43.

of “myself,” or, “my” soul, as a being that is not simple, but is composed of many “parts,” temperance will appear as a struggle of myself with myself.²¹

Let these musings stand simply as a comment on why it might be important to inquire into what might seem, at first, a frivolous question; an inquiry such as “Am I the same person I was when I was a child?” might first be perceived as an empty, meaningless thought experiment. The discussion, however, has revealed the ways in which this question might help expose and articulate deeply held ontological beliefs about the self which might bear great weight, most likely unconsciously, on an understanding of the power of self-knowledge and the ethical demands we place on ourselves. The most effective way to answer this question would be go ‘straight’ to the self itself and directly uncover its being. However, this direct, pure apprehension is impossible. The position sketched in the second sailing, as will be demonstrated, insists that the reader attend to the λόγοι in which the self appears as either pure soul, material body, or soul-and-body; this insistence, I argue, is both based in and working toward an understanding of the limitations of the self which reveal that Socrates is pushing toward an awareness of the nature and consequences of embodiment.

Further, the reader should note that this question encourages an orientation toward the past. In connection with the narrative frame – of Phaedo telling Echecrates how Socrates met his *death* – the opening words of the dialogue orient the reader toward the past, and to memory; these passages turn the reader toward questions arising from the contemplation of time, the passage of time, and personal change – indeed, toward human

²¹ Cf O’Connell 1997: “One could not settle on what human ἀρετή was unless one came to know what the “human being” was: was the human being a body, a soul, or a combination of the two?” (p xvii)

finitude. Thus, this ‘personal’ dimension of memory should be kept in mind during the discussion of the argument from recollection in the *Phaedo*. Personal change over time and human finitude will be especially important as this dissertation gives an account of μελέτη θάνατος – the practice, or care of dying.

§2 “Self” in Athens

Throughout the dialogues, Plato provokes his readers to ask questions about their lives which will lead them toward self-knowledge.²² However, this concept of “self-knowledge” remains extremely vague; it is unclear what the Delphic maxim “γνώθι σεαυτον” meant to a 6th, 5th, or 4th century Athenian.²³ While the term αὐτός certainly means “self,” it is generally used as a pronoun, as it is in the first line of the *Phaedo*, and not as a substantive; it is difficult to determine whether there is something “substantial,” a “substance,” referred to when Socrates repeatedly asks us to examine our “selves.” This leaves open the question: Does he mean to examine our opinions? Our habits? Our histories? It is not immediately clear.

²² I will argue that the question of the nature of the soul, *and thus the nature of the self*, is certainly at the heart of the *Phaedo*. Michael Davis says that Socrates’ “original, but only implicit question” in this dialogue is about the “nature of man.” (1980, p 565)

²³ There is, however, strong evidence that γνώθι σεαυτον implores the man who enters the oracle to remember that he is finite, a mere mortal, and to keep his limits in mind while interpreting the words of the oracle. Also, we remember that it is the ultimate act of *hubris* to place oneself above the gods, even if only in words. Cf Burkert 1985, p 274. On the centrality of self-knowledge to the dialogues, see Hamilton’s comments in his translation of the *Phaedrus*: “The inscription ‘Know thyself’ upon the temple of Apollo at Delphi expresses the essence of the philosophy of Socrates, who turned philosophy away from the study of external nature to that of man as a moral being.” (1973, p 25, n. 1). On self-knowledge as σωφροσύνη, and thus its connection with virtue, see *Charmides* 164dff. For a good discussion of the *Charmides*’ account of virtue, see Vorwerk (2001). He argues that the one of the positive results of the discussion of σωφροσύνη in that dialogue is to (attempt to) develop a desire for self-knowledge *and with it, for philosophical discussion* (in the form of Socrates “charms”), in Charmides’ soul (p 36). On the importance of σωφροσύνη in the *Phaedo*, see 68cff.

Further, in many instances Socrates seems to use the term “self” almost interchangeably with “ψυχή”; in telling us to “examine” (ἐξετάζω) or “care” (ἐπιμελείσθαι) for ourselves, Socrates at the same time provokes us to examine the state of our ψυχή in terms of φρόνησις or ἀρετή.²⁴ Without fully determining the concept of the self, it becomes apparent that there is a complex connection being drawn between “self,” the nature of the ψυχή, φρόνησις, and virtue; further, the considerations of examining one’s life, and striving to live the best possible life, lie at the heart of this constellation of ideas.²⁵

In any case, interpreting these injunctions risks importing a modern understanding of “self” into the discussion, and thus of reading a foreign element into Plato’s texts. Given this risk, it is important to briefly clarify the space of the question of the self as it might have been experienced by students in the Academy, and Plato’s Greek audience more generally.²⁶

²⁴ For example, see the *Apology*, where Socrates’ injunction slips between examining (ἐξετάζω) oneself (28e, 38a), to examining or giving account (ἔλεγχον) of one’s “life” (βίου) (38a, 39c), to making the soul as “good” (βέλτιστος, or ἄριστος) as possible (29e, 30b), to caring for virtue (ἐπιμελείσθαι ἀρετής) (31b), to caring that “oneself” be as good (βέλτιστος) and wise (φρονιμώτατος) as possible (36c).

²⁵ cf Griswold 1986: “The problem of self-knowledge must be approached with some care. There is a Greek word for “self” in Plato, but the word is used as a pronoun, not as a substantive. The word “ψυχή” functions as the noun corresponding to our “self.” In the *Phaedrus*, however, “soul” does not necessarily have the connotation of “substance” that came, during the history of philosophy, to be associated with “self.” In this dialogue the “soul” is fundamentally different from Descartes’ *res cogitans*. . . The *Phaedrus*’ account of “self-knowledge” begins not with a technical interpretation of the notion but with an ordinary one. Socrates wants to know what he in particular – as an individual person – is. At the end of the dialogue he returns to this commonsensical level in his famous prayer to Pan: he prays that (among other things) he in particular might lead a harmonious sort of life. . . Still further, at the start of the dialogue “self-knowledge” is an ethically charged term . . . That is, Socrates wants to connect self-knowledge with leading a morally right life.” (p 2-3)

²⁶ Hackforth notes that the idea of the ψυχή as the “self” is “post-Homeric.” (1955, p 4, note 2)

2.1 Heidegger, Hegel, and the Cartesian Subject

It is often noted that an element of caution is necessary when reading the self in the dialogues in terms of modern conceptions of *subjectivity*. In “Hegel and the Greeks,” Heidegger argues that reading Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy as Hegel does has the effect of obscuring the meaning of ἀλήθεια, and thus of obscuring the experience of concealment and unconcealment which “holds sway over the beginning of Greek philosophy.”²⁷ In Hegel’s studies of the history of philosophy, this danger arises from his reading of the Pre-Socratics. Hegel reads these texts as expressions of nascent forms of Spirit’s progress toward absolute self-knowledge. As such, Hegel reduces the concept of ἀλήθεια in Greek thought to his own conception of “truth” as the goal of philosophy only achieved at the completion of philosophy. For Hegel, the Greeks have not reached this completion; thus, as Heidegger says, they remain “in the ‘not yet.’”²⁸

According to Hegel, the Greeks lacked a developed conception of the *subject*. They had not yet reached the truth of the subject which, according to him, would finally be formulated by Descartes.²⁹ With Cartesian philosophy, Hegel finally finds the explicitly posited subject which can be the solid foundation of scientific philosophy. This subjectivity was, for Hegel, the truth of ἀλήθεια and of the self, αὐτός, even in Greek times, but had not yet been brought to consciousness. In his lectures on the history of philosophy, he says, “The human being (of the Greek world) was not yet turned inward

²⁷ Heidegger 1998 p 332

²⁸ Ibid. p 331

²⁹ On the difference between the self, and the relation between soul and body, in Descartes and Plato’s *Phaedo*, see Broadie 2001.

upon himself as he is in our times. He was indeed subject, but he had not yet posited himself as such.”³⁰

If Heidegger and Hegel are right about there being a radical difference between modern individuals who think of themselves in terms of what we call “subjectivity,” and the Greek experience of the individual, and if in fact individuals now experience themselves in post-Cartesian terms as rational subjects fundamentally in opposition to the “objects” of the world, then the reader is presented with an enormous difficulty: We appear to be cut off from the experience of self which held sway in Athens, and to which Socrates is referring when he implores us to care for ourselves. In light of this problem, the project Heidegger sets for thinking is to return to the pre-Socratics (and to Aristotle, who is for Heidegger an “ontologically earlier” thinker than Plato) to uncover what was heard in the word ἀλήθεια. In doing so, a Greek “subject” is not recovered, but rather the space of the event of human being as one who speaks is disclosed. Heidegger tells us that “ἀλήθεια, thought in a Greek manner, certainly holds sway for human beings, but the human being remains determined by λόγος. The human being is the sayer.”³¹

This connection between the human being *for* whom unconcealment happens *must* not be confused with the subject *by* whom unconcealment is thought to be accomplished; ἀλήθεια is not something that the subject effects, it is the space in which human being, determined by λόγος, can happen. That is, the necessity of the human being, and of λόγος, for unconcealment does not make the event of truth unavoidably “subjectivized.”³²

³⁰ Quoted in Heidegger 1998, p 331

³¹ Heidegger 1998 p 334

³² Ibid. For more on the connection between truth and the subject in his reading of Plato specifically, see Heidegger’s essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” in Heidegger 1998, p 155.

It is in learning how to think this connection – the connection between λόγος as holding sway over human being, ἀλήθεια as the site in which human being comes into its possibility, and the question of the “self” which is ontologically prior to the subject – that one can begin to think the self outside the sway of a self-present, transcendent Cartesian subject. This thinking, however, *should come from a reading of the dialogues*, and cannot be a “settled matter” prior to that reading. It should avoid determining in advance what Plato might have meant by the “self” to which we must turn, and for which we must have care (ἐπιμέλεια). That is, in provoking his readers to ask the question of the self in the dialogues, Plato is at the same time giving us the tools to formulate that question in productive ways, and, I would argue, *in different ways in different dialogues*. Thus, rather than approaching the *Phaedo* with a fully-formulated question of the self ready-at-hand – whether formulated from readings of modern philosophy or of interpretations of Plato’s philosophy – this analysis will allow the reading of the dialogue make the self questionable again. It is not Plato’s intent to simply present a theory of the self, nor a “doctrine of truth”; rather, he intends to engage his audience in a project of questioning.

That being said, I would like to outline what the reading of the *Phaedo* undertaken in this dissertation will present as the space of questioning which will free us

Heidegger argues that in Plato – specifically, in the cave allegory in the *Republic* – we can find a shift in the conception of truth from ἀλήθεια, unconcealedness, to ὀρθότης, or the correctness of statements. With the dominance in Plato of the *idea*, the way to truth lies in the subject attempting to come into the proper relation to the *idea* as object. Truth lies in the ὀρθότης, “the correctness of the gaze.” (p 177) As such, while both conceptions of truth are at play in the dialogues, Heidegger argues that in the cave allegory “ἀλήθεια comes under the yoke of the *idea*.” (p 176) Thus, the stance of the subject over against the *idea* as object brings with it a conception of truth as *adequatio intellectus et rei* which becomes dominant in Western philosophy. For a good account of the problems with Heidegger’s reading of Plato, see Gonzalez 2009.

from thinking of the self in terms of a Cartesian subjectivity. As argued earlier in this paper, and as Heidegger has said, it is impossible to formulate a conception of the self outside an understanding of truth and λόγος. *It is only when we begin to understand how the world is gathered around us in and through λόγος that we can begin to understand what we are, or who we are.* In reading the *Phaedo*, this analysis will uncover the idea that humans do not have unmediated access to the truth of things. As limited, finite, embodied human beings we find that we must turn to the λόγοι in which we present the world to ourselves to begin to uncover our world; it is only through careful consideration of these guiding λόγοι – including, centrally, what come to be called “master narratives” – that we are able understand our experience, and thus begin to fathom the nature of the embodied, finite self.

In discovering this, we find that we cannot understand ourselves outside the specific political context – that is, the context in which the λόγοι are formed *by which* we understand ourselves. In other words, it is only within a given historico-political context that one can come to understand “what it means to be a man,” what it means to be Athenian, and indeed what the “self” is. We cannot simply turn away from these λόγοι, which, as Echebrates says, have a “wondrous” hold on us; we cannot simply assume an unmediated apprehension of the things themselves, or of the self itself. The process by which we might ideally achieve this pure vantage point – as that of a disembodied soul – is a long and arduous climb which must work *through* the λόγοι of the πόλις, and cannot simply leap beyond them. This is, in fact, the path of self-knowledge, and the path of caring for ourselves.

This will indicate that in coming to know the self we come to know the world into which the self is thrown; we do not come to know the self as a “subject” standing opposed to the world as its “object.” We find rather that we are fundamentally a part of the world that would initially appear to be our “object”; discovering ourselves as ‘extended’ out into this world, as συγγενοῦς with the world, we cannot understand ourselves as simply standing outside it, judging it. Thus, this stance “outside” the world, and this would-be disconnected judgment, can no longer be the locus of truth, as Heidegger has repeatedly argued.

This observation, however, cannot stand as the answer to the question of the self; rather, it acts as further provocation, redirecting us back into the project of discovering the self. That is because this claim, on its own grounds, insists that the self *cannot* be uncovered as a metaphysical entity existing outside the dimensions of its specific world, its specific λόγοι. In other words, the philosopher seeking self-knowledge *must* turn to the λόγοι in which the concrete self presents itself to him or herself. The work of the philosopher as Socrates describes it is not essentially characterized by the development of an abstract, ‘scientific’ theory of the self; rather, the life of philosophy is the work (ἔργον) of caring for and uncovering one’s own self, and living toward self-knowledge.

We will now turn to an account of the political situation of Athens in Plato’s lifetime. The argument will show that the λόγοι by which people understood themselves were in radical flux in Plato’s time. This, in turn, will help illuminate what is at stake for Plato in turning people toward the self.

2.2 Of Sophists, Tyrants, and the Uncertainty of Politics

In the *Seventh Letter*, Plato gives an account of how he turned from the life of politics to that of philosophy. When he was young, he says, he was under the same πάθη as many other youths in the πόλις: he intended to enter political life – to enter into the common (κοινός) life of the πόλις – as soon as possible (324b-c). Plato’s situation was extremely favorable in this respect; he had many connections to people in political power and could easily have led a very successful political career, as everyone certainly expected him to do. How does it happen that he gives up this life and becomes a philosopher?

In 404 BC, at the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Golden Age of Athenian democracy and empire came to an end when The Thirty came into power.³³ These “tyrants,” with favorable ties to the Spartan regime, included Plato’s relatives Charmides and Critias among their number, with his uncle Critias in particular holding a seat of great influence. Plato was 23 years old, and states in the *Seventh Letter* that as a result of his youthful idealism he thought that this new regime would wash away the injustices of its democratic predecessor, which, he says, was “reviled by many.” (324c) Unfortunately, he soon saw that in comparison, the previous democratic regime appeared as precious as gold. (324d-e) Seeing the injustices of what had seemed so promising – some of them committed against Socrates, who by this time had become Plato’s mentor – Plato “recoiled from this evil (κακός).” (325a)

³³ For a good account of how the fall of Athens set the stage for the philosophy of Plato, and his conflict with the sophists for the souls of Athens, see Jaeger 1943, esp p 3-6. Jaeger argues that the 4th century was built on the novel principle of “equality under law – *isonomia*,” which arises out of the newly-created conception “of a personality fully self-conscious and responsible for itself.” (p 6)

This first encounter with political life teaches Plato that in the real world, things do not always accord with his ideals. Just as the political structure of Athens is in radical flux and turmoil, Plato begins to doubt the path that has been laid out for him as the proper life of an ἄριστος Athenian male; he begins to doubt what it means to have ἀρετή. At the same time that he witnesses the injustices committed by The Thirty, Plato sees that Socrates presents a contrasting image of virtue. When The Thirty try and coerce Socrates into unjust actions, Socrates “refused to obey and risked the uttermost penalties rather than be a partner in their unholy deeds (ἀνόσια ἔργα).” (325a)

When The Thirty were shortly deposed, Plato states that he was again taken with a desire to enter politics. However, the renewal of democracy – of the πάτριος πολιτεία – in Athens proves to be an enormously difficult project; by the time Plato comes of age, democratic Athens is in sharp decline. Plato witnesses injustices being committed by the followers of Thrasybulus in their rise to power following the overthrow of The Thirty. He says that this is to be expected, and that many of those who returned to power sought revenge on their enemies, but did so with “great restraint.” However, at this time “some of those in power” sought to bring Socrates to trial for impiety. (325b-c) Seeing the man who Plato believes to be the least deserving of such a dishonor brought before a democratic jury and sentenced to death has a profound effect on Plato’s opinion of public life, the possibility of democracy, and indeed the possibility of having any substantive, positive effect in the political world.

Plato came to consciousness in a time of great turmoil; it was no longer clear what Athens was, and what it meant to be an Athenian was thrown into uncertainty. To better understand the tenor of this time, and the way this political turmoil could call for self-

examination, we can look to Thucydides' *History*. Writing during the troubling time leading up to the fall of Athens and the tyranny of the Thirty, Thucydides has Pericles, in his famous funeral oration, spend a great deal of time praising Athens as a whole, as an institution, rather than speaking directly of the dead and their honorable deeds, as would have been customary. In this speech, Pericles, and Thucydides through him, is attempting to (re)create a sense of what it means to be an Athenian. Pericles says: "I have dwelt upon the greatness of Athens because I want to show you that we are contending for a higher prize than those who enjoy none of these privileges, and to establish by manifest proof the merit of these men whom I am now commemorating. Their loftiest praise has been already spoken. For in magnifying the city I have magnified them, and men like them whose virtues made her glorious."³⁴ It is precisely this sense of self-as-Athenian that is in decline during Plato's time; that is, in light of the political turmoil of Athens, the question of the self is drawn into the light.³⁵ Further, Pericles connects the sense of what it means to be Athenian to the ἀρετή that Athenian citizens display *as a result of being Athenian*. Thus, as what Athens itself *is* is called into question in the years following the rule of The Thirty, so the traditional conception of ἀρετή which Pericles is calling-upon/(re)creating in his oration is also problematized.

The specifics of the formulation that Thucydides has Pericles express in his speech is not centrally important to this discussion. However, it is interesting to note that the ἀρετή praised in the speech centers on achieving a balance between λόγος and ἔργον; this balance is said to be made possible because an Athenian is raised to

³⁴ 2.42.1

³⁵ This is convincingly argued in Munn 2000, esp. 294-296. See also Martha Taylor 2010, Goldhill and Osborne 2006, Dunn 2007.

appreciate both the best of things offered by peace, as well as the benefits of valor in times of war; in this, the Athenian is unlike the Lacedaimonian, who can only thrive in war time. Pericles seems to ascribe this possibility to the *freedom* of the Athenians.³⁶ It is this freedom that makes Athens the “school of Greece”: “I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace. This is no passing and idle word, but truth and fact; and the assertion is verified by the position to which these qualities have raised the state.”³⁷ Pericles begins his oration pointing to specifically this connection between the institutional structure of Athens – specifically its “freedom” (ἐλευθερος) and the fact of its “being administered in the interests not of the few but of the many”³⁸ – and the virtue of its citizens. Pericles says that he wants to demonstrate by what devotion, or cultivation of habit (ἐπιτήδευσις) the Athenians have come to power, and from what form of government (πολιτεία) and what “national character” (τρόπος) their greatness has resulted.³⁹

In calling upon these democratic principles of equality and freedom, Pericles is speaking to a primary class division in Athenian society.⁴⁰ In his funeral oration, Pericles insists that it is the virtues of the *demos* that are responsible for the greatness of Athens, and not (simply) the ἀρετή of its most wealthy and influential citizens.⁴¹ There were

³⁶ Cf Balot 2001.

³⁷ 2.41.1

³⁸ 2.37.1

³⁹ 2.36.4

⁴⁰ Cf Munn 2000: “The tension between his aristocratic ideals and the democratic political order in which he grew up marks the great fault line in the social foundations of political power at Athens that was building pressure throughout the youth of Plato.” (p 50)

⁴¹ Some have argued that this represents Pericles’ actual speech, and does not reflect Thucydides position, who is argued to have more critical of the *demos* and thus suspicious of democracy. E.g. Balot 2001: “I sharply distinguish Pericles’ arguments and reasoning from those of Thucydides

factions within Athens which idealized the Spartan way of life over these democratic ideals – factions which included Plato’s relatives Critias and Charmides, as well as his brother Glaucon; Plato himself has been traditionally held to have great sympathies for this position.⁴² In any case, we can easily see how the traditional conception of the virtues proper to someone raised in free, democratic Athens are in turmoil at this time; with this, there is a kind of “identity crisis” endemic in the culture, and we can see this echoed in Plato’s turn away from the political life, and his call for self examination.

One form this turn away from the values of the *καλοί κάγαθοί* takes can be clearly seen in Socrates’ account of virtue in the *Apology*, as well as in the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and many other works. Socrates repeatedly attacks the dogma which holds that the excellences traditionally defining the *καλοί κάγαθοί* – political power, public honor, wealth, physical beauty, etc – are inherently and unquestionably good. In this traditional ‘system,’ these ‘external’ goods are the true sign of *ἀρετή* – to have *ἀρετή* is to amass wealth and to protect your household and your *πόλις* from destruction, death, and enslavement. Socrates’ attacks on these conventionally held values further dovetail with Plato’s feud with the Sophists. This “battle between rhetoric and philosophy” begins to appear as a battle for the souls of the men of Athens.

himself: where Pericles in the *Histories* is an advocate of and spokesman for participatory democracy, and develops a notion of courage in light of his democratic ideals, Thucydides, in my view, is critical of participatory democracy because of his negative opinions of the *demos*.” (p 506, n 3) Thus, we see that the proper structure of the *politeia*, and thus of the proper source of *ἀρετή* and *ἀνδρεία*, is publicly in debate in the early years of Plato’s political education, as it was a prevalent theme in Thucydides’ work.

⁴² Though the account of Plato as simply and univocally an enemy of the Open State has been rightly called into doubt by some recent scholarship, especially on the *Republic* and the *Statesman*. See Recco 2007, Miller 1980. I argue that a careful reading of the dialogues can see a clear undercurrent of criticism of the values of the *καλοί κάγαθοί*, as well as a suspicion of democratic ideals.

The claim that Sophists customarily make is that they can teach virtue.⁴³ Socrates repeatedly attacks them for claiming to teach virtue without knowing what virtue itself is. In these attacks, Socrates characteristically shows them to be simply parroting traditional conceptions of virtue – specifically of the *καλοὶ καγαθοί* – which they know will appeal to their employers’ sensibilities. In these discussions, the question is consistently raised: “If these are the virtues of an Athenian, why are special teachers – often from beyond the walls of Athens – necessary to teach a youth ἀρετή? If these are Athenian virtues, why isn’t every Athenian a sufficient teacher of ἀρετή?”⁴⁴ This question indicates the loss of a basis for a clear and stable sense of self in Athens during the years surrounding the Peloponnesian War. The Athenian empire experiences a rapid, dramatic, and traumatic collapse. As a result, the sense of ‘manhood’ (ἀνδρεία) which traditionally served as a clear guide to Athenian youth in his coming of age is thrown into uncertainty. There is a void that opens up with the fall of Athens and the rise of The Thirty – the defining events of Plato’s youth; if, in fact, success and prosperity are the true signs of ἀρετή, then these defeats seem a clear call for self-examination.

In these times of uncertainty, the Sophists appear as opportunists claiming to teach the virtue, and rhetorical skill, necessary to become powerful and influential – to rise above the mass of the δῆμος, the οἱ πολλοί, and become one of the rich and beautiful *καλοὶ καγαθοί*. Plato, in the *Seventh Letter*, said that he, too, was under this πάθος, and so desired to enter the political world and gain esteem and authority in the πόλις. However, he came to realize, partly through Socrates’ example, a clearer

⁴³ Cf Burkert 1985: “. . . the true goal of sophistic education was the highest value of traditional morality, namely, distinction won through achievement and success, ἀρετή . . .” (p 311)

⁴⁴ See especially the *Apology* and the *Meno*.

understanding of true virtue; Plato came to believe that, given the loss of the traditional conception of ἀρετή, it was necessary to care for the self, for the ψυχή, to achieve the kind of ἀρετή which he saw exemplified by Socrates' life. This self-examination becomes the cornerstone of his inquiry into traditional values, and, I argue, is key to a more complete interpretation of what is commonly understood as Plato's metaphysics and epistemology.

The kind of power that the Sophists intended to teach is, in the *Phaedrus* (among other places), framed in opposition to dialectic, understood as a “writing in the soul.” Plato turns away from his youthful desire to externalize himself and achieve political power; instead, he begins to idealize the virtue displayed by Socrates – Socrates, who met precisely the end that Calicles in the *Gorgias*, Anytus in the *Meno*, and others warn waits for those who deny the ἀρετή of achieving amoral power and value-neutral, δεινός influence in the πόλις. As Plato turns away from these crumbling traditions, he discovers the path to Socratic virtue in earnest self-examination; in so doing, he develops insight which allows him to use discourse to disclose the truth of himself rather than to manipulate those around him.⁴⁵

It should also be noted that the Sophists, especially Protagoras of Abdera and Gorgias of Leontini, introduce into democratic Athens a new form of ἀγών: the ἀγών of λόγος. These itinerant teachers introduce verbal and logical disputation into the space of gymnastic contests, and in so doing lead a kind of “revolution” in which even tightly held traditional beliefs became open to question and analysis. An example of this is found in

⁴⁵ This can be seen especially by attending to Socrates comments to Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, to Phaedrus in the dialogue of that name, and to Polus and Calicles in the *Gorgias*. Plato seems to have dedicated much of the work of the dialogues toward developing an excellence in speech – along the lines of the “writing in the soul” spoken of in the *Phaedrus*, esp. at 276a – dedicated to the cultivation of *self*, rather than the manipulation and control of others.

the opening lines of Protagoras' book *On Gods*, "Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject, and the brevity of human life."⁴⁶ This line of reasoning was enough to have Protagoras put on trial, and may have led to his books being burned in Athens, but such a reaction only served to make these analyses more famous and influential to Plato's young mind.⁴⁷ We will now turn to a brief account of the changing religious context in which Plato began to formulate his conception of the importance of self examination.

2.3 Individual and Πόλις, and the Concept of Ψυχή in the "Mystery Religions" and Pythagoreanism

Religion in ancient Greece had a strong public character and was, in many respects, a way of integrating the individual into the community. Within this public religion. . . there were special cults that addressed people on an individual basis and were voluntarily selected by each person. . . As these cults had to do with the individual's inner self, privacy was necessary and was secured by an initiation ceremony, a personal ritual that brought the individual to a new spiritual level, a higher degree of awareness in relation to the gods. Once initiated, the individual was entitled to share the eternal truth, to catch a glimpse of the eternal reality. – Michael B. Cosmopoulos *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*

⁴⁶ 80B4 DK. Cf Burkert 1985 p 311ff.

⁴⁷ For an account of the social constraints on the intellectual in Athens, see K.J. Dover, "The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society," reprinted in Dover 1988. Also, see R. W. Wallace, "Private Lives and Public Enemies: Freedom of Thought in Classical Athens," in Boegehold and Scafuro 1994.

In addition to the political upheavals of Plato's youth, religion in Greece undergoes radical transformations in the 6th and 5th centuries.⁴⁸ The *Phaedo* can, in large part, be understood as a transformation or development of religious concepts; specifically, the dialogue develops the concept of the ψυχή, and of the afterlife that the ψυχή can expect, from out of the context of these religious traditions which were integral to the πόλις.⁴⁹ Thus, it is clear, in line with Socrates' conviction on the charge of impiety, that philosophy begins with a tense relationship to the πόλις, and to religion.

In Plato's time Mystery cults gained prominence which, while staying within the broader outlines of the traditional accounts of the gods as presented in Homer and Hesiod, nevertheless begin to question the place of the individual both within the πόλις and within the kosmos. While many of these cults had been in existence for over a thousand years, these cults gained in size and import within Athens in the 6th century (particularly, the Eleusinian Mysteries under Peisistratus, who ruled Athens from 546 to 527). These movements are connected to a transformation of the understanding of the meaning and nature of the ψυχή. At this same time, agnosticism regarding the nature and even the existence of the gods begins to become fashionable with the sophists and educated people of Athens. A brief account of some of these changes will clarify what might be at stake in Plato's discussion of the self.

The figure of Pythagoras looms large in the background of the *Phaedo* – a fact which will receive further examination later, during my discussion of Socrates'

⁴⁸ For general accounts of the changes in religion during these times, see Burkert 1985 and 1987, and Parker 1996.

⁴⁹ Hackforth argues that the opposition of soul and body found in the *Phaedo* is a *Platonic* modification of Socrates' thought, based in Orphic and Pythagorean influences on Plato. (1955, p 4)

presentation of the doctrine of reincarnation. For now, let it suffice to note that Simmias and Cebes are both Pythagoreans, and that the frame-dialogue presents Phaedo telling of Socrates' death to Echechrates, a Pythagorean, in the town of Phlius, which is a Peloponnesian city associated with Pythagoreans. While historical evidence for the exact nature of life in a Pythagorean community is far from complete, it is clear that this was a radical departure from everyday life.

When one chose to join the Pythagorean community, it was a radically individual and personal choice. The Pythagoreans apparently had no rite of initiation, and thus there was no mass gathering or group ritual such as found in the Eleusinian mysteries. Upon entry, there was a five-year vow of silence, a renunciation of all personal possessions, and the promise to follow the esoteric and strict *ἄκουσματα* which governed every aspect of life.⁵⁰ One's *πάτριος πολιτεία* was no longer the significant group to which one owed allegiance, and from which one drew the meaning of one's identity. Burkert argues that by imposing new strictures governing how to live, and by removing the individual from the purview of the *πόλις*, Pythagoreanism represented a "protest movement against the established *πόλις*."⁵¹

The essential aspect of this protest is that the individual chooses to leave the communal life of the *πόλις* to begin a life dedicated to the purification of their own

⁵⁰ 1985, p 303. These strictures included burial practices; we will discuss this aspect when we look at Socrates' lack of concern over the treatment of his body at 115c. Duty requires that the body be buried with the proper rites in every species of Greek religion. Rohde argues that the Greeks of the 6th and 5th centuries took this "even more seriously than the Homeric people had done." (1950, p 162) Thus, I will argue that Socrates' disinterest in the method of his burial – coupled with his choice to bathe himself in order to save the women the trouble of washing a corpse – is emblematic of the transformation of religious tradition that Plato is undertaking in the *Phaedo*.

⁵¹ It should be noted that these Pythagorean communities only existed until the early 5th century, at the latest, and were gone by Socrates', and certainly by Plato's, time, and probably only in southern Italy, and never in Greece.

ψυχή, with an eye toward their own existence in the afterlife. Thus, each individual is *still* a member of a community, identifies themselves in terms of the strictures of that community, and habituates themselves to seek specific values within the context of that community; the crucial difference is that this community is not based on the accidents of birth, but on individual choice. As Burkert writes, “. . . instead of the pre-existing communities of family, city, and tribe there was now a self-chosen form of association, a community based on a common decision and a common disposition of mind.”⁵² We find that Socrates calls for the formation of a similar, *philosophical* community after his passing, at 78a, and that Plato accomplished precisely this with the Academy.⁵³

The break from the πόλις is less radical, but no less significant, in the case of the Mystery cults. While there were important festivals in which thousands were initiated into the Mysteries at Eleusis – festivals so important to the Greeks that even wars were suspended to enable people from both sides to participate⁵⁴ – this decision to be initiated was still an individual decision not governed by the demands made upon one as a member of a πόλις.⁵⁵

Further, with the Mystery Cults, the essential religious context was no longer a relation between a πόλις or a tribe and its own protecting deity, but a relation between the individual and the divine. Luther Martin writes of the rise of Mystery cults: “. . . a sacred order of things was no longer assumed to be immanent in a particular terrestrial

⁵² 1985, p 303.

⁵³ We can see here one reason why post-Socratic schools often set themselves up as apolitical, e.g. Antisthenes and the Cynics, who suggested that people withdraw from public life and become ιδιότης. We see also the Epicurean schools, which idolized Socrates and chose to form communities ‘outside’ the purview of the πόλις.

⁵⁴ Cf Martin 1987 p 66ff.

⁵⁵ “In contrast to traditional piety, which belonged to social convention, initiation into the mysteries was both voluntary and individual” (Martin 1987, p 61)

realm or locale but it was elevated to the universal locus of the celestial realm.”⁵⁶ At the center of this relation was the concept of the purity of the ψυχή. This purity, while still an act of community, fundamentally altered the conception of the world and the place of the individual within it *for the individual initiate themselves*. What was seen in the Eleusinian Mystery rites was not openly discussed, but the feeling of living in a world in which one was initiate, chosen, and thus destined for “salvation” in the afterlife must have had profound effects on the way the individual understood his or herself in the context of the world.⁵⁷

Connected to the way initiation into these groups called attention to the individual as distinct from the πόλις, tribe, or family is a revolution in the concept of ψυχή.⁵⁸

Speaking of Orphic, Bacchic, Eleusinian, and Pythagorean movements, Burkert writes:

What is most important is the transformation of the concept of soul, ψυχή, that takes place in these circles. The doctrine of transmigration presupposes that in the living being, man as animal, there is an individual, constant something, an ego that preserves its identity by force of its own essence, independent of the body which passes away. . . This ψυχή is obviously not the powerless, unconscious image of recollection in a gloomy Hades, and in Homer’s *Nekia*; it

⁵⁶ 1987, p 59.

⁵⁷ Martin writes: “No longer was the initiate homeless in the midst of a chaotic, labyrinthian world: through initiation, the rule of that world was revealed as that of divine providence. The cosmic abyss that separated humans from the gods had been bridged, and their at-homeness in the world and with the gods had been established.” (1987, p 62) In *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Burkert argues that, unlike Pythagorean communities, an initiate into the Eleusinian Mysteries did not have daily contact with their new community of believers. After the celebration, the group disbands, does not meet regularly, and the πίστις of the individual in their private, secret recollection of the event become central. Everyday life is continued just as it was before initiation, and no moral rules for conduct are imposed upon the initiate – all that is changed is their spiritual awareness of their place in relation to the divine. (Burkert 1987, p 42ff.)

⁵⁸ Hackforth notes that the concept of the ψυχή as the locus of the self is present in Pythagoreanism, but is predates the Pythagorean formulation. (1955, p 4) Dodds writes: “In fifth-century Attic writers, as in their Ionian predecessors, the “self” which is denoted by the word ψυχή is normally the emotional rather than the rational self.” (1962, p 139) This self as ψυχή was not considered to be alien to, nor opposed to, the body, until Pythagoreanism.

is not affected by death: the soul is immortal, ἀθάνατος. That the epithet that since Homer had characterized the gods in distinction from men now becomes the essential mark of the human person is indeed a revolution.⁵⁹

These various religious traditions do not finally coincide in a single conception of what that soul is, nor do they agree on the nature of immortality and rebirth; however, in each of them is developed – slowly, incrementally – a conception of ψυχή as distinct from the body and as bearing the ego into a far richer existence after death than that described in Homer or Hesiod.⁶⁰

This new conception of the ψυχή had profound influence on Plato, and specifically provided the context in which he could begin to use the concept of ψυχή as a cornerstone of his metaphysics of the self; ψυχή, in the sense developed in the 5th century by such groups as the Pythagoreans and Orphic and Bacchic mystery cults, provided the ontological starting-point for Plato's investigations into the Socratic notions of self-

⁵⁹ Burkert 1985, p 300.

⁶⁰ Rohde argues that the accounts of ψυχή in Homer are multifaceted, and do not present a clear picture of the nature of ψυχή. However, with some exceptions which he attributes to later poets' additions to the Homeric Poems, the Homeric account of the ψυχή in Hades is an unthinking shadow of the self, lacking will and desire: "The ψυχή of Homeric belief does not, as might have been supposed, represent what we are accustomed to call "spirit" as opposed to "body." All the faculties of human "spirit" in the widest sense – for which the poet had a large and varied vocabulary – are indeed only active and only possible so long as a man is still alive: when death comes the complete personality is no longer in existence. The body, that is the corpse, now becomes mere "senseless earth" and falls to pieces while the ψυχή is untouched. But the latter is by no means the refuge of "spirit" and its faculties, any more than the corpse is. It (the ψυχή) is described as being without feeling, deserted by mind and the organs of mind. All power of will, sensation and thought have vanished with the disintegration of the individual man into his component parts." (1950, p 5) We will look at this more closely when we discuss the accounts of the self as 'body plus soul' in the *Phaedo*; for now let us note that it is unclear how this account of ψυχή in Homer is consistent with the portrayal of the shades as able to speak with still-living Odysseus (once given blood to drink) or as able to "appreciate" their punishment, as in the cases of Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus (who Rohde argues are "exceptions to the rule" of the ψυχή as unconscious shade in Hades – p 40ff).

examination and virtuous living.⁶¹ However, the ontology of the self is left vague by the variety of conceptions arising from this religious context. It is left to Plato and Aristotle to thematize the concept of the ψυχή as the metaphysical basis of the self; it is their work – including significant *misunderstandings* of their work – that provide the basis of metaphysical speculations concerning the soul for the entire history of Western philosophy.⁶² Their importance as original thinkers notwithstanding, their inquiries into the nature of the ψυχή are not created *ex nihilo*, but rather arise from the context of religious speculation in their time, and thus must be understood as an extension of this *zeitgeist*.⁶³

While Plato is clearly borrowing a great deal from the Pythagorean and other traditions in his account of the nature of the ψυχή, there are important ways in which he departs from these traditions, as will become clear in my account of the *Phaedo*. In the *Republic*, Plato has Adeimantus refer to the practices of many wandering priests of the Orphic cults who claim to be able to purify people of any injustice they or their ancestors have done. Adeimantus argues that Socrates should give an account of how justice is

⁶¹ cf Kahn 2001: “In Pythagorean thought immortality is conceived both in terms of the transmigration of souls. . . and also in the possibility of purification and escape from the cycle of rebirth, from the bondage of bodily form. (It is this conception of the afterlife that is common to the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions.) This Pythagorean view of the soul is most systematically developed in Plato’s *Phaedo*. . .” (p 4). I disagree with Kahn’s assumption that Plato is simply continuing with the Pythagorean and Orphic conception of the ψυχή, and of the afterlife. I will argue that Socrates use of this vocabulary is strategic, in order to appeal to his listeners, and not to be a mouthpiece for Plato’s own views.

⁶² Burkert writes: “. . .with the idea of the immortal soul the discovery of the individual had reached a goal which is only fulfilled in philosophy. It was Socratic care for the soul and Platonic metaphysics that gave it the classical form that was to predominate for thousands of years.” (1985 p. 301)

⁶³ On the connection between Orphism and Plato’s dialogues, see Cornford (1903). Specifically, Cornford argues that Plato’s image of the body as a “tomb” for the soul is of Orphic origin.

good “by itself,” and not in terms of the benefits that might accrue from having a “good reputation” with people or with the gods. Adeimantus states that the poets present justice as something hard to achieve and the just life as unpleasant and difficult; further, they present injustice as something that does not permanently harm an individual’s relation to the gods, since one can be absolved of his or her wrongdoings through sacrifice and prayer:

But the most wonderful of all these speeches are those [the poets] give about gods and virtue. They say that the gods, after all, allot misfortune and a bad life to many good men too, and an opposite fate to opposite men. Beggar priests and diviners go to the doors of the rich man and persuade him that the gods have provided them with a power based on sacrifices and incantations. If he himself, or his ancestors, has committed some injustice, they can heal it with pleasures and feasts . . . And they present a babble of books by Musaeus and Orpheus, offspring of the Moon and the Muses, as they say, according to whose prescriptions they busy themselves about their sacrifices. They persuade not only private persons, but cities as well, that through sacrifices and pleasurable games there are, after all, deliverances and purifications from unjust deeds for those still living. And there are also rites for those who are dead. These, which they call initiations, deliver us from the evils in the other place; while, for those who did not sacrifice, terrible things are waiting. (364b-365a)

Adeimantus presents this argument as a challenge to Socrates: He and Glaucon demand that Socrates show that the life of justice is beneficial *on its own grounds*, and not with reference to hypothetical benefits in the afterlife.

Socrates responds by giving an account of justice which shows that it is beneficial to the soul *itself*, and not simply beneficial in terms of what *happens* to the individual, in the πόλις or in Hades⁶⁴; his account argues that injustice harms the soul directly, that it

⁶⁴ This is a complicated issue, and unfortunately we cannot undertake an account of the place of the Myth of Er as it is presented at the end of the *Republic*. For an account of how this Myth represents a return to the ‘level’ of traditional understanding of the benefits of justice – as presented by the poets – after the descent, the κατάβασις, into the deeper philosophical levels of understanding represented by the central books of the *Republic*, see Brann 2004, esp p 106-107, 256-272. She argues that “Socrates – having shown the two youngsters Glaucon and Adeimantus that justice is good not only as a political virtue but as a human way of being, since it is in fact

has negative *internal* effects on the soul by creating disorder and sickness in the ψυχή; thus, justice is not simply choiceworthy due to factors *external* to the soul, such as how the soul fares in the afterlife, or is viewed by the gods. Justice is no longer an issue of the *relation* between the individual and the divine. If injustice is external to the soul – if it is simply a matter of angering the gods, or of creating some sort of karmic debt to be paid in a less desirable reincarnation – then it follows that a priest could wipe away these injustices by appealing to the external source of judgment: to the gods, or to the divine in some sense. If, on the other hand, injustice does its damage *internally* to the soul, then there is nothing a priest can do by turning to the divine, and only a turn inward can begin to address the damage done by injustice; this turn inward is not achievable by a priest, but must be effected through a process of education and self-inquiry which turns the soul toward justice.⁶⁵ It is this radical shift away from the accounts of the nature of the soul and of injustice in these various cults that marks the turn from religion to philosophy.⁶⁶ Thus, as I will argue in Chapter 3, there is a radical shift in the concept of “purity” (εἰλικρινής or καθαρός) that was central to the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions.

nothing less than the healthy condition of the well-constituted soul – now wants to bring back in abundance the external rewards of which the just man had been stripped for the sake of experiment.” (p 260)

⁶⁵ This formulation makes the turn seem deceptively simple, however it is anything but. The nature of this turn, the means of effecting it, and the issue of how the turn makes the soul more just is extremely complicated. Much of the work in this dissertation will be useful in understanding how λόγος and an understanding of the χωρισμός clarifies the nature and importance of this turn.

⁶⁶ It is important to note the importance of this shift in the context of the historically developing understanding of individuality and the self. In the context of Homeric “ethics,” injustice is so centrally located in an external relation between the individual and the gods that one’s ancestors could be punished for one’s injustice. In the context of a philosophical/Platonic understanding of virtue, no such punishment is possible. This represents a radical shift in the concepts of self, justice, purity, and ultimately, of what is “real.”

The account we give of the nature of the soul, the self, and the place of philosophy and λόγος in human life as it is presented in the *Phaedo* will be speaking, in one way or another, to this turn *inward* as the path to purity. That is, we will be developing, in part, an understanding of the soul which provides the ontological basis for the Platonic account of justice and injustice; that is, we will show how the choice of the *best life* – the philosophical life of *self*-examination – benefits the self *internally* in terms of participation in the benefits of a healthy and harmonious soul, rather than *externally* in terms of its relation to the divine or of pleasures in the afterlife.

Chapter 2

Λόγος and the Minotaur

Introduction: Socrates as Theseus

In this chapter, I will give an initial account of the danger of misology in the *Phaedo*. I will show that the opening lines of the dialogue point to misology as a major danger to the life of philosophy. I argue that the specific images of that danger presented in the opening section of the dialogue are intended to serve as a primer for how to receive – and how *not* receive – the arguments in the text. I will also show that *emotion*, in this case, specifically *fear of death*, plays a significant role in the way the *Phaedo* presents the danger that misology poses to the life of philosophy.

It has been argued convincingly that, in the opening lines of the *Phaedo*, Plato presents Socrates as a Theseus figure attempting to rescue his 14 friends from the dangers of the minotaur.⁶⁷ The dialogue's structure re-tells the myth of the descent into the labyrinth, the battle with the Minotaur, and the return and rescue of the 14 youths.

We are told by *Phaedo* that the execution of Socrates has been delayed. The city has the custom (or law – νόμος) of keeping “pure” (καθαρεύειν) during the time when the ship is sent to Delos in honor of Theseus' journey,

This is the ship, as the Athenians say, in which Theseus once went to Crete with the fourteen youths and maidens, and saved them and himself. Now the Athenians made a vow to Apollo, as the story goes, that if they were saved they

⁶⁷ Cf Davis 1980: “We are given an account of Socrates' deeds in which he is repeatedly referred to as an *aner*, a real man (57a, 58c, 58e, etc.), in which he is likened to a hero, Theseus. . .” (p 575)

would send a mission every year to Delos. And from that time even to the present day they send it annually in honor of the god. Now it is their law that after the mission begins the city must be pure and no one may be publicly executed until the ship has gone to Delos and back. . . (58a-b)

Shortly after this account, Phaedo lists the names of those present at the discussion re-told in the *Phaedo*, and there are 14 names listed. Brann concludes that “The *Phaedo* is a playful recasting of this well-known myth. Socrates is the new, philosophic Theseus. He is the heroic savior of the friends gathered around Socrates as he is about to make his final journey. . . But who or what plays the role of the Minotaur?”⁶⁸

This dissertation follows the suggestion of Francisco Gonzalez and John Russon, among others, in taking the minotaur to be the danger of misology.⁶⁹ The *Phaedo* itself, and the arguments for the immortality of the soul in particular, present the reader with a labyrinth. At the center of this labyrinth Socrates is explicitly concerned about the danger of misology and with warning his friends against falling into this trap.⁷⁰ In order to understand the dangers of the hatred of λόγος, with the further goal of understanding the powers and limitations of λόγος (especially as figured by the second sailing), we will examine this danger as it appears in the context of Socrates’ invocation of misology. I will argue that there are many dangers presented in the dialogue that lead people away from trusting in λόγοι.

⁶⁸ 1998, p 3.

⁶⁹ cf Gonzalez 1998 p 189, Russon & Sallis 2000.

⁷⁰ Henry Piper calls this passage the “existential center of the dialogue.” (2005, p 266) I argue that Socrates’ discussion of misology in the “digression” from 88c-91c is central to understanding the context and spirit in which to receive the arguments for the immortality of the soul. Contrast this stance to the practice of R. E. Allen, who, in his re-print of the *Phaedo* in *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle* chose to excise this part of the text – presumably to return the ‘more important’ arguments for the immortality of the soul.

First, I will discuss the danger that arises from *trusting* in λόγοι in the wrong way as discussed at 89dff. Then, I will discuss the important danger of *emotion* to the proper relation to λόγος. Specifically, I will show that the dialogue warns us against the danger of attachment to traditional λόγοι which have a “wondrous” hold on us – which can lead to violent and aggressive reactions when these “wind-eggs” are taken away from us. My analysis will show that seeking to overcome the internal disharmony of cognitive dissonance is essential to philosophical παιδεία. Further, I will show that *fear* of death, and *temptation* – specifically, the temptation to seduce or dominate others by seeking “that what they themselves put forward should seem to be the case to those present” (91a) – pose a serious threat to attending “to the way it is with the things the argument is about.” (91a) Avoiding these dangers will prove essential to the *ethical* work of examining traditional λόγοι, and of developing a unified, harmonious self by turning to the λόγοι through which we gather beings into intelligible unities. The process of harmonizing the λόγοι which guide and govern our lives cannot begin if we are caught by this most terrible Minotaur.

§ 1. Πίστις and Παιδεία

We will begin our inquiry into how Socrates rescues his friends by looking at Phaedo’s description of the experience which provoked Socrates to speak about misology. At 88c, Phaedo finds himself to be sharing in the emotions of his friends.⁷¹

⁷¹ Cf *Gorgias* 481c-d.

They are so affected by Simmias and Cebes' attacks on Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul that they later commented to one another how they felt at that moment in the conversation. Phaedo says that they were all persuaded (πεπεισμένους) by Socrates' earlier λόγος concerning the immortality of the soul (ibid). After hearing the λόγοι of Simmias, presenting the soul as a harmony, and of Cebes, presenting the analogy of the cloak maker, they felt that they had been “thrown down” (καταβαλεῖν) into confusion (ἀναταράξαι) and distrust (ἀπιστία) (ibid.).⁷² In this confusion, they found themselves distrustful not only of the argument Socrates had presented, but of “what would be said later on.” Phaedo worries: “Who knows, we might be worthless judges, or these matters themselves might be beyond trust (τὰ πράγματα αὐτὰ ἄπιστα ἦ)!” (88c)

I will note several issues regarding this initial expression of the danger of the mistrust of arguments. First, the reader should attend to the use of the word “trust” (πίστις) in order to develop an understanding of what is at stake in this account of the danger of misology. It is important to keep in mind the etymological connection between πίστις and πείθω (persuasion), which is also used in this passage and throughout the dialogue. In the Republic, Socrates says that what he at first placed his trust in, he later

⁷² It is interesting to note that the term translated as “confusion” in this passage – ἀναταράξαι – is formed as the negation of ἀταραξία: A calm, centered and peaceful state of mind. Αταραξία was considered by some Hellenistic philosophers – notably the Epicureans – to be the central virtue of the philosophical life. Thus, being pulled between one's rational beliefs and social conditioning is said here to be an obstacle to this central virtue. It is in some sense in *overcoming* the sort of cognitive dissonance which caused Phaedo and Echecrates to experience ἀναταράξαι that we will find peace of mind.

came to distrust; he describes philosophical education as compelling the soul to develop from πίστις in things to higher modes of belief in what is truly real (Book 6, 509cff.).⁷³

To see what is at stake here, regarding the *Phaedo* as well as the *Republic*, it is important to develop an understanding of what Socrates is referring to when he speaks of *time* in this passage – and particularly, how what he placed his trust in changed over time. He is not simply referring to the passage of time *simpliciter*, but is describing the process of the education of his soul in philosophy; Socrates is speaking of παιδεία. As such, an understanding of how the *Phaedo* is a document concerning the education of the soul is necessary to clarify the way this education and turning of the soul takes place.

1.1 Παιδεία and the Defense of the Life of Philosophy

The *Phaedo* is, among many other things, a defense of the life of philosophy.⁷⁴ Socrates failed, in a sense, to defend his choice of life to the Athenian “judges.”⁷⁵ Plato undertakes a defense of this life in writing the *Phaedo* (there is an important sense in which each of the dialogues takes up this challenge in various forms). This fact is evoked

⁷³ In the *Republic*, at 523aff, Socrates says that one of the important steps in this development is the “summoning of the intellect (διάνοια).” The example he uses, of the finger that is ‘both big and little,’ mirrors the example of Simmias as both big and little at *Phaedo* at 102bff. Cf Byrd 2007, p 145.

⁷⁴ Cf Davis 1980: “Throughout the *Phaedo* Socrates’ apparent praise of death is, beneath it all, a praise of a certain kind of life. In that sense he is competing with the poets.” (p 567) Ferit Guven argues that there is a “constantly renewed desire” to define the work of philosophy in the dialogues, and specifically to delimit it from sophistry and rhetoric. He says that the *Phaedo* (and *Phaedrus*) are notable examples of dialogues where the philosophical activity *is* the attempt to define philosophy. He even suggests that one might “suspect that this attempt to delimit philosophy as a discourse is itself what philosophizing is.” (2005, p 13) I will argue that, while he is right to suggest that such delimiting is necessary, the more important task of the philosopher can be discerned when we attend to the philosophical *life*, and not philosophical “discourse,” and that therein lies the cardinal distinction between philosophy and sophistry.

⁷⁵ Although Socrates notably refrains from calling the members of the jury who voted to convict him “judges.” Cf White 1989, p 41

at many places in the dialogue where juridical language is used to describe Socrates' defense of the life of philosophy, here presented as the "practice of death."⁷⁶

This juridical language appears most notably at 63b. After putting his feet down on the earth, Socrates praises Cebes for his willingness to engage in argument, and his habitual unwillingness "to be persuaded (πείθεσθαι) right off by what anybody says." (63a) Simmias and Cebes then charge Socrates with abandoning them. Arguing for the "practice of death," Socrates says: "What you're both saying is that I should make my defense against these charges, just as in the law court." (ibid.) He continues, "I'd better try to give a more persuasive defense before you than I did before my judges." (ibid.) The way in which this defense of the practice of death is, in fact, a defense of the life of philosophy is central to understanding the importance of self-knowledge and the development of a harmonious condition of the soul to the philosophical life as presented in the dialogues.

In order to understand how the *Phaedo* presents the life of the philosopher, and how the work of the philosopher is to be distinguished from that of the sophist or the rhetorician, it is important to understand how the philosopher stands with respect to *death*. At 61b-c, Socrates expresses that anyone who is truly a philosopher should be willing to follow Socrates into death. He says that if Evenus is a philosopher he should do as anyone "who takes a worthy part in this business" of philosophy should do, and take

⁷⁶ μελέτη θάνατος – It will have to wait until we make more progress concerning the life of philosophy before I can explicate what I take the practice of death to mean. For now, let it be noted that this phrase indicates that the life of the philosopher cannot deny or obscure the immanence of death. Just as Socrates faces death on the day of this conversation, all philosophers live in the awareness that death can approach at any moment.

Socrates' advice – which is, *apparently* to follow Socrates into death (61c).⁷⁷ That is, the *true* philosopher is one who will face death as Socrates does; we can know the philosopher from the sophist, the believer from the one who spouts eloquent and empty phrases, by their willingness to die for their ideals. It is after giving this strange advice that Socrates put his feet down on the earth, and remained sitting in that posture for the rest of the dialogue (61d).

This is not the only connection between awareness of death and the παιδεία that the soul of the philosopher undergoes – a παιδεία lacking in the sophist, the ἀντιλογικός, and the misologist. The παιδεία indicated by the progress from youth to maturity is indicated in several places in the dialogue. At the opening of the dialogue, as we saw in the last chapter, we are asked to consider Phaedo's development from being a youth – in arguments as in age – to the time when he recounts his tale. Of course, at the close of the dialogue, the image of the dying Socrates demands that we consider our own mortality, and thus the significance of the fact that we age, and that our life is finite, as well as changing and developing. At the structural center of the dialogue we find the passage we are considering, concerning misology.⁷⁸ In that passage, the language Socrates uses to describe the process of development concerning our stance toward λόγοι (and toward other people) evokes the passage of time and the importance of accounting for human development. He says we come to be misanthropic over a period of time, after

⁷⁷ We will see, however, in our discussion of the passage at 64bff, that it is not yet clear what “sort of death” (οἴου θανάτου) the philosopher should seek, and is “worthy” (ἄξιό) of.

⁷⁸ For other examples of misology in the dialogues, see the *Laches* 188c, and *Republic* 411d. In the *Republic*, misology results from the soul becoming “savage,” and never using persuasion. The love of learning in the soul becomes small and weak, and so we turn to forcing others to think the way we want them to think. On the *Laches*, see Gotshalk 2002, p 4ff. Laches says that he can be considered to be a misologist, since he hates to hear an argument from someone whose λόγος does not accord with his ἔργα. (188c)

dealing with untrustworthy people “many times” (89d). We are all familiar with how in youth it is not uncommon to tend toward seeing the good in people and trusting in a handshake; as we get older, we become jaded, assume the worst, and make sure to get *everything* in writing. It is a similar *process* with misogyny, and Socrates speaks of the danger to those who have “spent their days in debate arguments (περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες)” (90c). That is, Socrates warns that the way we ‘wear away’ (διατρίβω) time has an enormous effect on our development, and on the kind of people we become. He goes on to warn that those who spend their time with the ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους will “finish out the rest of [their] life hating and reviling λόγοι,” (90d)⁷⁹ which once again reminds us of the passing of our lives. Finally, at what I take to be the philosophical center of the dialogue, we find the second sailing passage coming at the end of Socrates giving an autobiography in which he recounts his own philosophical development.⁸⁰

The *Phaedo*, then, is a text which demands that we take into account the fact that we age, the fact that our stance toward the world, toward each other, and toward λόγοι

⁷⁹ Note that at *Sophist* 225b, the ἀντιλογικοὺς is defined as a species of argument which is “chopped up into questions and answers.” At *Phaedrus* 261d, Plato uses this word to include public debate, including that in the courts, such as the one in depicted in the *Apology*, where Socrates begins by saying that he will *not* speak in the “usual manner” for the court. There, it is also used to include the arguments of Zeno. Cf Robinson: by ἀντιλογικοὺς Plato indicates “a tendency to contradict, to maintain aggressively whatever position is opposite to that of one’s interlocutor.” (1953, p 89) Thus, spending time oriented toward “what is said,” in order to defeat others in an eristic battle designed to create the appearance of wisdom in public, and not toward “the way it is with the things the argument is about,” can harm our philosophical education and even habituate us to believe that the only thing λόγος can accomplish is defeating others. On the relevance of Socrates’ call for a turn away from debating λόγοι and toward truth in the context of Athens at the time, see Hackforth 1955, p 110.

⁸⁰ On the importance of this autobiography as looking into his *past* on the day of his death, Sallis says: “It is as though, confronted by his own death, Socrates looks into himself, back into his own past. . .” (1996, p 39) Sallis notes that the issue of philosophical “growth,” which reveals philosophy to be a process, a *life*, is raised in this passage: “Socrates’ own growth consisted in his coming to see that the common opinions regarding growth are questionable.” (ibid.)

changes and develops over time, and the fact that we will all die. The swans “sing the most and the most beautifully when they sense that they must die (οἱ ἐπειδὴν αἰσθωνται ὅτι δεῖ αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν).” (84e-85a) The ‘perception’ that death is inevitable is essential to our most beautiful speeches. The life of the philosopher, then, will be that life which does not obscure or deny this fact. That is to say, the life of the philosopher will understand itself to be a *life* – not a theory, not a doctrine, but a growing, developing, inconstant human life.

1.2 Trust in Λόγοι, and the Technology of Speech

The life of philosophy, marked by the second sailing as an inquiry into λόγοι, is, in an important sense, a life which progresses from *trust* in “things” to *trust* in λόγοι. Of course, Socrates’ autobiography of his own παιδεία culminates in a turn to λόγοι. While it remains unclear what trust in λόγοι might mean, we note here Socrates’ insistence that a mistrust of λόγος would be a crippling impediment to the life of philosophy. If Socrates is unable to save Phaedo and his companions from this Minotaur, they will be cut off from what Socrates takes to be the best life. It is, in some sense, in respect to λόγος that the philosophical life progresses from youth to maturity. This progress – this παιδεία and turning of the soul – is marked by our stance toward λόγοι relating to the issues of trust (πίστις) and persuasion (πείθω).

It also becomes clear why the reader needs to beware of thinking in translation, and must stay close to the original Greek. To translate λόγος as “argument,” and thus *misology* as “hatred of arguments” is to reduce this point to the true, but misleadingly

simple statement: “Hatred of argument is damaging to philosophy.” This is misleading because, while true, this interpretation conceals the importance of λόγος to the *life* of philosophy. The danger of misology is not simply that we do not trust arguments to give us the “truth” of the external world; rather, the situation of dwelling with λόγος has far deeper implications for ethical living than one might expect if one understands λόγος simply in terms of the arguments we consciously accept or deny concerning ethics.

In fact, I will argue that attending to the ethical dimensions of life is based in a certain stance *toward λόγος itself*⁸¹; i.e. λόγος is not reducible to being merely the means by which we come to belief about ethical demands. Λόγος is not a set of arguments about what is real or how we should behave, and misology is more than being mistrustful of these arguments. Rather than being merely a *means* to the end of proper belief, λόγος is instead the logic of the space in which reality appears to us as something “in” which we are called to act. We will see that it is the *activity of the soul* to determine, “through” the senses – that is, through bodily engagement with the world – the “being and benefit” (οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν) of what is encountered, as it is put in the *Theaetetus* (186c).⁸² It is in accord with λόγος that the soul gathers beings into unities, gathering them into their being as the beings they are, and determines the “benefit” of each one – that is, what should be pursued, and what avoided. Thus, translating λόγος as “argument” closes off the question of this dissertation before it can begin, and does not allow us to understand how hatred of λόγοι could be the worst evil that one could undergo,

⁸¹ This is the thrust of Francisco Gonzalez’ argument in his discussion of the *Meno* in *Dialectic and Dialogue*. He says that Socrates, in refuting Meno’s definitions of knowledge, has the goal of getting “Meno genuinely to *inquire* for the first time in his life, *not because inquiry is a means to an adequate definition of virtue, but because inquiry is itself an essential part of being virtuous.*” (1998, p 163)

⁸² This will be discussed in Chapter 4 and in the subsequent Chapters.

according to Socrates. In the next chapters, I will show that this danger is figured in the dialogue in part by the way Socrates' interlocutors take, or mistake, his λόγοι.

“Πίστις” is said by Socrates to be at the heart of the trouble which leads to misology. Like misanthropy, misology is described repeatedly as a πάθε – i.e. an “experience” in which the person undergoing the “experience” is largely passive⁸³; this πάθε is, however, the result of an active stance the person takes toward λόγοι. This stance is one of excessive *trust*. At 89 c-e, Socrates says, “Misology and misanthropy come about in the same way. For misanthropy comes about from artlessly (ἄνευ τέχνης) trusting someone to excess, and believing that human being to be in everyway true and sound and trustworthy (πιστόν), and a little later discovering that this person is untrustworthy (ἄπιστον) – and then having this experience again with another.” When this process is repeated, Socrates says, “especially at the hands of those he might regard as his most intimate (οἰκειοτάτους) friends and comrades,” people often end up distrusting everyone, or thinking there is nothing “sound” (ὑγιές) in anyone. (ibid.)⁸⁴

⁸³ Socrates says we must be on our guard not to “experience this experience” (τι πάθος μὴ πάθωμεν) at 89c.

⁸⁴ It is interesting to note here the connection between knowing and trusting a person and knowing and trusting a λόγος. At the opening of the dialogue, the word “αὐτός,” which is how Plato usually refers to the “forms,” (e.g. beauty *itself*) is used to refer to Phaedo *himself*. Something is at play here indicating a connection between the experience of knowing, encountering, or being involved with a person and the experience of knowing, encountering, or being involved with an εἶδος or a λόγος. This point is also connected to Plato's use of the word ὑγιές, which can refer to a sound and healthy body, or a logically sound argument; as such, I note, without being able to follow this observation out explicitly, that this implies a sense in which the soundness of a λόγος is like a healthy body, and thus, a sense in which being persuaded of and trusting an unsound λόγος is like a disease.

Socrates uses the word τέχνη to describe the stance toward λόγος and toward people. He implies that there is in some sense a τέχνη of judging people which would demand measured trust; thus, there would perhaps analogously be a τέχνη of λόγος itself that would dictate the proper stance, not toward any specific argument, but rather toward λόγοι in general – this, again, in terms of trust and persuasion. This dissertation is working toward an account of how a general stance toward λόγοι is being presented in the *Phaedo*. It would seem that λόγος itself might be a form of τέχνη which we must *turn to* in order to become aware of the unity and the *good* of beings (99a – 100b); thus, λόγος is in some sense a τέχνη which mediates our experience of the world, and it is thus somehow through this τέχνη that we determine the “being and benefit” of the beings we encounter. *Thus the world we inhabit would in some sense be a product of the technology of λόγος* – a technological world manufactured in accord with the λόγοι which have a “wondrous” hold on us.

Socrates *asks* if it would be shameful (αἰσχρόν) to attempt to deal with human beings without this “τέχνη” (89e). Phaedo, a youth in arguments and in dealing with people, does not get a chance to answer. The reader is thus left to follow out the question: Is it shameful to attempt to deal with people without a τέχνη of human affairs? Is it, in fact, even *possible* to avoid dealing with people until we acquire this τέχνη? How can we acquire this τέχνη without dealing with people? How could it be shameful to deal with people with whatever, however untechnical, means we have at our disposal if we have no choice but to be *always already* thrown into a life with other people?

A passage from the *Theaetetus* is useful here: In the midst of a discussion with Theaetetus examining Theaetetus' conceptions of knowledge, Socrates breaks off and says they are being "shameless" (ἀναίσχυντος). Throughout a discussion trying to define what "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη) means they have been using the word "know," "recognize" (γινώσκω), and others as if they knew what they meant. Theaetetus is a bit exasperated by this, saying "In what way (τρόπος) will we converse (διαλέξῃ) if we avoid [such words]?" (196d) Socrates says that there is no other way, since "I am who I am." (197a)⁸⁵

We are always already underway in dealing with people, and involved in human affairs; we are always already underway in λόγος.⁸⁶ We do not have the luxury of a rehearsal for life. We are thrown into a fully articulated human situation, a culture, a language, and a family, whose logic we are forced to learn how to navigate even as we are underway navigating it.

One particular form of this navigation is the skill of finding safe passage between the Scylla of excessive trust and the Charybdis of excessive distrust. We might be inclined, by temperament as well as by training and enculturation, to overly trust people; analogously, we can trust too readily in the λόγοι we tell and have been told about the meanings that form the content of our human situation. This most readily takes the form

⁸⁵ To make even clearer the connection to the passage of the *Phaedo* we are concerned with here, immediately after saying this – that he proceeds as he does since he is who he is – Socrates contrasts himself with the ἀντιλογικός, "the debaters." In the *Phaedo* at 90b-c, Socrates says that it is the ἀντιλογικός who have become misologists and find nothing sound in any λόγος.

⁸⁶ "The *Phaedo* begins in error because there is no other place to begin. Put differently, we do not ever begin; we rather discover that we have already begun. . . Misology and misanthropy are the same because to be an *anthropos* is already to be immersed in *logos*. Of course that does not mean that we are born with *logos*. Rather, when learning to speak it is unthinkable that we could begin by learning what it means to speak. We must begin in ignorance of what we are doing. Our first speech cannot be about speech; it must therefore be self-forgetful. Only when we have spoken do we have anything to say about speech." (Davis 1980, p 574)

of shared cultural beliefs, e.g. religion, what it means to “be a man,” what it means to be beautiful, the dogmas of patriotism, etc.⁸⁷ The belief in death as separation of the soul from the body – and thus the underlying assumption that a person is the combination of soul and body – is one such belief that is at play in the *Phaedo*, along with traditional concepts of Hades and the afterlife as presence in a τόπος, and the soul as a “harmony,” etc. I will show how attachment to such λόγοι – and the dangerous attempts by philosophers to rid people of these traditional dogmas – give rise to powerful *emotional* responses which speak to the multiplicity and cognitive dissonance in the soul. The dialogues provide a myriad of examples of how people can become upset, and even violent, when their ignorance is revealed to them; Socrates’ conversation on the day of his execution makes this danger very real for readers of the *Phaedo*.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates shows that these inherited, traditional beliefs have a *genealogy*; Theaetetus’ initial claim that knowledge is perception is revealed as the offspring of Protagoras – Protagoras is the “father” who has “impregnated” Theaetetus with this idea.⁸⁸ This process of uncovering the histories of our concepts has a liberating effect; when we see that these conceptions do not fall from heaven – are not handed down by the gods, so to speak – we begin to see them as *questionable*, and are driven to question them. Seeing that they are contingent on specific histories and specific traditions

⁸⁷ We saw above how the political turmoil in Athens during Plato’s political education called all of these values into question, and helped provide the impetus to his call to *self-examination*. One dimension of this examination is, of course, the process by which we become aware of our *ignorance*. This ignorance, however, comes in the form of δόξα: “Ignorance is not simply emptiness; a human soul is never simply empty. Ignorance rather manifests itself in opinion, appearance, *doxa*. It is in awareness of our opinions as opinions that we become aware of the power of a soul, that we become self-aware.” (Davis 1980, p 574, emphasis added)

⁸⁸ cf. *Greater Alcibiades* esp. 109-113ff, where Socrates implicitly names Homer as the father of young Alcibiades’ conception of justice, through the tutelage of the οἱ πολλοί.

frees us to imagine things otherwise. Only when we recognize them as contingent upon a particular tradition can we seek to understand the reasons behind these beliefs such that we can form the kind of opinion that comes with knowledge, rather than the kind of *persuasion* that happens without knowledge.⁸⁹ It is obviously one of the primary purposes of Socratic *elenchos* to shake the foundations of these traditions. *It is precisely because of the threat this activity poses to the origin myths of the community that Socrates finds himself faced with execution.*

Much of the work Socrates does in the *Phaedo* is directed toward this kind of archaeology. As demonstrated later in this dissertation, Socrates is *explicitly* calling us to this work in his discussion of the ‘method of hypothesis’ which he is driven to adopt after his second sailing. There, at 101d-e, Socrates makes it explicit that this method is designed to allow the dialectician to inquire into the consequences *and the presuppositions* of any λόγος. We have to begin from where we are because we are who we are; this starting place does *not* mean, however, that our cultural presuppositions are unalterably fixed. We do have the capacity to develop a vantage-point from which to draw these assumptions into the light and question them. This vantage-point is only possible if we allow ourselves to ‘own’ these traditions, and admit to our own limitations as humans. *From this perspective we recognize that the inquiry into our cultures’ presuppositions is essentially self inquiry.*

I will argue that examining the values that have, as Echechrates says at 88d, a “wondrous” hold on us is essential to the process of developing *harmony* in the self. I will show that the process of examination that Socrates describes as his “second sailing”

⁸⁹ cf *Gorgias* 454c-455a

has the *ethical* importance of being the only possibility for developing a harmonious mode of living in which we are no longer acting blindly out of the values of our tradition; it is only once we have freed ourselves of the chains of this tradition and turned toward the light, as it were, that we can begin to live out of a set of values which we *consciously* and *rationally* adhere to. However, it will also appear that the limitations of being a finite, embodied human, born into a specific socio-political context, reveal the process of developing this self-awareness and self-possession to be, unfortunately, *not* subject to total completion.

Gnothi seauton, ‘know thyself,’ is commonly taken to mean “know your limitations; know that you are mortal.” In knowing ourselves to be mortal, limited beings, we come to realize, in addition to the fact that we *will* all die, that we are not the authors of our own existence. We do not lay the ground for our being, but are thrown into the human situation. One form in which this makes itself apparent is through the λόγοι that shape and form the basis of a specific culture. Excessive *distrust* of these λόγοι would be marked by an attempt to flee this tradition too readily and too easily. Just as we might choose to avoid human contact out of distrust, we quickly find that the basis of our lives just *is* this involvement.⁹⁰ Such avoidance is impossible because we are who we are.

In order to understand the problems of excessive distrust as figured in the dialogue, a return to Phaedo’s expression of his experience in the conversation which was pushing him toward misology is in order.

⁹⁰ We see, for example, Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias* suffering from a distrust of λόγοι; they both attempt to cast off the traditions of their culture, and think of themselves as self-sufficient. We can find in Socrates’ refutations of both of them the seeds for a conception of human life as essentially interpersonal – i.e. for man as the “political animal.” For example, Socrates is able to show Thrasymachus that even if he wants to be a tyrant he will need other people.

§ 2 Distrust, Dogma, and Emotion

We will now return to Phaedo and Echecrates's accounts of the πάθος they underwent upon hearing Simmias and Cebes' objections. I will argue that a stance toward the arguments, and thus toward argument in general, is revealed in these comments. It will become clear that an understanding of *emotion* plays a critical role in accounting for how we are to stand with regard to λόγος if we are to avoid the minotaur of misology.

2.1 Fear and Persuasion

Phaedo says that he and his friends were 'thrown down' upon hearing Simmias and Cebes' objections because they were so "powerfully persuaded by the previous λόγος." (88c) We must note a very puzzling fact about Phaedo's response here: he refers to Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul in the *singular* (as does Echecrates in his response at 88d); he is, then, either ignoring the fact that Socrates has made three distinct arguments, or he is only dealing with the last argument concerning the similarity of the soul to divine incomposite eternal Being.⁹¹

⁹¹ The first argument, on the generation from opposites, spanning 70c-72d, the second, the argument form recollection, from 72d-76e, and the third from 78b-84c. At 77c-d Socrates refers to the first two arguments as distinct before proceeding to the third.

The first possibility – i.e. that Phaedo is treating all three of Socrates’ arguments as one argument – raises the question: Why would he take them as a single argument? There is a common problem with thinking in terms of simple binaries; in this way of thinking, all arguments for one position form a single argument, and all arguments against that position are arguments for the “opposite” position. This naïve attitude toward λόγοι leads one to dismiss as ridiculous all arguments against a position one holds to be true. In other words, when λόγοι are thought of in this way, there could never be a good, sound argument for the wrong position. Such people often revel in straw-man arguments and in the worst examples of arguments for the position they oppose. As such, Phaedo and Echecrates might be taking all of Socrates’ arguments together, as if they were necessary parts of a larger, unitary λόγος about the soul which reveals it as immortal.

It is, however, more likely that what is indicated by Phaedo and Echecrates’ referring to the arguments for the immortality of the soul in the singular is that they have chosen, consciously or not, to ignore the first argument. We will explore the question of *why* they ignore it in order to better understand the dangers of misology – specifically, in how it can lead to excessive distrust in λόγοι.

At 77c, Socrates chides Simmias and Cebes for forgetting that their first argument had proven that the soul continues to exist after death, just as the argument from recollection proves that the soul existed before birth. It seems that they were unmoved by this first argument, and understanding why they are not persuaded might help explain why Phaedo and Echecrates have chosen to ignore it as well.

Simmiias and Cebes have just said, at 77a-c, that while they are persuaded by the argument from recollection that the soul exists *before* birth, they are not convinced that it will continue to exist *after* death. This is a peculiar position to take. They have been ‘convinced’ of the separation of soul and body, and they admit that the soul can exist without the body, specifically, prior to the body’s existence; strangely, however, this belief is not enough to convince them that the soul may continue to exist *after* death. Why is this?

Socrates immediately identifies the problem: *Fear*. Socrates says they “have the fear of children – that in truth the wind will blow the soul away and scatter her in all directions as she departs from the body, especially whenever somebody happens to die, not in a calm, but in some great gust of wind.” (77d-e) In the face of this visceral fear, the abstract argument from opposites holds no sway. It is one thing to be persuaded of the abstract proposition that the soul has a being and an existence separate from the physical body; it is another matter entirely to face death calmly. Thus, the *Phaedo* warns that we must be on our guard against the dangers of “taking refuge in λόγοι,” as Aristotle cautions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, at 1105b12.

2.2 Persuasion, Refutation, and Emotion

Considering that Simmiias and Cebes already accept that the soul can exist separately from the body, it must be their fear of death that prevents them from accepting the idea that the soul can ‘survive’ death. In order to understand how their emotions affect their conclusions concerning the *arguments* for the immortality of the soul, we

must examine *why* they hold these beliefs; specifically, it is relevant to the discussion to discover if they have been convinced by rational argument or if, rather, they believe unquestioningly as a matter of dogma. This will lead us to examine *how* they hold those beliefs, and thus how they stand with regard to the logical consequences of their beliefs. That is, if they are rationally convinced of an argument, we might find them to be more willing to accept the logical consequences of their belief; if, on the other hand, their belief is a matter of unquestioning acceptance, they are more likely to be unaware, and less immediately accepting, of those consequences.⁹²

Often, people are happy to be persuaded of a position without wanting to accept many of the consequences of that position; a variety of forms of willful ignorance arise to cope with this situation. Later in the dialogue, Socrates pushes Simmias and Cebes toward this realization in his discussion of the method of hypothesis. There, he calls for the work of examining, clarifying, and affirming the “propositions” that are harmonious with one’s hypotheses. In understanding Simmias, Cebes, Phaedo, and Echekrates’ specific reactions to Socrates’ arguments – specifically, in seeing how they do *not* understand or accept the consequences of the λόγοι which they put forward – we come to a clearer understanding of the dangers of misology. Specifically, we find these characters do not suffer from *complete* misology; rather, they are in an intermediate stage where an “untechnical” stance toward λόγοι allows trust to be placed in arguments in the wrong way, thus placing them in danger, in Socrates’ estimation.

⁹² Recognizing this fact about how we hold to arguments is much of the point of Socrates’ first refutation of Simmias, at 92a-93a – which I will show in Chapter 6.

How is it that Simmias and Cebes can be persuaded of the argument from recollection and not believe that the soul will continue to exist after death? How is Simmias able to profess complete agreement with the argument from recollection, assume that this argument *proves* the pre-existence of the soul, and yet put forward the argument that the soul arises from the harmonious interaction of the parts of the physical body (91eff)? Plato is drawing our attention to the way these characters stand with regard to their λόγοι.

At 77c, Socrates says that his argument for the immortality of the soul is complete if they “put together” (συνθεῖναι) the argument from recollection with the one that claims that “Every living thing comes to be from what is dead.” (77c-d) This is a strange claim: If the argument from opposites is true, it proves that the living come from the dead, and that the dead come from the living in an endless cycle; why, then, must it be “put together” with the argument from recollection?⁹³ What would it mean to “put together” these two arguments?⁹⁴ What kind of a picture of human persuasion is being called upon here, where two completely distinct arguments are ‘added together’ to push a person toward conviction? If the first argument is rationally convincing, there is no need for the addition of the other argument; if it is not convincing, what good is the addition of a better, more convincing argument? If I offer a bad argument for a true proposition, can I

⁹³ Cf Burger, p 82-84.

⁹⁴ On this point, see also Gadamer, 1980, p 26: “As if these two proofs could actually compliment each other! For certainly it cannot be overlooked that “soul” in the one means something quite different from “soul” in the other. The Pythagoreans do not think at all in terms of the Socratic “soul” which knows itself.” On the (unasked) question of the nature of the soul in these arguments, cf Davis 1980 “[the argument from opposites] is not sufficiently aware of its own origins, or, this argument which purports to show the immortality of the soul fails to ask the crucial question, “What is soul?” Socrates' first argument, like his first sailing, is pre-Socratic.” (p 568)

then ‘put it together’ with a good argument? Does the good argument, in showing the proposition to be true, lend credence to the bad argument?

It seems that Simmias and Cebes remain unconvinced by the argument from opposites. Perhaps it is in an attempt to not upset Socrates on the day of his death, as Socrates remarks⁹⁵, that they do not express their objections to it. In any case, their failing to attack the logic of the argument from opposites directs the course of the dialogue. The conversation looks very different than it would have had it been an analysis of the type outlined later in the dialogue in the ‘method of hypothesis’ – that is, it would have included an analysis of the conclusions and presuppositions of this first argument. Many commentators have noted the problems with these presuppositions implicit in the argument from opposites (which I will discuss in the next chapter) and thus have carried out the discourse as it might have proceeded had Simmias and Cebes expressed their discontent with the argument more directly. Once again, the reader of the Platonic text must *participate* in the dialogue by taking up the mantle and engaging in the *philosophical* work of following out the dropped threads of the conversation – just as we must do in the face of the explicit aporias of many of the dialogues. That is, the reader is guided to pursue the direction the dialogue would have taken if, instead of offering arguments for the contrary position, the interlocutors had examined and attacked the logic of the argument that they found unpersuasive.

These are two different forms of refutation: To present opposing arguments, on the one hand, and to attack the reasoning behind the claim, on the other. I will argue in

⁹⁵ 84eff. Not wanting to upset people around us, especially our teachers or parents, is one form in which emotion can affect the arguments we make and find persuasive. Our political context can also provide a context in which we are afraid to speak. In his speech at 84e, Socrates reminds us of this context when he assures Simmias and Cebes that they need not fear upsetting him, that they can say whatever they want, “as long as the Athenian Eleven allow it.” (85b)

the discussion of the argument from opposites that there is much to be learned from a critical analysis of the particular conception of the self, the soul, and human existence implied in this argument; thus, the interlocutors could have learned a great deal by attending to the reasoning behind the argument rather than merely avoiding it by restating their belief in the opposite position.

Instead of this form of refutation, Simmias and Cebes simply offer λόγοι which present *images* of the soul which describe it as mortal, and as dying with body (I will discuss the specific structure of these arguments in later chapters). It is important to understand how these arguments, and the way they are taken up by the characters in the dialogue, open up the danger of misogyny. Specifically, Phaedo and Echechrates express that they felt the presence of this danger as result of the way the arguments affected them – “throwing them down” from their confidence and persuasion. What gave them this experience was *not* a detailed attack or analysis of Socrates’ arguments; rather, it was the experience of hearing *other* arguments which, as Echechrates states, have a wonderful (θαυμαστῶς) hold on them.

The discovery of *their own inner conflict* regarding their conviction about these arguments is, clearly, very unsettling. The interlocutors are beginning to become aware of their own cognitive dissonance, of their internal multiplicity, and of the disharmonious nature of their souls.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ I once heard a feminist film maker speak about an experience she had. She was on a plane, and the captain came over the intercom, and it was a woman’s voice. The film maker said that, for just a moment, she thought, “Oh no, can *she*, a *female* pilot, fly this thing?” Of course she was appalled at herself, rationally realizing the possession of a Y chromosome is not a pre-requisite for skilled flying. However, the experience, as she said, made her wonder if feminist discourse had the power to root-out these deeply-ingrained cultural biases. She was flirting with misogyny.

This experience is essential to the development of harmonious, philosophical mode of life; i.e. an understanding and awareness of internal conflicts is essential to philosophical παιδεία and the turning of the soul toward self-knowledge. However, this unsettling experience can also be very dangerous, because it can lead to a kind of apathy with regard to arguments – that is, based on this experience, some audiences may come to feel that equally good arguments may be made for either side of any given proposition, and thus, that there is no hope of discovering truth in λόγος.⁹⁷ In other words, Socratic elenchos can be described as dangerous to the project of philosophy because it creates an experience of confusion in people which can stun them into radical doubt in the power of λόγος.

In the *Meno*, Meno describes Socrates as the Torpedo fish; in so doing, he reveals that he feels paralyzed by Socrates' arguments. This image stands in stark contrast to Socrates' description of himself in the *Apology* as the *gadfly*, constantly keeping people moving and thinking. On the one hand we have an image of paralysis and apathy; on the other, we have the image of being spurred into action. The unpleasant experience that Phaedo and the others undergo has a similar structure, balanced between two possibilities: On one hand, they can begin questioning into the presuppositions of the arguments with renewed vigor; on the other hand, they might also sink into the apathetic stance that equally good arguments may be given for any position, the weaker argument can be made stronger, and, in the end, man is the measure of all things. This danger is realized, Socrates says, when people place trust in arguments in the wrong way. We will

⁹⁷ We might think of Kant's antinomies here; see also 85c, where Simmias says "It seems to me, Socrates, as perhaps it does to you too, that to know anything sure about such matters in our life now is either something impossible or something altogether hard . . ."

now turn to an examination of how the danger of cognitive dissonance can be understood with regard to the “wondrous hold” that traditional, inherited λόγοι have on us.⁹⁸

2.3 The “Wondrous Hold” of Traditional Λόγοι

Echecrates reveals that the source of the unsettling experience he and Phaedo underwent upon hearing the objections is the “wondrous” power over him which the argument that the soul is a harmony holds, and *has always held*. He says, “and your speaking of it reminded me, as it were, that I myself had believed this before (προυδέδοκτο).” (88d, translation altered) Echecrates says that this conversation has been unsettling because it has put the persuasiveness of Socrates’ argument (singular) in conflict with what he ‘has always believed,’ his “pro-doxa” (προδοκέω), his presupposed belief. The first argument, from opposites, does not have this hold on him – or on Simmias and Cebes – because, unlike the image of the soul as a harmony, in its abstraction it does not speak to his dogma, to that which he already, in some way,

⁹⁸ This discussion will help us understand Heidegger’s comments in his lectures on the *Sophist*: “according to its original sense and original facticity, λόγος is not at all disclosing [*aufdeckend*], but is, if one may speak in an extreme way, precisely *concealing* [*verdeckend*]. . . λόγος has the facticity of not allowing themselves to be seen, but producing instead a self-satisfaction in resting content with what ‘one says.’” (p 197, as quoted in Gonzalez 2009, p 8) We will encounter many situations in the dialogue in which the λόγοι of the οἱ πολλοί pose a serious threat to the philosophical life by concealing, as Socrates warns “the way it is with the things the things the argument is about” (91a). On Heidegger’s understanding of λόγος and dialectic in Plato, cf Gonzalez 2009. I agree that language, and the linguistically structured reality enforced by “idle talk” can be limiting and confining. However, I will argue that Plato is correct to find in λόγος and dialectic something more than the philosophical “embarrassment” that caused Heidegger to see Aristotle as a far more advanced thinker. I see in λόγος the resources to lead thinking, *through* and *beyond* the confining stories of our tradition.

believed.⁹⁹ As such, it held no power over his *fear* of death. Echecrates and the others *are* deeply convinced of the argument from recollection; further, Socrates' third argument speaks to their implicit conceptions of the soul as immaterial, invisible, and divine. Thus, these arguments, taken "together," were enough to persuade them to put their childish fear aside, if only for a moment. The recollection argument alone is not sufficient since it speaks, explicitly, only to a belief in a mythical time *before birth*, not after death. However, since the fear itself has not been dealt with directly, as soon as they hear contrary arguments that have an equally "wondrous" hold on them, their fear returns, and they feel confused. They were certain a moment ago; now they have been thrown down, back into their original condition of fear. Even after Socrates' great and convincing arguments cleverly appealing to another set of deeply-held cultural assumptions, they find that they can be thrown down, and they begin to doubt that the soundness they desire can be found in any λόγος. Socrates suggests that they sing charms to the frightened children inside them instead of making arguments.

⁹⁹ We will see how this fact is a serious problem for Simmias and Cebes, who claim to be Pythagoreans, and thus should believe in reincarnation, and find the argument from opposites compelling. Michael Pakaluk gives a substantial interpretation of this argument which concludes that it represents Plato's own Orphic/Pythagorean-influenced belief. However, he bases his argument on the position that Plato had *already* proved the independence of the soul from the body (2003). I will argue, with Burger, that the *Phaedo* is designed to drive the active reader to realize the essentially embodied nature of the soul, and thus the ontological interdependence of body and soul (see Chapter 6 and 7). Burger says: "Socrates brings to light the inseparability of body and psyche; for his opinion of the best, which should represent the intention of psyche in contrast to the mechanical operation of the body, would have been carried not only through the bones and sinews but in their service." (1984, p 143)

Thus, there is a conflict depicted within the characters; they are described as being complex, and possessing conflicting drives.¹⁰⁰ They have their emotions driving them – specifically, their fear of death. They have their cultural presuppositions, which themselves often conflict. They also have those beliefs which they find “rationally” or logically persuasive, but which may or may not hold sway over what they believe. Distrust in λόγος can result when we get a glimpse of this complexity; it can be enormously difficult to puzzle out the complex relations between these “parts” of ourselves, and in exasperation, we may insist that rational argument is not an adequate source for the drive to right action and true belief. According to Socrates, this is the worst thing that can happen to a person.

Previously, we saw that excessive trust can be placed in cultural conceptions – in our pro-doxa. When these beliefs are attacked by something of sufficient persuasive force, we find ourselves in danger of distrusting rational accounts, in general. One situation in which these conflicts are revealed is through Socratic elenchus. Socrates’ interrogation often reveals that one’s cultural presuppositions are complex, and are often

¹⁰⁰ The intellectual conflict within Simmias – specifically, his inclination to accept both the theory of recollection, proving that the soul pre-exists the body, and the theory of the ψυχή as a *harmonia*, which necessitates that the soul could *not* pre-exist the body – is explicitly mentioned by Socrates at 92a. This conflict is the source of a debate between Grube (1980, appendix I) and Hackforth (1955, p 50 n 2). I side with Hackforth, who argues that “Simmias, or at least the Simmias of this dialogue, was a man who could simultaneously hold two beliefs without realizing their inconsistency. . .” In this discussion, I go beyond Hackforth by treating the conflict within Simmias as not exhausted by his holding inconsistent metaphysical claims to be true; I argue that Plato wants us to see this tendency as arising from conflicting drives within Simmias’ soul. This reading will serve as the basis for my re-interpretation of how the soul is, in fact, a harmony; I will argue that the path to virtue is the work of harmonizing both these internal drives and the theoretical claims to which these drives incline us. Thus, I do not see how Hackforth can recognize this conflict within Simmias, and still maintain that in the *Phaedo* “the incomposite nature of the soul is asserted in emphatic terms” (p 11) without recognizing the possible irony of this account of the soul, especially given the tri-partite soul of the *Republic* (which I will discuss in Chapter 6). Hackforth concludes that Plato had not “discovered” the divisions within the soul at the time of writing the *Phaedo*, but his own recognition of conflict within Simmias’ soul seems to belie his claim that the soul is “conceived as wholly good and rational.” (ibid)

in conflict with one another. A central aspect of Socrates' skill is his ability to expose these contradictions; he asks the right questions, at the right time, in order to cause his interlocutor to reveal these inconsistencies. The process of working through these conflicts – the turn toward care of the self and toward developing a philosophically-grounded, harmonious mode of life – is precisely what Socrates calls for in the second sailing. We will see that it is with regard to *λόγοι* that this process of harmonization takes place, and thus why misology is such a danger.

2.4 Intermediate Misology

Socrates warns that trusting in *λόγοι* in the wrong way can lead a person to become a misologist, and to “finish out the rest of his life hating arguments.” Before full-blown misology happens, however, there *must* be intermediate stages of distrust. At these stages, experiencing the ‘betrayal’ of *specific λόγοι* in which we placed excessive trust leads us to distrust not *all* *λόγοι*, but merely those individual *λόγοι*. This situation is analogous to the one described by Socrates, in which, before moving on to full-blown misanthropy, one simply finds that an individual person is not worthy of trust (89d-e).

It is important to understand the dimensions of the intermediate stages between the philosophical way of approaching *λόγος* and misology since this is where the interlocutors – and, indeed, most people most of the time – find themselves. It is in this space that we find people reacting to *λόγοι* which at one time seem utterly convincing and adequate, and at another, seem false or suspect. At this point, they begin to doubt

these arguments, and, “putting them together” with all other arguments for that specific position, begin to excessively distrust that position, and that tradition. Seeing their traditions and pro-doxa intelligently and persuasively challenged, they move from excessive trust to excessive distrust of these inherited λόγοι.

When we consider how certain λόγοι form the very basis of our shared cultural identity, it becomes clearer what Socrates *might* have in mind when he speaks of certain people, and thus by analogy, certain λόγοι, as being our most intimate (οἰκειοτάτους) friends (89e). These arguments are most οἰκειοτάτους because we live in and through these accounts – these values and meanings are our proper home (οἶκος). These are the stories and concepts that structure our very lives, and present to us the landscape of values and reality itself in which we are called to make ethical “decisions” and live responsible lives. When we find these stories untrustworthy, as with the people we take to be οἰκειοτάτους, we do not *immediately* become full-blown misologists. Instead, we find fault with the particular offending λόγος, or person, and reject it as *completely* false and unhealthy. As Socrates says at 89d-e, it is only when this happens again and again that we become misologists or misanthropists. What happens when someone is at an intermediate stage of localized mistrust?

At 90d, Socrates says that the danger of misology comes about when someone, instead of “blaming (αἰτιῶτο) himself or his own artlessness, instead in his distress is only too pleased to push the blame (αἰτίαν) off himself and onto the arguments. . .” We will return to this passage later, but for now simply note that Socrates here indicates that the *cause* (αἰτία) of the experience of distress is a problem of “blame” (αἰτίαν) and

responsibility. Noting in advance that the experience Socrates recounts which drove him to the second sailing “in search of the *αἰτία*” stemmed from a style of inquiry into the *causes* of things, we should take special note of this desire to push the *αἰτία* for the experience of distress onto the *λόγοι*. We note, then, that the problem lies with the way (*τρόπος*) a person stands with regard to *λόγος*.

If we think the cause of the *λόγος* appearing at one time true and at another time false is a problem with the *λόγος*, we think that *it* is unsound. In then rejecting this *λόγος* as the problem, we then feel we are free of the cause of the problem, and often turn our belief toward the perceived *opposite* of that *λόγος*; we then repeat the problem by remaining unchanged, ourselves, in how we *orient ourselves* toward *λόγοι* in general. We can avoid this if we take the *cause* of this changing appearance of truth to be our lack of a *τέχνη* with regard to *λόγος* (a lack that we suggested above is the natural and unavoidable starting place of all thinking – though we have not said whether or not we can expect to *ever* perfectly develop this *τέχνη*). The mistake is thinking that disappointment by a *λόγος* is the fault of the *λόγος*; often, then, the *λόγος* is rejected entirely, and there is a turn to what is perceived to be the *opposite* of every claim associated with this *λόγος*. This is the mark of an unsophisticated understanding of *λόγος*.

Phaedo and Echecrates’ reaction to the *λόγοι* about the immortality of the soul is an example of this lack of sophistication; this reaction places them in an intermediate state between philosophical thinking and misology by causing them to doubt if there is anything sound in arguments. There is a naive conception of arguments which treats them as simply either “for” or “against” a position; thus, they are good or bad arguments based

on whether they argue for what we presuppose to be true, or against it. When Echebrates expresses his experience of distrust, he says, “And now what I really need is some other argument which will, *from a new beginning* as it were, persuade me that when somebody dies, the soul won’t die along with him.” (88d) His self-diagnosis is that he needs yet another account to be given to convince him not to fear death. It is my contention here that this is not at all what Echebrates needs; instead, he should review what has been said and carefully examine precisely what in the arguments has appealed to him, and what did not, and why.

I will argue, in the next chapter, that in this case the dichotomy of “for” or “against” covers the presuppositions of the argument which make it *appear* that only one or the other of the arguments must be true. Often, the two antitheses share common presuppositions, and holding tight to their apparent contradiction does not allow this common basis to appear. We will find, specifically, that attending to Socrates’ presentation of the soul as a divine *substance* in the third argument shares with Simmias’ conception of the soul as a harmony the unquestioned assumption of the quasi-material nature of the soul which Socrates will implicitly challenge in his discussion of harmony. Only when the soul is conceived as a being of substance, and thus as existing in a *topos*, can the dichotomy that confuses Echebrates be an issue. What he needs is *not* another argument for either side of the dichotomy but the gadfly to goad him into questioning the bases of *both* positions; that is, he needs to be driven toward the kind of *self* inquiry which will reveal the cultural presuppositions and dogmas which make the two sides of the dichotomy appear as the only possibilities. This process can begin when he begins to *wonder* at the wondrous hold that these traditional λόγοι have over him.

2.5 Misology and Desire

We have seen that, in addition to the things usually said about misology, there are dimensions of intermediate misology that must be explored. These stages are necessary to understand, not simply what happens when someone is a full-blown misologist, but how misology comes about, and how *trust* is often placed in arguments in the wrong way. We saw above some of the problems with excessive trust and excessive distrust in specific λόγοι. The difference between a misologist and someone who is on the way toward misology is their explicit understanding of the place of λόγος in their belief. That is, the person who is on-the-way to misology – who is excessively trusting or distrusting *specific* λόγοι – is largely being moved by emotional reactions stemming from their “pro-doxa,” from their deeply-ingrained cultural presuppositions. However, they still *believe* themselves to be being moved by rational argument. The full-blown misologist, on the other hand, is aware of this fact; that is, they are also acting out of the basis of their emotions and desires, but they have accepted this as the best, and indeed, the *only* way of dealing in λόγος. For the misologist, λόγοι are tools, not for reaching truth, but for satisfying one’s own desires and manipulating the desires of others. Socrates explicitly points to the temptation to engage in λόγος with the goal, not of truth, but of seduction and domination at 91a. He argues that “altogether uneducated people” (οἱ πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι) are not philosophers – lovers of wisdom – but rather are φιλόνικος – lovers of *victory*. They engage in argument *not* to seek the benefit of being proven *wrong* – and

thus being ‘cured’ of the evil of having false ideas (as Socrates puts it) – but rather to seem wise to others, and thus achieve the power that comes from dominating others in the ἀγών of λόγος.

The dialogues are full of encounters with characters who have been reduced to this state. As a result, it has often been argued that Plato is calling for λόγος to be purified of emotion. Pure rationality would then be the guide of the philosopher unhampered by emotions and desires, and unafraid, he would be ready for death. If the emotions – especially fear and temptation – provide such an obstacle to philosophical inquiry, it does make sense to seek to purify the self of emotion. If the body is the source of these emotions, then it makes sense, further, that this purification should take the form of a turn away from the body and to the pure soul. I will briefly explore how this turn away from emotion and the body has been the traditional account of Platonic philosophy, before giving, in the next chapter, a demonstration that this simple account cannot hold-up to a careful reading of the dialogue. Thus, we will be called to develop a richer conception of the symptomatology and resolution of our inner conflict and cognitive dissonance than such a simple turn can effect – that is, a turn away from the body and toward a traditional account of “Platonic doctrine.”¹⁰¹

In *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, Francis M Cornford states: “the ‘separation’ of the Platonic Forms from any dependence on material things went with the separation of

¹⁰¹ Certainly, a richer account of internal conflict is present in the tri-partite soul in the *Republic*, and in the ample literature on this account. However, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of the *Republic* in Chapter 6, what is needed is an inquiry into the “longer road” (435c) Socrates calls for there, and it is this which I am attempting to carry-out in this dissertation.

the soul which knows them from any dependence on the physical organism.”¹⁰² I agree that it is essential to understand how the χωρισμός operates with regard to the ‘separation’ between the soul and body in order to understand how the “Forms” are to be thought of as transcendent, and vice versa. However, since I take a very different stance on the relation between the soul and the body, as it appears in the *Phaedo*, the χωρισμός becomes a far more complicated issue than Cornford presents. As such, I will show why his account moves too quickly and glosses over many ontological presuppositions when he speaks of “dependence.”

Regardless, Cornford argues that Plato believed both that the soul and the forms were transcendent, and that “the *Phaedo* is designed to plead for both conclusions concurrently.”¹⁰³ He also argues that Socrates intends his speeches to convince his listeners of these two concurrent beliefs:

In his opening discourse it is assumed from the outset that the soul can exist without the body; for ‘to be dead’ is defined as meaning ‘that the body has come to be separate by itself apart from (*choris*) the soul, and the soul separate by itself apart from the body.’ . . . The contrast is not between mind and matter, or even between soul and body as commonly understood. The psyche here is what was later called by Plato and Aristotle the Reason (*nous*), or the spirit, in opposition to the flesh. To the flesh belong the senses, and the bodily appetites and pleasures. The spirit’s proper function is thought or reflection, which lays hold upon unseen reality and is best carried on when the spirit withdraws from the flesh to think by itself, untroubled by the senses. The pursuit of wisdom is a ‘loosing and separation (*chorismos*) of the soul from the body’ – a rehearsal of that separation called death (67d).¹⁰⁴

Reading the dialogue, it is easy to see why Cornford makes this argument, and why most commentators agree with his basic argument.¹⁰⁵ Even excepting the obviously post-

¹⁰² 1957, p 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ 1957, p 4.

¹⁰⁵ For another example, see Vlastos (1991): “. . . *chorizein* . . . generally stands for something far stronger, else Plato would not have used it to express the harshest of dualisms in the credo of his

Christian form this reading often takes, the dialogue presents Socrates explicitly arguing for the body as the source of base appetites and desires which introduce impurities that block the soul from reaching the truth it may achieve when separate itself by itself.

However, it also been noted by many recent commentators that the self-abnegation of all desires, even all bodily desires, cannot be simply taken as the message of the dialogue. For example, as he begins to give his account of the dangers of misology at 88c, Socrates is said to be playing with Phaedo's beautiful hair – something he had a habit of doing, according to Phaedo. As Brann, Kalkavage, and Salem argue in the introduction to their translation of the *Phaedo*, this “is surely one of the most remarkable moments in the Platonic dialogues.” They argue that “this affectionate gesture is alone sufficient to dispel any notion that Socrates is simply a hater of bodily things.”¹⁰⁶ Further, one of the first things we are told about the setting of the discourse which took place on the day of Socrates' execution is that his friends found him sitting with his wife Xanthippe, who was holding Socrates' “little boy.” Socrates is in his seventies, and he has a small child. This is clearly not a man without *some* enjoyment of the body.¹⁰⁷

middle period – that view of the soul . . . which makes it an immigrant form another world, attached precariously to a piece of matter in this one, from which death shall “separate” it to “exist separately” (*choris einai*, *Phd.* 64c6-8; 67a1) until its next incarnation.” (p 257) See also Bluck: “. . . the theory of the Forms and the theory of the immortality of the soul are mutually interdependent; and we may take it that Plato was anxious to justify his belief [in both] before going on to apply his Forms to a wide range of problems in the *Republic* and later works.” (1955, p 2) Again, I agree that there is a deep connection between the separation of soul and body and the separation of forms and particulars; I also agree, and take as a structural motivation for this dissertation, that it is necessary to become clear about the relation of soul and body in order to understand the nature and transcendence of the forms. However, I will argue that a close reading of the *Phaedo* shows the soul to be separable *only in λόγος*, and to be, unfortunately, not immortal; we will find that Socrates insists that the body is a necessary condition for life (99a-b). Thus, while I take the standard view that the relation between body and soul is a ‘model’ for the relation between sensible and intelligible, I disagree with the standard view of how the *Phaedo* presents that relation.

¹⁰⁶ 1998, p 11.

¹⁰⁷ The *Phaedo* is, further, anything but a dialogue devoid of *emotion*. Lange argues “The

This enjoyment, however, cannot be read as an *answer* to the questions of separation, nor of the relation of the ‘self’ to ‘its’ bodily desires. Rather, these moments in the dialogue indicate that we are not to rest content with the surface arguments that Socrates makes in the dialogue concerning emotions and bodily desires, and their place (or lack thereof) in the philosophical life. Rather, they make us return to the text with a more critical eye, looking beneath surface arguments which we can no longer take at face value.

How, then, should we take these arguments? Plato *obviously* wants us to consider them, as he spent considerable time carefully constructing them. If he does not want the reader to simply believe in the “independence” of the soul from the body, why would he have Socrates argue for that independence convincingly enough for virtually every commentator in the tradition to take that as his final word? We must ask: Of what use is it to spend time considering the independence of ψυχή and body if they are not in fact, finally, independent?¹⁰⁸ Of what use is the λόγος that tells us that the ψυχή is “separate”

dialogue is not cold – it is replete with exquisite feeling. We are constantly kept aware of the fact that the day is passing and the sun will set, that tomorrow Phaedo must cut his fair tresses in mourning (89b). And just because the situation so poignant and keeps us on the verge of an overpowering emotion, Plato here applies the balance of reason and calmness.” (1938, p 297) In agreement with this point, I will argue that dialogue does not posit the philosophical life as transcending emotion toward purity, but rather of developing a philosophical stance in which we can experience *moderate* emotions, and not be overwhelmed by them into rash or irrational decisions. Thus, while I argue that emotions and desires can be dangerous, it is not being *devoid* of them that is our goal.

¹⁰⁸ On this point, Gadamer notes: “. . . it seems appropriate to me to first examine Plato’s mode of demonstration to see if it indicates whether Plato was fully aware of the insufficiency of these proofs and, if we find that he was, to ask then what the actual intent of his demonstration is.” (1980, p 22) Cf Davis 1980: “Few readers of the Phaedo have been tempted to consider Socrates’ first arguments for the immortality of the soul simply persuasive. A refreshingly large number have even been willing to entertain the possibility that Plato was aware of their inadequacy. Of the first argument Bluck says that “there are strong indications that Plato did not consider the present argument to be conclusive,” and of the second that “it is admittedly incomplete by itself.” According to Gallop the first proof “is better construed as an opening dialectical move than as an argument to which Plato was seriously committed.” While refreshing, these admissions are not

from the body, if that is not the “truth”? What do we gain from contemplating soul and body as two elements of our being if we are, finally, a metaphysical unity? These questions, are, of course, premature. We do not understand “soul,” nor “body,” nor “combination,” nor “unity.” We take these questions with us into a reading of the text.

enough. One is compelled to ask why Plato begins with arguments which are so obviously inadequate. It is not sufficient to say that Plato threw in a mechanistic argument for his mechanistic readers (Bluck). Nor will it do to suggest that the first argument is an opener in a dialectical game (Gallop). We still wish to understand why Plato plays this game. Or, supposing the purpose of the *Phaedo* (as its subtitle suggests) is to teach us about the soul, why does the dialogue begin with errors about the soul? To understand why we must turn to the *logoi* themselves.” (p 566, Davis notes Bluck 1955, p 20-22, Gallop 1999, p 104)

Chapter 3

Arguments for Immortality

§ 1 Body and Soul

As I argued in the introduction, it is easy to mistake the dialogues as documents presenting Plato's teachings, and Plato's personal beliefs; in the case of the *Phaedo*, one might initially take it to be Plato's doctrine that the ψυχή continues to exist after death, that this ψυχή is a quasi-physical entity which exists independently of the body and which travels to an other τόπος where it communes with the forms.¹⁰⁹ After being reborn, the soul comes into some un-thematized relationship with a new body, forming a new individual. The process of philosophy is, then, understood to be a process of recollecting the knowledge that the soul gained while it was "dead," or, living in the land of the forms. The concept of 'separation' that is implied in this account mirrors the separation between the intelligible and the sensible – that is, the separation between the "forms" and perceptible particulars. Those forms, as unchanging objects of knowledge, ground the possibility of epistemological certainty by providing the stability necessary for knowledge to be possible – a stability that cannot be found in the Heraclitean flux of

¹⁰⁹ The first Chapter showed how this account of the soul accurately represents the transformation of the ontology of the ψυχή effected by Pythagoreanism and the Mystery Cults. While many commentators recognize the irony in the first three argument for immortality (assuming the final argument to be genuine), Pakaluk takes the first three to be true to Plato's belief: "The three arguments are meant to establish merely the minimal claim that the continued existence of the soul across cycles of reincarnation is the most plausible view to take, given substance dualism; and it is left to the Final Argument to argue for something that we might regard as immortality, that is, the imperishability of the soul, come what may." (2003, p 89)

the world of sensible particulars. These forms, then, exist at the same level of remove from this perceptible world as the soul does from the body, existing in an other *τόπος* to which “we” – or our souls – retire when we die.

A close reading of the text, however, calls this interpretation into question. In this chapter, I argue that the “proofs” Socrates presents for the separation of body and *ψυχή*, far from settling the issue of the relation of the body to the *ψυχή*, are rather the initial steps in a line of thinking which *raises the question* of that relation. It is only when the nature of the *ψυχή* and body are *hypothetically* considered as separate that the truth of embodiment can be revealed. This same hypothetical movement demands that we consider the objects of knowledge to be, in some sense, separate from the sensible particulars which we encounter; in later chapters, I will argue that Plato presents us with this radical separation such that an epistemological vocabulary proper to embodied life can be developed. One path to this development is by analogy to the understanding of the *χωρισμός* revealed in understanding the nature of the *ψυχή* and its relation to the body. That is, any account of the transcendence of the forms – an account which, as I will show, is beyond the scope of a work on the *Phaedo*, since the dialogue fails to provide an explanation of *μέθεξις* – must be based in an understanding of the relation between *ψυχή* and body.

1.1. Preparation for the *Λόγος*

It is essential to take note of the context in which Socrates’ arguments for the existence of the *ψυχή* after death arise. Plato has presented the reader with a complex

situation in which the arguments are raised; these are arguments made, not in the abstract, but by *specific* people in a *specific* situation. Attending to these specifics is essential to reading a Platonic dialogue in the proper way. Further, Socrates makes several explicit statements about *how* one should “prepare” oneself to hear the λόγοι presented in the conversation. Plato makes it clear that these preparations, and this context, are central to receiving the λόγοι in the proper spirit. This dissertation argues that a clear understanding of the proper spirit in which to take any λόγοι – especially λόγοι as difficult and as influential as the nature of the soul – is central to the message of the *Phaedo*.

Rather than the dialogue being constructed to convince the reader of a doctrine of the soul’s existence after death, Plato is concerned that we *not* take *the specific stance toward λόγοι that some readings would have us understand to be Plato’s own motivation in composing the Phaedo*. At 91a-b Socrates makes clear a distinction between the stance in which philosophers, on the one hand, and lovers of victory (φιλονικία), on the other, “hold” themselves with regard to λόγοι. This distinction is based in the desire that the speaker has with regard to the audience: The philosopher desires to clarify that which the λόγοι is about; the φιλόνηκος merely seeks the agreement of the audience. Thus, this section will demonstrate that, *taking the dialogue’s own direction concerning the proper spirit in which to receive the λόγοι presented in the dialogue*, it is essential that we begin to raise the question of the nature of the soul for ourselves, and not take the *Phaedo* to be a document whose intent is to make what seems true to Plato also seem true to its readers.

Of course, it is of central importance that these arguments about death as separation of soul from the body are made by a man who is himself facing death. It is Socrates who argues, makes speeches, and Socrates will die today. He remarks that no one, even a comic poet, could accuse him of talking about things that do not concern him (70c). The reference is to Aristophanes, who in *The Clouds* paints a satirical picture of Socrates as asking questions and making arguments about things “in the heavens and beneath the Earth,” as Socrates claims in the *Apology*. We will see how Socrates has given up asking such questions, despite the surface appearance of the myth of the true Earth. In his account of his reading of Anaxagoras’ book *Noûς*, Socrates shows how he is no longer interested in materialistic explanations of phenomena. When we turn to this account, and to the second sailing which it inaugurated, we will see the significance of this turn for a man facing death, and thus reflecting on his choice of *life*. For now, it is clear that Socrates is not idly explaining death as an abstracted phenomenon. He is facing death *itself* on this very day.¹¹⁰

This Socrates who gives λόγοι about death and faces death says, later in the dialogue, that Crito seems to believe that he is the corpse which will soon be lying before them, rather than “this Socrates – the one who is now conversing (διαλεγόμενος) and marshalling (διατάπτων) each of our arguments.” (115c) He goes on to say that Crito must take note “that not to speak in a fine way not only strikes a false note (πλημμελές) in itself, *but also makes for something bad in our souls.*” (115e, emphasis added) How the improper forming of λόγοι can negatively affect our souls has not been clarified;

¹¹⁰ As is true of each of us – death can come at any time to any one of us. Plato seems to want to make his readers aware that the recognition of death as *immanent* is the proper stance of the philosopher, since Socrates claims that philosophy is a kind of preparation for death. The technologies and privileges of modern life make it easy to forget the specter of death – the same would not have been true of ancient Athens.

however, we note that in Chapter 2, it became clear that λόγοι can have a wondrous hold on us, and that this hold often places us in a state of ἀναταράξει as a result of cognitive dissonance. Socrates demands that we examine these traditional λόγοι, and that this examination take the form of a *self*-examination – in some sense, an examination of our own *souls*. I have argued that this self-examination is integral to *care* of the ψυχή, and to the development of ἀρετή, but the mechanisms of this relation remain unthematized. It begins to become clear from Socrates' comments at 115c-116a that there is a sense in which the formation of 'bad' λόγοι – which have a “wondrous hold” on us – could be understood as a *formation of the self*, as well as a cultivation of the ψυχή. We will return to this passage later, but for now let us note that Socrates is speaking from the position of someone who faces death, and who believes that speaking well is important to the cultivation of one's soul.

It is essential to attend to *how* the issue of the separation of soul and body arises in the conversation in the *Phaedo*. Socrates raises the issue unexpectedly. He had been musing about pleasure and pain when his friends mentioned the rumor that he had been making poetry (60b-d). His friends had spent as much time as allowed by the guards conversing with Socrates in his cell. Apparently, then, Socrates has spent the time when he was not speaking with his friends converting Aesop's fables into verse. Making a distinction between λόγος and μῦθος, Socrates says that he is not a maker of μῦθος, so he chose to work with the stories of Aesop (60e-61c).¹¹¹

¹¹¹ This is a fascinating passage, which opens the question of the relation between philosophy and poetry, and wonders at the possibility that philosophy is μουσική. Unfortunately, I cannot give an adequate examination of this complex issue. For a good discussion, see Burger 1984, Roochnik 2001. Also, for a good discussion of the word “μουσική,” see the Appendix in Dorter 1982.

When he is not able to engage in making λόγοι with his friends in living conversation, Socrates chooses what might be considered a second-best option of composing verse which he specifically distinguishes from making λόγοι. While he is tentative about whether or not his philosophical λόγοι are under the province of the Muses, he is quite clear that there is a distinction to be made, however provisionally, between giving a μῦθος and giving a λόγος (61a-b). When his friends arrive and ask him about his making of poetry – that is, when they ask him about what he does to fill the time when he does not have his friends around with whom to make λόγοι – *he changes the subject*. He has gained some sort of solace in his time *alone* in prison working in creation of beautiful verse; however, with his friends at hand, he chooses to steer the conversation toward λόγοι – specifically, λόγοι about death, and about how philosophy is related to death and dying.

His conversants immediately seize this opportunity to put Socrates to the question regarding his willingness to die, and leave them. This questioning leads Socrates to frame his account of the existence of the soul separate from the body in terms of a defense of the way he has chosen to live, as well as how he has “chosen” to die. After saying that he is sure he will come among the blessed after his death, he quickly adds, “I wouldn’t altogether insist (δυσχυρισαίμην) on this.” (63c) “Δυσχυρίζομαι” does mean to “insist” on something, or to affirm it confidently, but this sense of the word comes from its primary meaning: to lean on, or rely on. Socrates is not confident enough to *rely* on the story that he will meet blessed dead men after his own death.¹¹² He says that if he

¹¹² Thus, I am disagreeing with readings such as that by Bedu-Addo, who claims that Since Socrates obviously does not consider himself a simpleton, and is indeed portrayed throughout the dialogue as being quite unperturbed by the prospect of his own impending death, we may safely assume that he thinks he knows that the soul is immortal, and can give an account of this.” (1969,

were to assert “any such thing” it would be that he has *hopes* (ἐὔελπις) that he will come among good masters, and “that there is something for those who have met their end, and just as has been said of old, something better for the good than for the bad.” (ibid.)

Socrates does not rely on the μῦθος that we will find ourselves in Hades after we die, but he does assert with confidence that in facing one’s death, one can expect something better for the ἀγαθός than for the κακός.¹¹³ This raises the question: Since Socrates is facing death with incredible poise, what *is* he relying on, if not the traditional μῦθοι of the soul?

Plato immediately presents us with an image of how we might understand this idea that the ἀγαθός person will face something better in death than the κακός. Simmias accepts this discussion of why the better person has reason to expect a better fate in facing death than the κακός person as Socrates’ defense, and immediately Crito cuts in with a practical matter. He is afraid that if Socrates gets “heated up” in conversation he might have to drink the φάρμακον twice or three times (63d-e). The sub-text here is that the drinking of hemlock is, in fact, an extremely painful way to die. Crito is worried that Socrates will face a far more drawn-out and painful death if he engages in the conversation. Socrates is unafraid, twice saying of the executioner: “ἔα,” “leave him be.” (63e)

Unafraid of death, and even of the increased pain he might suffer in dying as a result, Socrates constructs the first stage of his defense, that is, of his defense of his

p 111)

¹¹³ Henry Piper, in his paper “Socrates in the *Phaedo*: Knight of Faith” (2005), argues that this passage – along with others in the corpus where Socrates confesses to uncertainty concerning the afterlife – shows that Socrates is operating on “faith” rather than certainty or rational argumentation. While Piper is correct to identify that Socrates resists the “temptation” of too-easy “certainty” in such matters, I argue that the text offers avenues for understanding Socrates’ poise in the face of death *other* than either faith or certainty in some specific form of the afterlife.

choice of the life of the philosopher.¹¹⁴ He will tell Simmias and Cebes “the reason it appears to me that a man who has genuinely spent his life in philosophy is confident when he is about to die and has high hopes that when he has met his end, he will win the greatest goods There.” (63e-64a, translation altered) He begins this defense quite formally, referring to his listeners as his “judges” (δικαστής). This beginning colors what he is about to say as being a kind of ‘presentation,’ designed to have a specific effect on his *listeners*, rather than being Socrates’ own, let alone Plato’s own, belief. Socrates indicates this later in the conversation, saying

For at present as far as that goes, I run the risk (κινδυνεύω) of being in a mood not to love wisdom but to love victory, as do altogether uneducated people (οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ οἱ πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως). These people, whenever they dispute (ἀμφισβητῶσιν) about something, don’t give a thought (φροντίζουσιν) to the way it is with the things the argument is about, but put their hearts into this: that what they themselves put forward should seem (δόξει) to be the case to those present. And at present I seem to myself to differ from those people in this way only: I won’t put my heart into making what I say seem to be true to those present, except as a side effect, but in making it seem to be the case to me myself as much as possible. For I’m calculating (λογίζομαι), my dear comrade – behold how self-servingly! – that if what I’m saying happens to be true, I’m well off believing it; and if there’s nothing at all for one who’s met his end, well then, I’ll make myself so much the less unpleasant with lamenting to those who are present during this time, the time before my death; and this mindlessness (ἄνοια) of mine won’t continue – that would be an evil! – but will perish a little later. Thus prepared (παρεσκευασμένος), Simmias and Cebes,’ he said, ‘I enter on the argument.’ (91a-b)

¹¹⁴ Ferit Guven suggests that the willingness to face death calmly distinguishes the philosopher from the Sophist. Referencing Heidegger in *What is Metaphysics*, he suggests that it is only in (courageously) facing death that proper attunement to being is possible – i.e. the attunement which calls-forth the wonder that is the origin of philosophy (2005 p 14ff.). Cf Davis 1980: “We are given an account of Socrates’ deeds in which he is repeatedly referred to as an aner, a real man (57a, 58c, 58e, etc.), in which he is likened to a hero, Theseus, and in which in all honesty we must admit we are at least as impressed with the noble and graceful manner of his death as we are with the arguments he introduces to prove the immortality of the soul.” (p 575)

The question before us is: How does this preparation, how does Plato's careful setting of the scene, color the arguments to come? There are several issues to note about this preparation.

One sense in which the philosopher's readiness to die can be understood, and one sense in which the philosopher will expect to fare better than others in meeting with death, is a sense which is modeled in Socrates' own comportment on the day of his death. That we should attend to this behavior is at once obvious, and it is signaled by Plato when he has Echecrates ask, at the opening of the dialogue, to hear both what Socrates said before he died, and *how* he died, "how he met his end". (57a) Socrates, as we have already seen, meets his death calmly. One of the dimensions of that calm is expressed in what he says above regarding his preparation for the argument; Socrates does not want to spend his last hours lamenting, and listening to his friends crying and wailing. He wants to spend it calmly and pleasantly, engaged in conversation. He adjusts his own, *at least outward*, reaction to the situation to bring about the outcome he desires – a last time in which to engage in his favorite ἔργον, philosophical conversation. Many aspects of the situation – from the high-running emotions of himself and his friends to the wishes of his executioner – stand in the way of his desires, but he is able to strategically and intelligently overcome them.

Another important aspect of this preparation is that Socrates compares himself to the φιλόνομος in his desire to make his arguments convincing, rather than "giving thought" to "the way it is with the things the argument's about." (91a) He states that he is risking not "holding himself" as a philosopher – οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν. Socrates is not

willing to strictly affirm that he is holding himself in a non-philosophical frame of mind; however, he says that he runs the *risk* (κινδυνεύω) of this in arguing as he does for the immortality of the soul. We must, then, be on our guard for the danger that the arguments Socrates presents are designed to elicit *agreement* rather than *truth*.¹¹⁵

At 64a-b, Socrates makes Simmias laugh. He laughs because Socrates has presented an image of the life of the philosopher which is comically close to the image that is dominant with the οἱ πολλοί, as well as that of Socrates himself presented by Aristophanes in *The Clouds*. Socrates says that people who happen to get in touch with philosophy in the right way “devote themselves to nothing else than dying and being dead.” (64a) Simmias thinks the οἱ πολλοί will find this claim all too true, and would add that the philosopher “deserves” (ἄξιτοι) death as well. “They *would* be speaking the truth,” replies Socrates, “except of course about their not being unaware (σφᾶς μὴ λεληθέναι).” (64b, emphasis added)

The many hold an image of the philosopher as ripe and ready, and even deserving of death. They believe they understand who and what the philosopher is, and that the life of the philosopher might as well be death, or they might as well be a stone.¹¹⁶ What Socrates says, however, is that while the claim “the philosopher is worthy of being dead” is, in the abstract, true, those who say this do not understand what they are saying. They

¹¹⁵ I will argue that this is specifically the case with the final argument, which is often taken to be Plato’s final word on the soul, but which I will show is intentionally flawed, and structured to appeal specifically to Cebes.

¹¹⁶ Cf Gorgias 492e.

believe that this ‘fact’ is not concealed from them, not *λανθάνω*; that it has not escaped their notice that the philosopher is *ἄξιοι*, worthy of, or deserving of, death.¹¹⁷

They are, however, unaware of their own ignorance in this matter. Not knowing who the philosopher is, they do not know in what way the philosopher is *ἄξιοι* of death. Further, Socrates says that they do not know “what sort of death” the philosopher is worthy of. (64b) We will see that until we understand what death itself *is*, we cannot know in what way the philosophical life prepares us for death. That is, the conception of death we have will inherently inform the way in which we understand the philosopher to be preparing for death. Specifically, if we think of death as the separation of soul from body, *and* we believe that the philosopher prepares for this separation, *then* we will be led to believe that the philosophical life is a preparation for the separation of the soul from the body. If this belief leads to a series of absurdities, then we would do well to listen to Socrates’ words at the opening of this argument and question more closely into “what sort of death” we assume the philosopher to be “worthy” of. We will note later that Socrates closes this series of arguments in the dialogue with another injunction to question into their “very first hypotheses,” at 107b.

¹¹⁷ Recall that in the last chapter we saw that the philosophical life is one that happens in the face of the full realization of human temporality – that is, of growth, development, and eventual death.

1.2 Assumptions

At 64c Socrates says that they should bid the οἱ πολλοί, and their unphilosophical ideas about a philosophical death, farewell, and talk amongst themselves; however, we will see that leaving the many behind is not as easy as it seems.

Socrates begins the investigation with a strange question: “Do we consider that there’s such a thing called death? (ἡγούμεθά τι τὸν θάνατον εἶναι;)” (64c) Simmias answers quickly, *interrupting*: πάνυ γε, “altogether,” “certainly.” The word that Plato uses here for “interrupting” – ὑπολαβῶν– can also mean, more literally, to “interpret,” or “to take up by getting under” something. In interrupting Socrates with such a quick answer, Simmias has also offered an interpretation, and in so doing, has taken up the discussion. Socrates’ questions will now be answered by Simmias, and the proceeding discussion will thus be an examination of *Simmias’* beliefs.

Socrates’ question is a strange way to begin the inquiry: “Is there such a thing called death?” It seems more logical to assume that death is real, and to ask *what* we take death to be. What is Socrates’ purpose in asking if we *consider* (ἡγέομαι) there to be a thing, a “this” that is death? While ἡγέομαι is a perfectly typical word for “belief,” it is interesting to note that its primary definition is “going ahead,” which is connected to its secondary sense of *a* leader or ruler. Simmias’ belief *has*, in fact, gone ahead and answered the question even before Socrates gets a chance to fully formulate it *as* a question. Simmias’ belief, his certainty that death is real and that he understands its nature – as separation of soul and body – has gone ahead of him, and has led him to his answer. As we will see, his beliefs continue to move the discourse through this first

argument; these beliefs remain unquestioned, and are in fact the *object* of the questioning, rather than death “itself.” With Simmias leading the way, they are, in fact, in danger of being unphilosophical to the extent that they are primarily concerned with how their beliefs appear to themselves and to their listeners, as Socrates will remark later in the conversation; they are in danger of not giving “a thought to the way it is with the things the argument is about.” (91a)

Socrates picks up on this too-ready answer; he presents a strange formulation of a standard conception of death: Death is separation of soul from the body, *and* of body from soul. Socrates – perhaps encouraging Simmias to break the mold of his already-formed dogma, his προδοκέω – tries to press the issue, asking: “Death couldn’t be anything other than this – could it?” (64c) Simmias has a ready reply: “No, just that.” In addition to earlier ignoring the strangeness of the question: “Is there such a thing as death?” Simmias here ignores the strange formulation Socrates has given of the traditional idea of death as separation of soul from the body. At 64c, Socrates begins his account by saying that death is the “freeing” (ἀπαλλαγέν) of the *body* from the *soul*. This is *certainly* not how this is usually phrased. The body is said to be the prison or the tomb of the *soul*, not vice versa.¹¹⁸ To speak of the body as “imprisoned” by the soul, and thus of death as the “freeing” of the body from that imprisonment is a clever satire, an ironic and playful way to attack the traditional conception of body and soul as two self-identical entities at war with each other; Simmias misses this entirely.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Cf Gorgias 493a.

¹¹⁹ Cf Vlastos 1991, p 260, for an example of someone else completely missing the import of the playfulness in this formulation. For a criticism of Vlastos’ general stance toward irony in the dialogues, see Gordon 1996. She shows the failings in Vlastos’ extremely influential account of “complex irony” (see Vlastos 1991, Chapter 1). Gordon shows how Vlastos does not account for the full complexity of irony as a pedagogical tool. She states: “Socratic irony is among the most

Having established that Simmias is inclined to frame his answers in terms of an unquestioned set of traditional beliefs, Socrates immediately turns to making an image of the ἔργον and life of the philosopher on the basis of these beliefs. Insofar as we find that this image conflicts with the image of Socrates presented in the dialogue(s) – and, further, that it leads to obvious absurdities – it is important not to assume that Socrates’ account in this passage represents Plato’s conception of the philosophical life.¹²⁰ As such, we will be led to question the conception of death upon which this philosophical ἔργον, as the work of the *practice* of death, is based.

powerful tools at Socrates' disposal for turning the lives of his interlocutors toward philosophy. And so for Plato and his readers.” (p 137) In line with this interpretation, when I claim Socrates is being “ironic,” I do not intend to say that he simply “does not mean” what he says, nor that he “does *and* does not mean” what he says, as Vlasto’s “complex irony” claims. Rather, with Gordon, I will show how Socrates’ ironic statements are often intended to mirror back to the interlocutor their own views, or views they are flirting with, in order to push them to question further, and to wonder again in the face of their *revealed* ignorance.

¹²⁰ Pointing to the turn away from Socrates as the primary speaker in the “later” dialogues, Stanley Rosen (1983) argues that we should not restrict our conception of the philosopher to the image presented of Socrates in the dialogues; he goes so far as to suggest that we have to see Socrates as a proto-philosopher, and must move beyond his ‘style’ of inquiry in order to reach true philosophy. However, considering Plato’s statement in the *Seventh Letter* that the dialogues are intended as a an “image of Socrates grown young and καλός,” I argue that we should be attentive to the passages in which images of philosophical life are presented which do not accord with the life Socrates chooses. See also *Theaetetus* 173d-e. There, Socrates presents an image of the philosopher’s life to Theodorus. He describes the philosopher as not knowing the way to the *agora*, and being unconcerned with political and ethical matters since spends his time in contemplation of things “deep down below the earth,” and “above heaven.” (173e) I argue that this, like the image of the “true philosophers” in the *Phaedo*, is intended to mirror back to the interlocutor his own conceptions of the nature of philosophical practice. In this case, Theodorus, who spends his time in contemplation of mathematics and does not know who Theaetetus’ father is (144b), is having his image of the politically-disinterested φυσικός philosopher mirrored back to him to attempt to call him to self-awareness.

1.3 So-Called Pleasures

With the traditional conception of death as separation of soul from body on the table, Socrates paints a portrait of the life of the philosopher that is fitting to the οἱ πολλοί's conception of the "true-born philosopher."

At 64d-e, Socrates asks Simmias if he thinks "being serious (ἐσπουδακέναι) about the so-called pleasures" goes with being a "philosophical man." The way Socrates phrases this question is interesting; he does *not* say "serious in *pursuing*" the so-called pleasures. He merely says serious *about* pleasures: "περὶ τὰς ἡδονᾶς." Such seriousness does not fit Simmias' idea of the philosopher. As Socrates will say in a moment, for Simmias, the philosopher "stands apart from (the body) and keeps turned toward the soul (πρὸς δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν τετράφθαι) as much as he can." (64e)

The argument Socrates uses to elicit Simmias' agreement is interesting in its own right. Socrates asks if the philosopher will be serious about the θεραπείας of the body; as an example of these θεραπείας, Socrates mentions buying fine cloaks and sandals. We *do* know that Socrates does not buy such things, but this a *very* weighted example of bodily θεραπείας; these are examples which cast care of the body in a specific light – as an 'outward' thing, a thing to be looked at, and *not* as essential to the self. This leads Simmias to easily answer that the individual should decide to 'turn away' from the body *as* something external to the self. The image of "turning away" indeed contains within it the idea of something external; one cannot 'turn away' from oneself (64e).

The choice of these examples immediately calls to mind what *other* θεραπείας of the body a philosopher might be serious about. Socrates asks us to consider this by

adding to the argument that we can only avoid such *θεραπείας* to a limited extent – limited by the *θεραπείας* of which we necessarily must have a *share* (*μετέχειν*). Socrates asks if the philosopher will hold bodily *θεραπείας* in “dishonor (*ἀτιμάζειν*) except insofar as there is an urgent necessity for him to have his share of them?” (64d) In this formulation, the philosopher *will* honor *θεραπείας* insofar as they are necessary. This raises the question – what sorts of bodily *θεραπείας* and pleasures are necessary? To what extent should the philosopher partake (*μετέχειν*) in these pleasures, and to what extent should the philosopher engage in these “therapeutic” practices?¹²¹

No answers are given, since Simmias is not interested in discussing the body; this disinterest stems from his image of the philosopher as completely unconcerned with the things of the body. According to Simmias, then, no seriousness is necessary in the apparently un-philosophical work of understanding the proper place and balance of pleasures in our lives.¹²² As such, his answers, and his failure to ask clarifying questions of Socrates, reduces this stage of the discussion to a simple binary: On the one hand, there is the body and ‘its’ pleasures, which are dishonorable, and on the other, the soul, where philosophy ‘happens’ and which is the sole source of honorable pleasure.¹²³ This

¹²¹ On the significance of the term *θεραπείας*, see Burkert 1985: “In epic *theraps*, *therapon* is the henchman, as Patroclus is in relation to Achilles. This implies a relation of reciprocity and mutual interest in spite of an unmistakable difference in rank. *Therapeuein* means to take care of in relation to parents, children, domestic animals, or plants, to the sick, to public favor, and most eminently in relation to the gods. Parallel is *epimeleia*, care, in contrast to *ameleia*, negligence.” (p 273)

¹²² Cf. the *Philebus* and the *Republic*, for philosophical discussions of the proper place of pleasures in life. See also, *Gorgias* 494a, where Callicles claims that any life which is not constantly seeking any pleasure is like the “life of a stone,” which leads us to consider the proper balance of pleasures, and demands that we make a distinction between good and bad pleasures – as Socrates often does (see, for example, *Gorgias* 499cff.).

¹²³ Bluck takes these passages unironically as Plato’s own doctrine, and thus as going beyond the philosophy of the historical Socrates. Bluck argues that Plato had been strongly influenced by the

reduction might, in fact, be devastating to the project of a *balanced* life guided by λόγος. In other words, Simmias remains in that space of discourse that risks being ‘un-philosophical’ by focusing on the defense of his own beliefs, rather than attending to “how things are with the things the argument is about”; as a result, he has closed himself off to the path of questioning which would open a *serious* philosophical discourse on the importance and proper place of pleasure in philosophical life.¹²⁴

In fact, we often find Socrates expressing serious concern for the proper condition and training of the body. For example, in the *Republic*, at 410cf., Socrates argues that a person who spends all of his time with “music” and never touches gymnastic – the training of the body – “cuts the sinews from his soul” and becomes weak and cowardly in his pursuit of truth (411b). Not only is training the body, as a bodily *θεραπεία*, a ‘serious’ issue for philosophy, it is here argued to be an *essential condition* for the philosophical life.¹²⁵

Orphic/Pythagorean asceticism, and thus developed a hatred of the body and ‘its’ pleasures. He calls this the “essence of Plato’s creed.” (1955, p 47)

¹²⁴ In Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 27, Socrates argues against the pleasures of drink, sex, sauces, and clothes etc. by saying that they will “destroy the household and the body.” Thus, the danger is not from the pleasures themselves, but indulging in them to *excess* – an excess marked by negative results on one’s life and affairs. Baltzly, 1996, takes these passages unironically, and argues that *any* pleasures *or* pains have a negative effect: “pleasures and pains lead one to develop mistaken priorities (83c-d).” However, it is not clear how we are supposed to avoid *pains* in life. Blasky has thus erased any possibility of understanding how the philosopher recognizes the danger of *intemperately* engaging in pleasure, or avoiding pain in a *cowardly* manner, which requires recognizing the priority of virtue and wisdom over pleasure and pain, but does not equate to denying and avoiding all pleasures (and pains, as if that were possible). However, after interpreting these passages in such a simple way, Blasky claims that these “are not good reasons” to deny the senses or the body, and turn to the radical asceticism he finds in the *Phaedo* – a position which he claims Plato rejects “later” in his career. I agree that they are not good reasons, but they are not *Plato’s* reasons, nor Socrates’ – they are the reasons that flow from Simmias and the οἱ πολλοί’s mistaken conception of philosophy. Cf *Gorgias*, where Callicles accuses the philosopher of living the life of a stone (494a-b).

¹²⁵ We note that Socrates describes the body as a necessary condition for life at 99a-b.

In each of Socrates' first three questions about pleasure there is reason to think that Simmias has answered incorrectly. Socrates continues to draw out the image of the "true-born philosopher" from Simmias' answers. With these answers in hand, at 65a Socrates states that this conception which Simmias has brought to the table concerning the proper philosophical stance toward pleasures is exactly what "most people" think makes the philosopher worthy of death; the interlocutors attempted to leave 'the many' behind, but after a few answers from Simmias, we find that the conceptions of the οἱ πολλοί still haunt the discussion. Socrates repeats that such a "true-born philosopher" has "no share (μετέχειν) in" bodily pleasures; however, in addition to seeing Socrates enjoying such pleasures in measure, we note that at 64e he has just said that everyone, of necessity, must have *some* "share" of them.¹²⁶

1.4. Purity, and the Impossibility of φρόνησις

Socrates now begins to question Simmias about the "true-born philosopher's" account of φρόνησις. We will find that Simmias, and the οἱ πολλοί's conception of this life, makes φρόνησις an impossibility for an embodied being.

Socrates asks: "What about the attainment of φρόνησις itself? Is the body an impediment or not when somebody takes it along as a companion in his search?" (65a-b) Socrates then gives a λόγος in which the way the *body* 'knows' anything is by the senses,

¹²⁶ Cf Hackforth: ". . . outside the *Phaedo*, his general attitude does not seem to be that of an enemy of the 'flesh' and its pleasures; he can, on occasion, enjoy his wine, and drink with the best; but he is, in the Greek phrase, 'master of himself' (κρείττων αὐτοῦ) one who is not be overcome by pleasure." (1955, p 49)

and any other kind of knowledge is ‘through’ the soul (65b-c).¹²⁷ With the possibility of knowledge for an embodied being reduced to sensory knowledge, Socrates proceeds to show that no “pure” knowledge is possible while we are alive.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ See also 79c.

¹²⁸ Bluck takes this purity to be unironically the goal of the philosopher’s life, in Plato’s own opinion. He claims that Plato “borrowed the ideas from the religious mysticism of the Orphics, who believed in transmigration of souls, and claimed a soul could not be freed from the cycle of birth and death until it was wholly purified.” (1955, p 47) Since the body is an impediment to knowledge, purity of soul (from the body) is necessary for knowledge. The “body is a hindrance,” he claims, for two reasons. First, because “the *senses* are not accurate or reliable.” (p 46, emphasis added) Most commentators, of course, agree that Plato wants us to transcend the body, in part because of the fallibility of the senses. See for example, see Dimas 2003, p 181, Hackforth 1955, et al. In the coming Chapters, I will show that Plato does not hold the senses in such serious disregard in the *Phaedo*, and thus Bluck’s central argument for why the body is an impediment to knowledge is misleading. See, for example, the *Seventh Letter*, where Plato argues that knowledge can be had only once “names, logoi, and visual and other perceptions have been rubbed against one another and tested.” (344b, emphasis added) See also Hare 1965, p 34, for an account of the ‘method of hypothesis’ which includes testing our hypotheses against evidence of the senses – as I will discuss in Chapter 8. Bluck’s second argument that the soul must be rid of the body is that “emotions and bodily needs distract the mind.” (p 46) While it certainly true that bodily needs distract the mind, Plato presents us with many images of Socrates *withstanding* the need for warmth and food (for example, in the *Symposium*) and thus it would seem that philosophical virtue allows to stand up in the face of such needs, and to treat them temperately, rather than simply seeking to be rid of them. Emotions are only an impediment insofar as they *overwhelm* reason. One needs simply point to the central importance of ἔργον to see that emotions are only dangerous when directed toward the wrong object. Again, mistaking the emotions *as such* as an impediment to philosophy cripples the philosophical life by rendering it unable to give an account of the proper order and place of emotion and desire in human (including the philosophical human) life. By assuming that Plato’s Socrates (if not the historical Socrates) faces death with courage because of a *certainty* of achieving pure knowledge in the afterlife, Bluck mistakes Socrates’ – and the *philosopher’s* – stance toward fear, and thus courage in the face of death. Grube also takes this radical asceticism to be unironically the teaching of the *Phaedo*; recognizing that it does not accord with the “later” works, specifically, the *Symposium*, Grube assumes Plato changed his mind: “Philosophy as a training for death is a dangerously negative point of view in which no allowance is made for the development of the human emotions. There is good reason to regard the teaching of the *Phaedo*, splendid though it be, as pure intellectualism from life, its final aim being the eternal preservation of the soul in the cold storage of eternally frozen absolute Forms.” (1980, p 129) It is unfortunate that Grube was not attuned to the levels of irony – especially considering the projection into the mouths of the “true-born philosophers” – to see that Plato did not substantially change his position on emotions and desires. Stella Lange agrees: “In his ultimate interpretation of Plato Grube is undoubtedly correct. Plato was not an ascetic nor a cold intellectual. This is evident throughout not only the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* but the *Republic* and the *Laws* also, and to a lesser extent in all the dialogues. It was because Plato himself felt so strongly the appeal of the “honeyed Muse” that he realized the danger of excessive emotion (*Rep.* 607A-608B).” (1938, p 296) Lange does not explain the difference by appealing to hidden levels of the text, nor by seeing how Socrates ironically mirrors

Simmiias agrees that there is such a thing as “Justice itself,” as well as Goodness and Beauty themselves, and Socrates argues that we do not “attach ourselves to” (ἐφίψω) such “forms” with any of our bodily senses (65d). Therefore, since we do not “see” Justice, we must we come to knowledge of it *without* the body – since Simmiias has already agreed to the epistemology that claims that the body can only have knowledge through the senses.¹²⁹ Socrates then says, “And I am speaking about the Being of all such things, about Bigness, and Health, and Strength and, in a word (ἐνὶ λόγῳ) all the rest – whatever each happens to be.” (65d-e)

If Socrates is trying to get Simmiias to agree that body is not involved in any way with the knowledge of such things, bigness, strength, and health are provocative and problematic examples. How do we come to know strength? How do we come to know health? Socrates says that the soul comes to this knowledge αὐτῆ καθ’ αὐτήν – itself by itself.¹³⁰ How can the soul come to know health without any contact with the body? It would seem, at least at first glance, that embodiment is essential to the knowledge of strength, health, and size. As Burger puts it, “Socrates’ apparently superfluous reference to these characteristics tacitly invites us to step back and reconsider the cases of the just, beautiful, and good.”¹³¹

back to his interlocutors their own conceptions of philosophy; she argues, against those who would propose that the differences be attributed to Plato’s supposed development, and to a specious chronology of the dialogues: “So may we not rather say that the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* represent two aspects of truth, two moods, if we will? Any intelligent person of keen sensibilities – not to say any artist – is aware that his attitude even toward great matters changes from time to time.” (p 297)

¹²⁹ This position is often taken to be Platonic doctrine. See Dimas 2003: “The body’s way of making epistemic contact with the world is by making use of the senses. Unfortunately, the senses cannot be trusted.” (p 182)

¹³⁰ For a good discussion of Plato’s use of the phrase αὐτῆ καθ’ αὐτήν, see Kutash 1993, p 134ff. See also Dimas 2003, p 183.

¹³¹ 1984, p 41.

In fact, these characteristics make no sense outside of embodied physicality; the choice of these examples from the myriad possibilities Plato could have chosen which do *not* imply embodiment seems to imply that we should be careful not to immediately agree with Simmias' answers at 65e and 66a that the body is not in any way involved in the knowledge of the forms, *even if* forms are not the objects of sense perception. I will return to these examples when I present a reading of the argument from recollection, and specifically of Socrates' account of the perception of "equal" sticks, and how we come to know equality itself. In Chapter 7, I will argue that this epistemological situation, as described in the *Phaedo*, implies the necessary embodiment of the knower – for now, I am simply concerned with how the passage problematizes the traditional account of the body as an impediment to φρόνησις.

In addition, by adding, at 65d-e, "all" the rest, in their being (οὐσίᾳ), Socrates draws all such "forms" into a unity ἐνὶ λόγῳ; while this might mean "in a word," it literally implies that all "such" things have their unity in λόγος – ἐνὶ λόγῳ. Socrates thus invites us to reconsider how we come to know the being of each thing itself, and thus to reconsider the place of the fact of our embodiment in this act of knowing; this invitation is subtly connected to the issue of λόγος. When we turn to the second sailing, and how Socrates attends to the being of each thing in λόγος, we will find that there *is*, in fact, a *necessary* sense in which we do not see, nor detect with any of our other senses, the *truth* of the world around us. Nevertheless, it is wrong to think of this knowledge as the contact between a pure soul and pure being in some "other" τόπος, and thus it is wrong to think that the body is simply an impediment to learning.

That is, in my reading of Socrates' attack on materialism I will argue that Simmias is right to agree, in abstract, that we do not come to knowledge of Justice itself – or of the αἰτία of *anything*, for that matter – “with” the body *alone*, nor with the senses *alone*, if the body and senses are understood as some sort of tool or mechanism the self employs in order to acquire sensory experience. We will find that there is truth beyond the material explanations of knowledge which places the physicality of sensation at the heart of an account of human knowledge.

However, It will become clear that Simmias, driven by his conception of the soul as continuing to exist in a τόπος after death, thinks of ‘binding to’ or ‘contact with’ the forms as contact *in* a “spiritual” τόπος; thus, this ‘contact’ would only be possible without the body, since the body limits us to the physical τόπος ‘here.’ In my reading of the second sailing and Socrates’ biography, I will argue that there is a non-physical, nonmaterialistic explanation to the truths of our experience that does not commit us to the physical reality of some other τόπος, in which our souls would stand in some quasi-physical relationship to the “forms” before we are born and after we die. It is by *engaging* with the way in which the soul’s activity “itself through itself,” guided by λόγος, determines the “being and benefit” of the beings we encounter in perceptual life in *this* τόπος that the philosopher is able to work toward harmony in the soul, and a philosophical mode of life. Thus, an understanding of the epistemology proper to an embodied being is essential to a development of the ethical life characterized by a philosophically-grounded harmonious mode of living.

Guided by Simmias' answers, Socrates does not proceed to these deeper issues at this point in the dialogue; rather, he continues to fill out the image of the "true-born philosopher."

1.5 The "Short-Cut" to Purity

Socrates convinces Simmias to agree, on the basis of the assumptions they have made about knowledge and the body, that the thinker who approaches each pure (εἰλικρινεῖ) thing with pure (εἰλικρινεῖ) thought (διάνοια) who can "hit on what is (τευξόμενος τοῦ ὄντος)," *if anyone can*, he adds (66a). Simmias answers, more aptly than he knows, that Socrates, in giving this λόγος of what the pure, disembodied soul can know while he himself is still embodied, is speaking "supernaturally" – ὑπερφυσῶς.¹³²

Socrates distances himself even further from sincerity in giving this λόγος by putting the next speech in the voice of the "true-born philosophers," (γνησίως φιλοσόφοις) miming what they *of necessity* (ἀνάγκη) must "think and say to one another." (66b) He begins by saying these philosophers have found a "short-cut," an ἀτραπός, a path *without any turnings*. It is clear that they *must* have found such a path. How else could they know what sort of knowledge is possible for a dis-embodied being while themselves, the "true-born philosophers" are "still" embodied? Once again Socrates is playing with Simmias, presenting a playful and ironic attack. Simmias misses the playfulness in the answer, as do the majority of commentators on the *Phaedo*.¹³³

¹³² Simmias says it is "supernatural" how truly Socrates speaks: "ὑπερφυσῶς, ἔφη ὁ Σιμμίας, ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες." (66a)

¹³³ With the notable exception of Ronna Burger: "(The true-born philosopher's) claim to be led to this insight by some sort of 'short-cut' may be a sign of their awareness of its inexplicability:

The “true-born philosophers” then outline an extensive list of grievances against the body, drawing conclusions from Simmias’ conception of the body as an evil entity, external to the self, which serves only as an obstacle to the soul’s search for contact with truth. It is not necessary for us to explicate each of the inconsistencies in this account, nor to work out what more sophisticated understanding of the soul might help us deal with such inconsistencies – although those are interesting and important issues. My intention here is to show that the text gives several indications that it cannot be taken as Plato’s doctrine that knowledge is the “pure” contact between the soul and the forms – a contact which takes place in a τόπος transcendent and χωριστός of the world in which we embodied beings live.

The conclusion of their argument is that “pure” knowledge is impossible for an embodied being. In other words, Simmias’ conception of philosophy has led to the conclusion that philosophy cannot lead a person to φρόνησις in this life. Philosophy – if it is still able to prove itself as the best life – must give an account of its benefits without claiming to provide certainty purified of the exigencies of embodied life. Philosophy thus appears impotent to free us of τύχη. With this in mind, Socrates constructs an image of what value the life of philosophy has, since it does not lead us to a stable, “pure” understanding of our situation which would allow us to live in a better way as long as we are embodied. With this in mind, he applauds the “people who instituted our mystic

apparently conversing while alive, “in the body,” how could they justify the truth of the claim that the body prevents all possible access to the truth?” (Burger 1984, p 43 *emphasis added*) By saying “apparently,” she shows that she has not missed the humor of the situation. For an example of one of the many commentators who take this unironically, see Bluck 1955: “Socrates maintains that death means release from the distractions and snares of the body, and the opportunity to contemplate truth unimpeded. . .” (p 1) On why this should not lead to suicide, Bluck also takes the text to unironically suggest that Socrates’ position is that we belong to the gods. (ibid.) See also Hackforth 1955, Bostock 1986.

rites,” in their teaching that “whoever arrives in Hades ignorant of the mysteries and uninitiated will lie in muck, but he who arrives There purified and initiated will dwell with gods.” (69c-d)

In the *Republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to prove that justice is choiceworthy without reference to benefit accrued in the afterlife (as discussed in Chapter 1). This question leads Socrates to a description of the soul as being composed of three ‘parts.’ These parts can stand in an ordered and harmonious relation to one another, and this state of harmony is justice; or, they can be disordered and disharmonious, which is injustice and vice. A great deal of this discussion centers on the place of pleasure and desire in the well-ordered life. That is, an account of the importance of philosophy which does not avail itself of hypothetical benefits in the afterlife demands a more sophisticated account of the nature of the soul. Specifically, it is necessary to develop an account of desire and of the nature of the individual which goes beyond the level of simply dividing the self into the body and ‘its’ desires, on the one hand, and the soul on the other.

Without turning to this other dialogue at this time, it is clear from the context of the conclusion Socrates draws from Simmias’ conception of philosophy in the *Phaedo* that this conception is extremely problematic. Socrates formulates the benefits of the philosophical life in terms of benefits for the afterlife immediately after distinguishing between ‘philosophical and ‘non-philosophical’ virtues. He says that non-philosophical courage is when people face evil “through terror at greater evils.” (68d) He concludes that “all but the philosophers are courageous by fearing and fear. And yet it’s certainly unreasonable (ἄλογόν) for somebody to be courageous by fear and cowardice.” He goes on,

. . . maybe this isn't the right way of making exchanges for virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and terror for terror and the greater for the less, as if they were coins (νομίσματα); but maybe this alone is the right coin for virtue, the coin for which all things must be exchanged – φρόνησις. Maybe this is the genuine coin for which and with which all things must be bought and sold; and maybe courage and moderation and justice and true virtue as a whole *are* only when accompanied by φρόνησις, regardless of whether pleasures and terrors and all such things are added or subtracted. (69a-b)

The first thing to note about this passage is that, if Socrates is to be taken at his word here, without φρόνησις we cannot have true virtue, but merely what he calls a “shadow-painting” of virtue (69b). He has just shown, based on Simmias’ conception of the true philosopher, that φρόνησις is impossible for an embodied being, and therefore virtue would be impossible as well. More importantly for our purposes here, it is immediately after this passage that Socrates, in light of the impossibility of virtue and φρόνησις, gives the account of the benefits of the philosophical life as being benefits – in some sense, the *pleasures* of dwelling with the gods and the avoidance of the *pains* of lying in muck – in the afterlife.¹³⁴ Thus, Simmias’ account of the preparation for death as the proper work of the true philosopher – understood as preparing the soul for separation from the body – has led to the “shadow-painting” of virtue in which the philosopher exchanges pleasures in this life for pleasures in the afterlife.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Bluck apparently misses the importance of this account of virtue when he says it is “the essence of Plato’s creed” that: “Only purification can qualify us for *bliss* in the life after death.” (1955, p 47, emphasis added) Socrates is *clearly* attempting to get his interlocutors to see the inconsistency here, and thus to seek virtue for its own good, and not for hope of “bliss” in Hades, just as he seeks to show that the just, ordered soul is good in itself in the *Republic*.

¹³⁵ Weiss has an excellent analysis of this argument, and on hedonic calculus more generally. Specifically, she compares the treatments of this calculus in the *Phaedo* and *Protagoras*. She concludes that the major difference in the way Socrates argues is based in the different interlocutors Socrates is dealing with. “When we leave the world of *Protagoras* and turn once again to the *Phaedo*, we find ourselves in arguably more familiar surroundings, in a world where pleasure is not the only value and where some people – philosophers – actually value *phronesis* over pleasure.” (1989, p 520). See also Weiss 1987.

This set of observations raises the question: What is the purpose of the philosophical life? If we have reason to believe, from the dialogue, that a pseudo-Orphic purification of the soul for the sole purpose of gaining benefits in the afterlife is *not*, in fact, the goal of a true philosopher, then what is that goal? In what sense is philosophy a “practice of dying?”

Whatever answers we discover to these questions, it is clear that the problematic conception of philosophy as the practice of purifying the soul of bodily pleasures stems from the conception of the body as the source of all human problems, as an obstacle to knowledge, and as something to be “turned away from.” It seems, then, that this conception of soul and body as simply distinct, and even *opposing*, entities is not the final teaching of the *Phaedo*, much less that of Plato.

1.6 Digression: Self-Conception, Responsibility, and the Foreign Body

The true-born philosophers blame the body for all evils in the world: “The body and *its* desires are the only cause of wars and factions (στάσεις) and battles.” (66c, emphasis added) In the first chapter, I argued that the first word of the dialogue, αὐτός, referring to Phaedo “himself,” opens up questions of personal identity. It became clear in that discussion that identifying the “self” with certain constellations of desires, and treating other desires as external to the self, can allow a person to disown such desires. This process allows a person to deny responsibility for being the source of those desires,

and thus to avoid dealing with the painful aspects of self-knowledge that such an admission of responsibility might create.

Here I will argue that the proper understanding of the relation between soul and body does not allow us to avoid this responsibility; relating ourselves to our desires and our fears is wrestling *not* with some foreign entity, but with the truth of ourselves – a truth which is troublingly diverse, lacking the harmony and unity that we might want to assume of ourselves, and rife with cognitive dissonance. Dealing in and with the variety of *stories* we tell ourselves in order to either face up to or to avoid these responsibilities, to either achieve or avoid self-knowledge, will be revealed as the proper work of philosophy. This will, in turn, allow us to see to what extent misogyny is the worst *πάθε* that a person can undergo.

We have seen that the primary story through which the body has been presented is one of externalization: The body is something foreign to the self.¹³⁶ I have argued that this

¹³⁶ Hackforth argues that this strict opposition between soul and body isn't present in the other accounts of Socrates, including the *Apology*: "The conception of the mind or soul (*ψυχή*) and the body as hostile to each other, which runs through this section (64c ff.), goes further than anything said by the Socrates of the *Apology*. He there says 'What I do as I go about amongst you is simply to urge both young and old not to make their bodies nor their possessions their primary and chief concern, but rather to strive for the fullest perfection of their souls.' (30a-b)" (1955, p 48) He concludes from this that the opposition of soul and body is *Plato's* conception, not that of Socrates. I argue that this is rather a result of *Simmias'* misconception, based in a misunderstanding of the way the philosopher resists temptation and is moderate in seeking physical pleasures, rather than totally ascetic. On this point, see Bluck 1955: "When set against some of Plato's other works – and particularly, perhaps, the *Symposium* – the *Phaedo* might appear at first sight to recommend a morality that is strangely ascetic. It seems to recommend that the pleasures of this life should be almost entirely eschewed." (p 2) However, Bluck does not see any inconsistency, and thus does not use Socrates' stance toward pleasure in virtually all of the other dialogues to interfere with his interpretation of the account of pleasure placed in the mouths of the "true-born philosophers," and based in *Simmias'* answers: "But there is no real inconsistency: the contrast lies in the difference of standpoint from which the two dialogues are written." (ibid.) He explains that the *Symposium* and *Republic* are concerned with the "ordinary virtue of the ordinary worldly man," while the *Phaedo* is solely concerned with "the philosopher alone." (ibid.) However, *if* Bluck, and the "true-born philosophers," claim that the root of the status of these pleasures lies in the *nature of the soul* (as distinct from the body and as only

λόγος serves to absolve the individual from responsibility for “base” desires. We have also seen how this absolution is connected to Simmias’ conception of the concern with desire and *θεραπείας* of the body as unphilosophical.

The dialogue also presents us with another image of projection of emotions or desires onto a ‘foreign’ entity in order to avoid responsibility. After Socrates presented the argument we have just discussed – the argument proving that body and ‘its’ desires are an impediment to the work of the “true-born philosophers” – Cebes “broke in” (*ὑπολαβὼν*, again) and said:

Socrates, the rest seems to me to have been beautifully put (*δοκεῖ καλῶς λέγεσθαι*), but what you said about the soul induces a lot of distrust (*ἀπιστίαν*) in human beings. They fear that the soul, once she’s free of the body is no longer anywhere and is destroyed and perishes on that very day when a human being dies; and that as soon as she is free of the body and departs, then, scattered like breath or smoke, she goes fluttering off and is no longer anywhere. (70a)

The conversants then press upon Socrates that he should show that the soul continues to exist “somewhere” (*εἴπερ εἴη που*) after death, in order to defend the conclusions he drew from the argument based in Simmias’ conception of the “true philosophers.”

Socrates then presents the argument of the generation from opposites, and the argument from recollection; however, he finds that he has still failed to convince them. Socrates states that reason for this is that they have a “childish” fear that the soul will be blown away when they die (77e). Cebes, “with a laugh,” dismisses the suggestion that *he* has a childish fear. Projecting that fear onto something external to himself, Cebes says

seeking the good) and its relation to the body (as the source of all base desires, and of all factions and strife), *then* Bluck’s account of the inconsistency does not make sense; that is, there is no reason to think that the nature of soul and body, and their relation, are any different for the philosopher than for the “ordinary man.”

that Socrates should persuade (ἀναπαίθειν) them “not as if *we* were afraid – perhaps even in us there’s some child present who is terrified by such things.” (77e)

Ronna Burger says the following about this projection:

(Cebes) projects his internal dissention onto an autonomous and alien being by transforming Socrates’ accusation of “childish fear” into “the child in us” who fears. The tension between Socrates’ adjective and Cebes’ noun points to the question of whether “the psyche in us” is anything other than a reification of the quality of “ensouled” body: it was only, indeed, by projecting all internal dissention onto the body as alien that the genuine philosophers could postulate the separability of the psyche as an autonomous being.¹³⁷

In this passage she astutely connects the issue of personal responsibility to the issue of the reification of the soul. When we think of the soul as a “thing,” we begin to see it as distinct from the body (and as we have seen, as *opposed* to the body), *and* we begin to see it as the bearer of characteristics, as the “subject” which would be the bearer of predicates. This is a common and understandable tendency of thought; it is a tendency which Simmias and Cebes exhibit throughout the dialogue, and which is virtually demanded by grammar.

There are, however, real dangers in succumbing uncritically to this tendency, as I will demonstrate. Our discussion of the second-sailing will show that the dialogue is asking us to consider how the stories we tell ourselves, and the stories we inherit from the πόλις – and in which we participate by ‘re-telling’ and enacting them in our personal and political lives – affect our self-understanding; this self-understanding, in turn, affects how we understand our *ethical* life to be structured. In this specific instance, we can see, as Burger has claimed, that the common conception of the self as soul and body (cf. 79b) is intimately connected with a conception of death as the separation of the one ‘thing’ from

¹³⁷ 1984, p 85.

the other ‘thing.’ We saw earlier how Socrates points to this connection in his satire of this view by beginning the account with the playful reversal of its usual structure, speaking of the body as being freed from the soul at death. With this firmly established tradition of self-understanding, it is easy for the “true-born philosophers” to claim that the body, an external *thing*, is responsible for the desires which they name as the source of all faction and strife, not *they themselves*. Cebes is engaging in the same tendency of thought when he disowns the fear of death that Socrates claims drives his distrust of the λόγος Socrates is presenting. With this picture in mind, the ethical life is a “turning away” from a set of desires foreign and alien to the self. We have already seen how this conception of the self makes serious consideration of and concern with the “so-called pleasures of the body” appear to be a non-philosophical concern.

§2. Purity, Blending, and Opposition in the Ψυχή

I have shown that the simple transcendence of the physical cannot be taken as the unequivocal goal of the philosopher. If it was, philosophy would be useless for guiding embodied human life, useless for developing the practical wisdom necessary to withstand fear and temptation, and would be reduced to a pseudo-religious practice designed to gain benefits in the afterlife. As we have seen, this trading of the “pains” of temperance and justice in this life for pleasures in the afterlife is explicitly said *not* to be the goal of philosophy – which can be seen from within the context of the *Phaedo*, and which

appears with greater clarity if we look to the discussion of justice and φρόνησις in the *Republic*.

Socrates' courage in the face of death must be accounted for by something other than his supposed certainty in the continued existence of his individual soul after death; by analogy, the account of the soul and the forms as χωριστός must be accounted for by something other than supposed access to another τόπος. Additionally, I will show that Socrates' *philosophical* poise in the face of death can be distinguished from *religious* certainty in the different understandings of *purity* that they involve. As I argued in Chapter 1, Plato is playing on religious conceptions of purification in the *Phaedo*. These conceptions are undergoing a transformation in Plato's texts. Understanding this transformation will be critical for understanding the philosophical, as opposed to religious, reaction to the fear of death and the attendant desire for purity; it will also be critical for understanding the philosophical way of life that orients itself in relation to the recognition of human finitude, and the inevitability of death.

That is, both a religious and philosophical life and conception of reality arise as reactions to the fear of death. For both, there is an attempt to purify the soul of this fear, and to live out of something other than this emotional reaction. The differences appear when we note that the religious thinker denies their own finitude, claiming that they have within themselves a purity which allows for immortality, and for contact with Truth. For Plato, I will argue, this amounts to a denial of the Delphic Maxim "know thyself" – an

aphorism which I have argued calls for a recognition that one is *mortal* as preparation for hearing the words of the oracle – and a denial of the human situation.¹³⁸

The *Phaedo*, as Socrates' death scene, ending with the presence of a *corpse*, refuses to let us forget this mortality. In the face of this body, in recognition of the decomposition it will soon undergo, it is difficult to forget the limitations of the human situation. At the end of the dialogue we are left with a body that will need to be handled and washed by those left behind; this is the origin of the *philosophical* ethical gesture that Socrates inaugurates by bathing before he dies in order to save the women “the trouble of bathing a corpse” (115a). The religious gesture concerns itself with how the treatment of the body will affect the fate of the soul. For Socrates, this is not a concern; it is not how his body is treated after death, but rather how he chose to live, that affects his fate (115c). His concern is not for his own soul, but for the still-living women he sees in front of him, who will have to deal with this corpse. The religious traditions of Plato's time sought to purify themselves of this corpse, this tomb; in the very structure of the *Phaedo*, Plato reminds us of the origin of this desire for purity by re-presenting to us the physicality of Socrates' cold, unmoving, corpse. In so doing, he reminds each of his readers of their own physicality, and of the impending inevitability of their own deaths.

¹³⁸ In his interpretation of the *Cratylus* in *Being and Logos*, John Sallis points out that Socrates there hypothesizes a “law-giver” of names who has direct access to Truth, and being itself, *unmediated by language*. What distinguishes the lawgiver, as the proper giver of names is that the lawgiver has access to the things themselves *unmediated by language* (389d). When the interlocutors turn to judging if the lawgiver has done his job well, they have to assume that they have, as did the lawgiver, pure access to beings distinguished in their being without needing the names which the lawgiver gave in order to distinguish these beings in the first place. As such, they have “abstracted” from the real function of naming, which is to distinguish beings in their being. Sallis states, “As a result of this abstraction, *which amounts to a forgetfulness of the condition of man*, a self-forgetfulness, the lawgiver proved to be comic, and what followed proved to be a comedy.” (1975, p 306)

In this discussion of the presentation of purity in the *Phaedo*, a certain conception of purity will appear as an impossibility; this observation will lead to a consideration of the nature of an impure, “blended” life – a life caught between carnal physicality and daemonic transcendence – as the proper context for philosophical practice.

Before turning to the explicit discussion of the purification of the soul, it is necessary to see how the issue of projection of purity in the face of uncertainties inherent in the “blended” nature of human existence is raised early in the dialogue.

2.1 The Ατόπος Blending of Pleasure and Pain

The issue of blending is raised early in the dialogue. At 59a, as Phaedo begins his account of the philosophical conversation that took place on the day of Socrates death, he states that neither the usual pleasure at discussing philosophy nor the pity he would expect at seeing a friend about to die “came into” (εἴσειμι) him. Rather, a “simply absurd (ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπόν)” πάθος was present in him: “an unusual blend (κρᾶσις), blended (συγκεκραμένη) together from pleasure and pain too.” (59a) Phaedo notes that the others were in this condition as well, “sometimes laughing, sometimes weeping, and one of us especially – Appolodorus. I suppose you know the man and the way he is (τρόπον αὐτοῦ).” (59b)

Socrates makes an observation similar to, but importantly different from, Phaedo’s about the ἄτοπος “blend” of pleasure and pain when the shackles are removed from his legs;

How absurd a thing this seems to be, gentlemen, which human beings call (καλοῦσιν) “pleasant!” How wondrously (θαυμασίως) related it is by nature to its seeming (δοκοῦν) contrary – the Painful – in that they’re not both willing to

be present with a human being at the same time, but if somebody chases the one and catches it, he's pretty much compelled always to catch the other one too, just as if the pair of them – although they're two – were fastened by one head! (60b)

Socrates is not amazed by an *unusual* experience of “blending,” as Phaedo was, but rather by their “wondrous” relation; while the two are not “willing” to be present together, they are inseparable.¹³⁹

Unlike Phaedo, Socrates does not claim to be speaking about pleasure and pain “themselves”; rather, he speaks of what people *call* (καλοῦσιν) pleasure and pain. He remarks that its relation to its “seeming” (“what people believe to be,” δοκοῦν) opposite

¹³⁹ Kenneth Dorter argues that that the significance of Socrates discussing what people “call” pleasant is that he is deriding the bodily pleasures (1982, p 23-24); thus, this passage *could* be read as an account of a *spiritual* pleasure that would not be accompanied and sullied by its attending opposite, pain, upon the inevitable cessation of that pleasure (see also Hackforth 1955, p 33, n 2). We will find that while this reading makes some sense of this passage alone, the reading we are interested in of the dialogue as a whole shows this desire for a “pure” pleasure to be a questionable expression of the human will to purity and personal immortality. While Dorter’s reading makes some sense of the passage, it assumes too easily the distinction between physical and spiritual pleasures. He claims that Phaedo, at 59a, is describing “mental” feelings which allow for mixture, as opposed to the physical pleasures Socrates describes at 60b,c – which people “call” pleasure – which do not allow for any mixing. As such, Dorter defines the pleasure and pain Phaedo describes as being of the type that, as “mental” pleasure, are not attached to their relative opposite; i.e. physical pleasure is always made impure by the fact that at the cessation of that pleasure, pain will result, while “mental” pleasures do not have this attendant relative opposite. However, it is not clear from the *Phaedo* that Phaedo’s sorrow at the loss of his friend is not intrinsically connected to the joy of having a friend in the first place; nor is it clear that his pleasure in partaking in philosophical discussion not always attended by the displeasure of having to stop such discussions to deal with worldly matters. The central issue that Dorter’s analysis misses is that the distinction between bodily, and thus ‘base’ pleasures and “mental” pleasures, which we would desire to be pure of any bodily element, is not at all clear. He makes reference to the *Republic*’s more detailed account of pleasure, at 583bff; however, in that text, different kinds of pleasure are not distinguished by the simple body/soul dichotomy, but are rather distinguished by being the pleasures proper to different parts *within the soul itself*. Dorter’s reference to the account of unmixed pleasures in the *Philebus* is even more problematic, considering the problems associated with that difficult text in general, and with the fact that smells are listed among the unmixed, “pure,” pleasures (at 51e); thus, the idea that pure pleasures are those of the soul and impure are those of the body cannot hold. Further, at 52a, Socrates says that they must agree that the pleasures of learning are unmixed *if* they agree that there is no “hunger for learning,” which is not entirely obvious; we would also have to agree that there is no pain associated with forgetting what once had been learned.

is “wondrous” (θαυμασίως).¹⁴⁰ In his wonder, Socrates composes a μῦθος, as he says Aesop might have, had he noticed this wondrous facet of experience.

He says that it is “as if” the two were fastened by one head (60b); this is a strange and striking image. Socrates anthropomorphizes pleasure and pain by projecting a will, or desire, onto them: They are not “willing” to be reconciled, as he says at 60c. However, “the god” wants them to end their war. Unable to accomplish this, the god fastened their heads together so that one would always follow the other (ibid.). In this passage, Socrates gives *two* accounts of how pleasure and pain come to be “wondrously” related. In the Aesopian μῦθος, there is an original dyad that is unified by the power of the god. On the other hand, there is the *human* will to separate them – to keep them *pure* from one another; in an act of personification, there is a projection “onto the feelings themselves of the human will to separate them.”¹⁴¹ Burger comments: “If . . . the attempt to unify pleasure and pain were really successful, they would together become one, or if the attempt to separate them were really successful, each would become one with no relation to the other. Addition and division thus constitute not only opposite causes of how two comes to be, but the same opposite causes of how one comes to be.”¹⁴²

This is *precisely* the perplexity that leads Socrates, according to his account of his own philosophical development later in the dialogue, in search of the “safe” answer to the αἰτία of anything becoming “one” or “two.” (96e ff.) Here, we find that the two stories present a tension between the divine will to unify pleasure and pain, on the one hand, and the human will (projected onto the feelings themselves) to separate out *what they call*

¹⁴⁰ We will see how this issue of Socrates’ wonder being called out by this relation between “seeming” opposites is fleshed-out in his account of Simmias as both ‘big’ and ‘small’ at 102a-e.

¹⁴¹ Burger 1984 p 27.

¹⁴² Ibid.

pleasure and pain. *Humans, in their act of naming, set out a unique form for each thing; they subsequently desire that the world be in accord with their naming.* When the world does not present itself in accord with these distinctions, we find it to be absurd (ἄτοπος), or out of place. Phaedo is puzzled because he discovered, in attending to his experience, the wondrous fact of the connection between pleasure and pain without being able to *articulate* this experience. Phaedo, working in names – what people *call* pleasure and pain – cannot make *sense* of his experience, and retreats from this puzzlement, calling it ἄτοπος and ἄτεχνος – not to be accessed by τέχνη; Socrates experiences *wonder*, and composes both a λόγος and a μῦθος about the experience.¹⁴³

Phaedo and Socrates' different reactions stem from the way they encounter the world and form λόγοι in relation to their experience – specifically to their experience of blending and the desire for purity. It is also clear that the question of *naming* – which is raised in Socrates' account of what people “call” pleasure and pain, and is central to his account of his second sailing (cf 102b and 103b) – and the place of the λόγοι that we tell concerning the nature and cause of anything, will prove central to an account of what the self is when understood *as* a unity, a one, formed “out of” two, body and soul; we will

¹⁴³ “While it seeks to explain why pleasure follows on the withdrawal of pain, the Aesopian mythos presupposes that each is nonproblematic in itself. The Socratic account, in contrast, which considers how strangely these apparent opposites are related by “nature,” points to the problematic character of each in itself. The Aesopian mythos thus assumes what the Socratic account makes into a problem: What is the so-called pleasant or the painful? It is because it implicitly raises this question – at least once it is contrasted with the mythos – that Socrates' account can be labeled a logos.” (Burger 1984, p 27). For a good account of “the relation between philosophical λόγος (rational account) and poetic μῦθος (myth or story),” as he puts it, see Roochnik 2001.

find that Socrates wants us to understand this formation of one “out of” two in a non-mythological and non-materialistic sense.¹⁴⁴

2.2 The Will to Purity

Central to the conception of φρόνησις which the “true philosophers” conceive themselves to be working toward is the concept of *purity* – ειλικρινής or καθαρός. These two words, which seem to be used interchangeably in the passages before us, play an interesting role in the argument of the “true philosophers.” I argue that Socrates’ ‘mythical’ account of the purity of pleasure from pain is instructive in understanding how the purity desired by the “true philosopher” is itself a projection. In that account, the purity of pleasure from pain was revealed to be a *projection* of the human will that they be clearly and unambiguously pure of one another, which is projected onto an anthropomorphized form of the feelings themselves. It will become clear that the concept of purity that dominates the interlocutors’ understanding is the result of a projection of the *human will* to purity and transcendence; it is the result of their fear of death and of their desire to live forever that the soul appears as a discrete, quasi-physical entity which can flee to another τόπος, unharmed, when one dies. The source of the ‘wondrous hold’ this conception of the ψυχή has on them is precisely this fear of death and desire for “salvation,” *not* a clear, rational understanding. That is, desire for “purity” and

¹⁴⁴ We have already encountered, right at the outset of the dialogue, this issue of λόγος in determining unity and identity in the account of the Athenians “saying” that the ship that left the day Socrates was convicted is “the same” ship that Theseus sailed on. (58a-b) Further, immediately after speaking about pleasure and pain, Socrates says he encounters the “same” dream in many different “aspects” (φαινόμενον) at 60e. The “sameness” that identifies it *as* the “same” is, as Burger puts it, “determined by one and the same logos it commands.” (Burger 1984, p 28)

transcendence explains the rising power of organizations such as the Mystery Cults, who propose to purify their followers of evil – without the difficult work of introspection and temperance – in the same movement that they guarantee them salvation and a place among the blessed for eternity, so to speak.

At 65e, Socrates subtly asks us to call into question the conception of a ‘pure’ soul in contact with ‘pure’ forms, as we saw above. Socrates chooses as examples for this contact “Bigness, Health, and Strength,” which give us pause and ask us to re-think the place of the body in knowledge. He then says ἐνὶ λόγῳ “all the rest,” implying that the unity of what “each happens to be” is, in some sense, in λόγος (65e).¹⁴⁵ Socrates suggests that the person who can come to “recognize” or “learn to know” (γινῶναι) each thing is the one who best prepares himself to think through, as exactly as possible, each of the things that he or she “looks at” (σκοπεῖ) (65e).

With Simmias’ agreement to this, Socrates asks if the man who best prepares himself is the one who most “purely” (καθαρότατα) approaches each thing, and who uses “pure” (εἰλικρινεῖ) thought itself, to “hunt down” each of the beings that is “pure” (εἰλικρινές) and itself by itself (65e-66a).¹⁴⁶ “Purity” takes on a three-fold aspect: to *purely* approach *pure* things themselves is to use *pure* διάνοια itself. That is, *we*, as individual thinkers, achieve purity in our search for truth by turning away from the evidence of the senses. We turn away from objects in the physical world that are accessible to the senses and exist in an impure state (everything that we might say is

¹⁴⁵ Cf Burger 1984, p 41-42.

¹⁴⁶ The variety of uses of “purity” also reminds us that the purity of the soul from the body is intimately connected to the purity of the “Forms” from sensible particulars, and thus we see again that the conception of the χωρισμός that such purity implies is connected in the two cases.

“big” in the world is also, from some other perspective “small” – cf 102a ff.) and turn to that which exists purely, itself by itself. The means we employ to this end must be themselves pure – pure *διάνοια* without the admixture of the senses. There is a preparation of the mechanism of knowledge to the intended object of the knowledge, and through this, the individual using the mechanism becomes herself purified.

Unfortunately, on this conception, purity is an impossibility for embodied beings. These passages are full of religious imagery, and play upon the religious conception of the *ψυχή* that took hold of the Athenian imagination in the 5th and 4th centuries, and specifically, which have a hold on Simmias and Cebes. Socrates plays upon this desire for purity and *personal* immortality¹⁴⁷ – just as he explicitly points to the fear of death in his interlocutors – in order to encourage his listeners to begin to develop a conception of knowledge and of *φρόνησις* which will turn their soul away from the “things of this world.” This does *not* mean turning to a spiritual *τόπος*, but rather to what might be called the “spiritual” dimensions of human existence – specifically, to care of the *ψυχή*. In order to accomplish this, however, Socrates must turn the souls of his listeners by working *within the conceptions which have some resonance with what they already believe*. This is why it is essential that we attend to the *zeitgeist* in which Plato has composed these dialogues; Plato is attempting to transform the Greek understanding of the *ψυχή*, and of *ἀρετή*.

¹⁴⁷ On the failing of the first argument for the immortality of the soul, Davis writes: “[Cebes] senses the inadequacy of the first argument; it had not sufficiently preserved the *individual* soul, the self.” (1980, p 568, emphasis added) I will argue that *none* of the arguments in the dialogue are able to accomplish this.

2.3 Opposites, Τόπος, and the Persistent Fear of Death

At 70a, after Socrates has argued that the “true-born philosopher” prepares for death by purifying himself of the body, Cebes says that, while the “rest” has been beautifully stated, the part concerned with the soul (περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς) “induces a lot of distrust (ἀπιστίαν) in human beings.” (70a) He asks Socrates to prove that the soul will not “scatter like breath or smoke” when the person dies, but will “be *somewhere* (πού)” (ibid, emphasis added). It is clear that the conception of the soul as continuing to exist after death is, in Simmias and Cebes’ minds, intimately tied to the physicality and quasi-materiality of the ψυχή as existing in a τόπος.

There is an implicit connection here between *being* and *presence*: If something *is*, then it is *somewhere*. The interlocutors are unable to conceive of the existence of the ψυχή without conceiving of it as a rarified *substance* – like breath or smoke – which exists in a location. One of Plato’s central concerns is to drive readers to overcome this limitation, and to develop a conception of being other than physical presence. This conception is essential to understanding how the body and soul are “blended” in a non-physical sense, and indeed, to understand the being of the ψυχή itself. It is Plato’s intention that we develop a way of understanding how the body and soul are separable *without* thinking of the soul as a ghostly presence hovering somewhere inside the body. Thus, the concept of blending we will work toward developing will be more akin to the way one and one ‘come together’ to form two.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ The situation of the relation between being and presence arises explicitly in the passage where Socrates confesses his perplexity about how one and one come together to form two. There, he (playfully, as I will argue) states that he does not know if the two ones “coming close to each

Socrates' first argument toward overcoming the distrust (ἀπιστίαν) Cebes spoke of is the argument from opposites. He introduces this argument by asking Cebes what they should do (or make: ποιῶμεν); he asks Cebes if he wants them to tell a more thorough *story* or myth (διαμυθολογῶμεν – 70b) to see if their account of the philosophical life is a “likely” (εἰκὸς) story (70a).¹⁴⁹ We will see that the “likelihood” of the story Socrates proceeds to tell, in the form of an argument, is based in Cebes' fore-conception of death, and his *completely unexamined conception* of the nature of the ψυχή. It *seems* likely to Cebes because what he already believes is being mirrored back to him through the way his own answers to Socrates' questions drive the discussion forward. Socrates thus attempts to reveal the inconsistencies and contradictions in Cebes' understanding.

Socrates begins his story with a problematic mixing of traditions:

And let's investigate (σχεψώμεθα) it in some such way as this: Either the souls of human beings who've met their end are in Hades or they are not. Now there's a certain ancient (παλαιός) account (λόγος), one that we hold in memory (μεμνήμεθα), that souls *are* There having arrived from here, and that they arrive here again and come to be (γίγνεσθαι) from the dead. And if this is so, and the living come to be again out of those who've died, could anything else be the case but that our souls *are* There? If they weren't somewhere, they couldn't come to be again; and it'd be sufficient proof (ικανόν τεκμήριον) that this is so, if in could in fact become clear that the living come to be from nowhere else but from the dead. But if this isn't so, we'd need another account (λόγου). (70c-d)

other” is the cause of their becoming two. (97a) In Chapter 7, I will show that the soul is separable from the body *only in λόγος*.

¹⁴⁹ Cf *Timaeus* 29d. Also, see Sallis 1999, p 55. Hackforth takes διαμυθολογῶμεν to simply mean “talk things over.” He bases his interpretation on his personal conviction that Socrates is in earnest in these arguments, and thus Plato must not have intended us to think of his accounts as a μῦθος as opposed to a λόγος (1955, p 58). Hackforth takes the purpose of the arguments to be “a scientific proof.” Burnet says – of the appearance of μυθολογείν at 61e – that “Socrates regards all definite statements with regard to the next life as μῦθοι i.e. as not λόγοι.” (1911) He does not, however, take the proof of continued existence to be in question, merely the *nature* of the afterlife.

There are several notable issues in this passage: 1. Socrates begins his story with a presentation of the traditional account of souls traveling to Hades after death – an account that can be seen in Homer, and is understood as the basic conception of the afterlife in Greek mythology. However, he *immediately* introduces the Pythagorean concept of reincarnation without commenting on the tension and contradiction between these traditions. It seems that he is trying to evoke in Cebes the recognition that this unresolved tension points to deep conflicts within Cebes’ own unexamined ideas about the nature of the afterlife.¹⁵⁰

2. Connected to Socrates’ blending of traditions, and Cebes’ lack of attention to the problematic nature of this tension, is Socrates’ comment that this is an account which is ancient (παλαιός), and which we hold in memory (μεμνήμεθα). The fact that Cebes has not undertaken the process of examination that would reveal this tension draws our attention once again to the *way* we hold a λόγος, and to the kind of hold that a traditional, unexamined λόγος can have on us. This, again, reminds us to be on our guard against too-readily accepting traditional conceptions of the soul without careful examination.¹⁵¹

3. Socrates subtly raises the question of whether or not it is possible to become clear about such an issue. He says that we would have sufficient proof of the fact that souls continue to exist in Hades “*if it could be made clear (εἰ τῷ ὄντι φανερόν)*” that the “living come to be from nowhere else than from the dead.” (70d) In this formulation, Socrates points toward the possibility of the *impossibility* of achieving certainty in this

¹⁵⁰ Whether or not Cebes actually holds that the personal soul is immortal is not primarily the issue here. That is, Cebes might, in fact, have held serious doubts about the religious traditions which claim the soul’s immortality, as was fashionable among the intelligencia of Athens. The important point is that he has not undergone the work of thinking through the ontology of the soul, which is what Socrates is trying to reveal to him, and to us, toward the end of being the gadfly spurring us to develop a vocabulary for articulating the nature of the self.

¹⁵¹ As Plato *explicitly* warns us at 92d.

issue – perhaps because of the difficulty inherent in anything becoming *evident* (φανερόν) to the living regarding what happens with the dead. This possibility of agnosticism – of maintaining a stance of wonder and uncertainty with regard to the divine – is raised at several points in the dialogue, notably at 85c, where Simmias says that “to know anything sure about such matters *in our life now* is something impossible or altogether hard. . .” (emphasis added). Further, Socrates, after spinning his elaborate myth about the fate of the soul in the true Earth, implies that holding to the details of any account of the afterlife “isn’t fitting for a man with any mind (οὐ πρόκειται νοῦν ἔχοντι).” (114d) We also note that Socrates simply *states*, without argument, that reincarnation is impossible unless the soul exists “somewhere,” and further, that this somewhere must be Hades and nowhere else.

4. It is important to note that the passage draws on the Pythagorean theme of reincarnation. Simmias and Cebes are both, of course, Pythagoreans, but they are Pythagoreans of a type common to their generation in Athens; specifically, they are not concerned with the ethical teachings of Pythagoreanism, but have great interest in the mathematical cosmology of Pythagoras as taught by Philolaus.¹⁵² Further, Phaedo is

¹⁵² See Kahn 2001: “A late but credible tradition reports that the early Pythagoreans were divided into two schools, the *akousmatikoi*, characterized by their faithful adherence to the *akousmata* or ritual observances, and the *mathematikoi*, who were concerned with more scientific philosophy.” (p 72) See also Burkert 1972, p 192ff. On this point, see also Gadamer: “(Simmias and Cebes) stand for that particular sort of mathematical investigation, theory of music, and cosmological knowledge which has, as not the least of its sources, Pythagorean teachings. And beyond this, as we shall see, they are quite at home in the natural science, biology, and medicine of their day. Now one should keep in mind that in the *Apology* Plato represents Socrates, not as an expert in modern science at all but, on the contrary, as one who himself repeatedly asserts his own ignorance of science and who restricts himself to the moral problems of mankind and to self-knowledge.” (1980, p 23) Gadamer goes on to say that Plato’s choice of Pythagoreans for the discussion with Socrates on the day of his death “is *obviously* meant to show that Plato saw it as his own task to unite the moral introspection for which Socrates stood with the scientific knowledge represented by Pythagoreanism.” (ibid., emphasis added) In my discussion of the second sailing, I will argue that this conclusion is far from obvious; I will show that such

telling the story of Socrates' death to Echeocrates, who is said to be a Pythagorean himself, in the town of Philus, which is a Peloponnesian city associated with Pythagoreans. Pythagoras' spirit was also known to his followers as *Αὐτός*; considering that *αὐτός* is the first word of the dialogue in which Phaedo tells a Pythagorean a story of Socrates' conversation with two Pythagoreans, in a town associated with Pythagoreans, it is fair to say that Pythagoras' spirit "hangs heavy over the *Phaedo*."¹⁵³

With this in mind, it is interesting that while Simmias and Cebes are "Pythagoreans," they are unaware of the Pythagorean prohibition against suicide (61d).¹⁵⁴ It seems that although they are Pythagoreans in terms of their "metaphysical" beliefs, they remain unaware of the ethical dimensions of their own tradition. That is, Simmias and Cebes seem to be concerned with doctrines of the type Philolaus expresses in his book "On Nature," and not with the *ἄκουσµατα* which demand radical and esoteric asceticism. Specifically, they appear to be concerned with explanations of what is "in the heavens and beneath the earth"; they are interested in the *mathematical* dimensions of

"scientific knowledge," *understood in the wrong way*, also poses the threat of misology and blindness to the questions of "moral introspection."

¹⁵³ Brann 1998, p 3.

¹⁵⁴ Socrates expresses surprise that they are unaware of this since they have both "spent time with Philolaus." (61d) According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Philolaus of Croton, in southern Italy, was a Greek philosopher/scientist, who lived from ca. 470 to ca. 385 BC and was thus a contemporary of Socrates. He is one of the three most prominent figures in the Pythagorean tradition . . . He wrote one book, *On Nature*, which was probably the first book to be written by a Pythagorean." There is a substantial discussion of the short conversation on suicide in Miles 2001. He concludes that: ". . .it appears that Plato is wrestling here, as most everywhere in the *Phaedo*, with the tensions between his Socratic inheritance and his own Pythagorean/Orphic religious entanglements, struggling to reconcile them through a philosophical synthesis that still eludes him." (p 257) It is unfortunate that the fact that such synthesis is simply *not* carried out in the dialogue, which he acknowledges, does not lead Miles to ask what else might be at work. As I have argued, Plato has been influenced by Pythagorean thought, but there is no reason to immediately assume that he would carry out a defense of their religious doctrine in so clumsy a manner. It is far more likely – and true to the text – that Socrates is offering these arguments to appeal to his interlocutors' "religious entanglements." On suicide, see also Dorter 1982, p 16ff., Gallop 1999, p 76ff, Hackforth 1955.

Pythagorean theory, not with issues of the best *life* for human beings. Indeed, immediately before beginning his account of the traditional belief in reincarnation, Socrates implicitly refers to this distinction between concern for ethical matters and concern for metaphysical stories about “nature,” by referring to what “comic poets” might say about him discussing death (70b-c). The reference is, of course, to Aristophanes. As Socrates tells us in the *Apology*, Aristophanes accuses Socrates of engaging in metaphysical investigations. Plato clearly wants us to keep in mind that Socrates is in fact *not interested* in such metaphysical speculation, and is further uninterested in materialistic explanations of phenomena. Socrates is apparently trying to turn Simmias and Cebes toward concern with ethical matters – with matters concerning the choice of the best life – in his presentation of the arguments for the immortality of the soul. It is important to note the distinction between ethical and metaphysical concerns, as framed by Plato’s characterization of Simmias and Cebes being unaware of the Pythagorean prohibition against suicide; I will argue that this distinction, in relation to how Socrates’ second sailing focuses him on concerns for the best form of life, is essential to understanding the conception of the soul as that which is the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ of care of the self presented in the dialogue.

5. Socrates’ initial formulation of the process of reincarnation already presents the essential problem which plagues the argument: It is unclear what subject (ὑποκείμενον) underlies the process from death to re-birth. The argument from opposites, at 70c and following, teaches that *everything* comes to be from its opposite. Later in the dialogue Socrates argues that this argument is about *particulars* coming to be from their opposite (103b-c). Thus, it attempts to show that the living *thing* comes to be from the dead *thing*.

When Socrates presents his account – which he said would be a kind of μῦθος – it remains unclear what *thing* makes the journey from the underworld to this world. The living individual is both body and soul. If the *individual* dies, and the soul lives on to be reincarnated, then a *new* living individual would be created, but *not* “from the dead;” in this case the individual, *me*, would not persist beyond death. Rather, a new individual would be created from a “new” body being “joined-together” with a soul which never died, but simply changed its place, its τόπος, from this world to Hades, and back again. Nothing, in this case, would be generated from its “opposite.” The fact that Socrates says that the soul “comes to be” γίγνεσθαι from the dead further underscores this problem.¹⁵⁵ The living individual would “come from” a soul that persisted in the other τόπος and a “new” body. Burger explains this problem as follows:

In presenting the strategy of the argument, Socrates anticipates its systematic confusion of two alternatives: either the psyche is an enduring subject that undergoes a genesis from one place to another, from Hades to the body and back again, or there is a genesis of one thing, the living, into another, the dead, and back again but with no enduring subject that persists through change. (p 55)

This confusion again raises the as-yet-unasked question about the nature of death, and, the nature of the individual as both body *and* soul. There is a radical suppression here of the role of the body in the “joined-together” condition of the individual living thing. With this suppression, there is a further willful ignorance of the possibility that life does not arise from its opposite, death, but rather that life arises *from life*; in this connection, it is

¹⁵⁵ Hackforth claims that the use of γίγνεσθαι cannot imply the coming into being of the soul from the dead, and thus is used simply in the sense of ‘being born,’ i.e. into a body. (1955, p 59) Nonetheless, the use of the term is suggestive of the problems of an account which takes the soul to simply travel from one τόπος to another, and thus of which there would be no ‘coming to be.’

notable that there is no mention of ἕρως in this discussion of the generation of life, just as there is no thematization of the role of the body in the dialogue.¹⁵⁶

In this discussion, the conception of the body and soul as separable and the identification of the “self” with a soul persisting beyond death are linked to the idea of the soul being present after death in another τόπος. Simmias and Cebes’ conception of death as separation of soul and body is intimately connected to the idea of the invisible soul existing in another τόπος. Death is nothing transformative – it is simply the occasion for the ψυχή to travel to Hades.¹⁵⁷ Simmias and Cebes – as we will see when we examine their counter-arguments at 85c-88b – are committed to a ‘spiritual materialism’; that is, they are unable to conceive the reality of the soul, as distinguishable in λόγος from the body, without thinking of that soul existing in a *place*, and thus as existing in terms of physical presence in that place, and thus having being in terms of that physical presence.¹⁵⁸

The most extreme expression of this position comes at 81c-d, where Socrates connects Cebes’ conception of the soul to the existence of ghosts, saying that souls that remain in this τόπος become visible to human beings, wandering around graveyards as “shadowy apparitions.” Surely, this is an ironic play on the limitations in Simmias’ and Cebes’ conceptions of the separable being of the soul *as essentially presence*.

¹⁵⁶ I will argue, in Chapter 8, that there is a conspicuous *lack* of an account the role of the body in the *Phaedo*. This fact is highlighted by the *physicality* of the fate of the soul after death in Socrates’ myth of the True Earth (cf 113dff). Unfortunately, I will not have time to do a thorough examination of this difficult and troubling passage. For good discussions of the myth, see Burger 1984, and Brill 2009.

¹⁵⁷ At *Apology* 40c, Socrates suggests that death is a change of place: Death is “*said to be a change and migration of the soul from this to another place (κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὐσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον)*.” Socrates implies doubt by referring to what the many “say” death is.

¹⁵⁸ For a clear discussion of the logical relation between movement, existence in a τόπος, and having limit or shape, see Kenneth Sayre’s discussion of the *Parmenides* (1983, p 53).

It is important to note, further, that in Socrates' re-telling of the traditional, pseudo-Pythagorean conception of reincarnation, the problem of determining what is the $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$ that underlies the transition from death to life in the argument from opposites mirrors the confusion that drives Socrates toward the second sailing in his autobiographical account. That is, as we mentioned above, the question of how the 'one' that is the soul and the 'one' that is the body come together to form a new 'one' that is the living individual is raised, in the abstract, in his autobiography. There, he specifically raises the issue of the $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$ in this process; he says: "I seem to be far from thinking, I suppose, that I know the cause ($\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$) concerning any of these things I who don't even allow myself to assert that whenever anyone adds a one to a one, the one added to *or* the one that was added has become two, or that the one that was added and the one to which it was added become two by the addition of the one to the other." (96e-97a) He goes on to express the same confusion concerning how two can *also* be caused by splitting a one into two (97a-b).

I will examine this passage in detail later in the dissertation. For now, it is sufficient to note that the question of which 'one' is the underlying one which becomes two is precisely the question raised concerning the transition from life to death; is the soul the 'one' that, when added to the body becomes the two that is the self – which is both body and soul? Further, how are we to understand the 'one' that is the self generating two by splitting into body and soul? These confusions cause Socrates to turn to the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\iota$, to the way people speak about such matters; we will find that we, in following his lead, are given much to consider when we think of this difficulty of relating

the soul and the body, and of the *composite* nature of the self, in terms of how people ‘hold’ these entities in speech and in thinking, and in the stories told about their nature.

2.4 Composition and the Ψυχή

After Socrates has elicited Simmias and Cebes’ agreement, for a moment,¹⁵⁹ that the soul continues exist in another τόπος after death, Cebes raises the issue of the theory of recollection, stating that it confirms their conclusions (at 72e – I will turn to a discussion of this passage later). It is at the conclusion of the argument from recollection that Simmias and Cebes express doubt that the soul will continue to exist *after* death despite their claim to conviction that it existed before birth (77b-c, as I discussed in Chapter 2). Socrates immediately identifies the source of this doubt to be their “childish” fear of death, and proceeds to give another argument for the incorruptibility of the soul, which has come to be called the “Affinity Argument” (78b-84b).

In this argument, Socrates likens the soul to the simple, invisible, and incorruptible forms; Simmias and Cebes have already expressed their affirmation of the existence of the forms, in the argument from recollection and elsewhere. Socrates then likens the *body* to the visible and constantly changing τόπος of physical, perceptible things. He bases this argument on the likeness of the body to composite (σύνθετος), and thus corruptible beings, and the soul’s likeness to simple, and thus non-corruptible beings. I will not discuss this argument in detail, but merely note some of the points of

¹⁵⁹ We saw in Chapter 2 why we have reason to doubt their sincerity in affirming their conviction in the conclusions of the argument from opposites.

the argument which dovetail with the issues that I have raised in my analysis of the dialogue thus far.

Before we begin to discuss this argument, it is prudent to heed the warnings within the dialogue about the level of certainty with which we will be able to accept its conclusions. Beginning his argument, Socrates says they must ask themselves “something like” the following: “What sort of thing is apt to suffer this affection – being scattered – and what sort of thing do we *fear* might suffer this?” (78b, emphasis added) By adding, seemingly superfluously, the consideration of our fears, Socrates draws our attention to the fact that emotions can affect philosophical investigation. This hints at another way to understand how it is *not* merely the body, and *its* desires, that affect our ability to investigate into the being of things, but also our *own* hopes and fears; in this case it seems, as seen above, that the desire for continued existence after death can influence our consideration of the “the things the argument is about.” It is this fear, driven by the traditional conception of ψυχή as our “life’s breath,” and thus as susceptible to being “blown away,” that leads Socrates to phrase the Affinity Argument in terms of a *physical* conception of composition and decomposition.¹⁶⁰

Further, when Socrates has established that the Unseen is non-composite (ἀσύνθετος), and thus is not apt to suffer dispersion, he asks Cebes “is something of ourselves body and something else soul?” (79b) Cebes replies that we are “nothing but”

¹⁶⁰ See also, Gadamer: “. . . he returns his two partners in the discussion to the level of the dogma of the common man, which holds death to be the escaping of one’s life breath and hence something to be feared as the dissolution of oneself. This devolution of the discussion indicates nothing less than that the two friends with whom he is speaking have not yet really grasped the meaning of ψυχή as that concept is worked out in the doctrine of recollection.” (1980, p 27) I do not agree with Gadamer in that I do not take the “doctrine” of recollection to be unambiguously Plato’s teaching, as he appears to; neither do I think a fully worked out concept of the ψυχή appears in that argument.

these two elements. Note that Socrates says that “we” are *both* body and soul. Continuing the argument, Socrates asks if the soul is “a visible or an unseen thing?” (ibid.) Cebes replies that it is “Unseen, *at least by human beings.*” (ibid. emphasis added). Cebes is presumably thinking of the traditional conception of souls existing in Hades as shadows or wraiths of living people, visible to the Gods and other dead souls – and even to Odysseus and other living beings who travel the waterways to reach Hades, the unseen. This is a revealing moment for Cebes; we see that his answers in the arguments are guided by this desire to continue to live as he is, as an individual, in some *physical*, visible form beyond death.

Socrates begins his argument by asking, “Now, is what is composed (συντεθέντι) and is composite (συνθέτω) by nature apt to suffer this: to be divided up (διαϊρεθῆναι) in just the way it was composed? And if anything turns out to be non-composite, isn’t it alone, if anything apt not to suffer this?” (78c) Socrates here links incorruptibility to the “non-composite” nature of things. It is immediately clear that this argument seems to be based in a *physical* understanding of “dispersion,” which is *precisely* the conception he has just mocked several lines earlier, when he speaks of the fear for the dispersion of the soul as greater if the person dies when it’s windy (77e).¹⁶¹ This physicality appears in several places in the Affinity Argument; for example, at 80e Socrates argues that the soul can be set free “pure” if it “drags” nothing of the body along with it into the afterlife. At 81c the soul can be made to be physically perceptible in this world, thus granted visibility, the mark of the bodily, by being made “heavy” through communion with the body and fear of Hades.

¹⁶¹ We will see this unconsciously assumed physicality of the soul again in the case of Simmias’ conception of the soul as a harmony, and with Socrates’ attack on it.

Socrates goes on to argue that the soul, since it is “more like” (συγγενέστερον, ὁμοιότερον) the invisible and unseen “forms,” is more likely to never suffer dispersion, since it is more likely to be non-composite (79b). In order to argue this, as mentioned above, he asks Cebes if “something of ourselves [is] body and something else soul?” (79b) In so doing, he states clearly that *we* are composite. In arguing that the soul is “more likely” to not suffer dispersion, he is *not* able to show that *we* will continue to exist after death; rather, he again raises the issue that we have already encountered several times in the dialogue: What *are* we? Are “we” the soul alone? Or, are we this complex and “joined together” entity?

Simmiias and Cebes consistently fail to ask themselves this question, as they fail to ask the nature of the ψυχή – which they sometimes assume is “part” of them, and other times assume is their essence and true identity; it is clearly Plato’s intent that we, as his readers, not fail to ask this question ourselves. Here we begin to see why Plato would present these ideas if it is *not*, in fact, his teaching that an immortal soul exists, and that the philosopher practices dying by ‘turning’ away from the body and toward this soul – as I have argued it is not. It is only in *presenting* this myriad of conceptions – conceptions that are active and salient, yet whose unexamined diversity lies hidden – that Plato can draw into the light their conflicts, and draw us toward self-examination, and the harmonization of our λόγοι concerning the soul.

Plato is trying to raise a constellation of issues in the minds of his students which are central to the dialogue and to which we must pay careful attention at every stage of our argument: What would be the nature of a disembodied *pure* thinking thing? In asking

this question, we can see a number of reasons within the dialogue – many of which have been discussed above – that indicate that human life would be radically different if we had access to this purity. The conception of the philosophical life which takes us to be divided between the divine and the mortal seeks to identify itself *solely* with a hypothetical divine part of us which has pure access to truth. This conception places φρόνησις beyond our reach as embodied beings by ignoring the composite, temporal nature of human existence; it becomes impossible to develop a skilled, philosophical mode of life if we mistake our embodied nature. It is a recognition of the *limitations* of human knowledge that gives rise to the epistemology that *Phaedo* is working toward, *not* a supposed recognition of a pure access to truth, in this life or any other.

Following the dialogue carefully, we see the difficulties of thinking of human existence as simply divided in this way between the pure, non-composite and eternal soul on the one hand and the impure, composite and constantly changing body; in so doing, we begin to ask ourselves another essential question: What is the source of the *diversity* of drives and desires, thoughts and emotions that we experience? When we approach the dialogue with this question in mind, we discover that the dialogue is *not* merely an attack on the “true-born philosophers’” conception of the body as evil and external to an eternal soul which would satisfy our desire for personal immortality; the dialogue also has much to offer us *positively*, in the way of better ontology of the ψυχή – an ontology that is structured in terms of λόγος, as I will demonstrate.

That is, when we approach the dialogue with the questions of self-knowledge and the ethical life of the soul, we begin to see that there is a conception of the ψυχή rooted in the stories we tell, and the λόγοι by which we gather ourselves to ourselves. This

account reveals the ψυχή to be non-material, separate (χωριστός) from the body, but not a quasi-physical spiritual substance that continues to exist in a τόπος after death. We must first break free of these traditional dogmas – dogmas that largely define Plato’s own time, Socrates interlocutors, and much scholarship on Plato’s works alike – and free of the dichotomies these dogmas trap us within. We then open the possibility of asking again the basic question: What is the source of *unity* which makes a *self* of the Typhonic diversity of desires and aversions, hopes and memories that constitute our experience?

Plato presents us with a variety of traditional accounts of the soul in which it is conceived as a separate entity in order to invoke in us the *question* of the relation between soul and body, and to come to awareness of the essentially embodied nature of human experience. What meaning is there in speaking of embodiment unless there has been a prior separation of soul and body? Only when these aspects of our selves have been pulled apart can the full import of their synthesis be realized. Analogously, only when the source of the intelligibility of our world has been projected into an unseen “beyond” can the claim that this source is integral to *this* world have meaning.

As we find ourselves confronted with the question of the self again, we find that the issue of what we are – the issue of what would be the “object” of self knowledge and the “subject” of ethical demands – is raised in connection, once again, with the issue of what would make a “one,” a “this,” out of a multiplicity. As we continue to investigate this issue in the abstract, as it appears in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere, it will be important to keep in mind what has been said here concerning the multiplicity experienced in the *self*.

What does it mean to be “composite”? What does it mean to “hold together” a multiplicity into a “one”?

This issue has surfaced at several important points in the dialogue, and we will find it to be central to the second sailing, and to the understanding of how *self*-knowledge presents us with a unified self *as* object of ‘care of the soul’ despite the internal multiplicity of the soul. We saw that the very first word – αὐτός – presents us with several dimensions of this issue; how does the name “Phaedo” “hold together” the multiplicity that this name names? How does the Athenians’ λόγος that the ship is the “same” ship, the αὐτός, the one ship that Theseus sailed on ‘make’ it so? How does the λόγος ‘beneath’ the many phenomena in which Socrates’ dream appeared to him make them all ‘one’ dream?¹⁶²

Again, it appears that the issue of λόγος is central, and we can immediately see why; as noted in the discussion of the first word of the dialogue, it is precisely the nature of λόγος to hold together multiplicities. We will have more to say concerning the nature of λόγος as holding together the self, and as providing coherence to the multiplicities within the self, and within experience, when we turn to the second sailing; there, we will begin to lay the groundwork for an account of the αἰτία of this diversity and this unity that is our experience.¹⁶³

¹⁶² For a good discussion of this dream, and dreams in the dialogues more generally, see Roochnik 2001. He notes: “There is thus an internal tension at work here similar to that found in the *Theaetetus*. In that dialogue, Socrates dreams of a world composed of logical “atoms” and their “molecular” composites. But if the world were as thoroughly analyzable as his dream would have it, it would not need a dream to describe it. Similarly, if the world were as beautifully and hopefully rational as the concluding story of the *Phaedo* shows it to be, if the μῦθος were true, it would be unnecessary to tell it.” (p 257) See also Tigner 1970.

¹⁶³ Indeed, we will find that even what we might take to be ‘single’ perceptual experiences appear to participate in this ‘problem’ of unity once we turn to issues of temporality and the diversity of qualities which are present in any perceptible object; e.g. we see some ‘one’ thing as Simmias, a

§3. Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that by attending to the way Plato presents the context of Socrates' arguments concerning the nature and immortality of the soul, we see that the explicit arguments are not to be taken at face value. Specifically, I argued that interpreting the *Phaedo* as a text dedicated to making the conception of the soul that seemed true to its author also seem true to its audience is a misguided approach since this motivation for a text is *specifically* said to be unphilosophical in the dialogue itself. Taking the comments of the dialogue itself as a guide, it is reasonable to conjecture that Plato's intent was to raise the issue of the existence and nature of the soul in his readers, and by raising this question, to guide his audience toward developing the virtue that arises from self-knowledge and care of the soul. It remains to be seen how the abstract philosophical work of inquiring into the nature of the soul is connected to virtuous living, but we have seen that there is a connection between self-care, care of the soul, and ἀρετή, as demonstrated in Chapter 1.

In attending to the deeper levels of the text, I have shown that we cannot take as Plato's doctrine the "true-born philosopher's" claim that the philosophical life is one spent ignoring the pleasures "of the body," nor that the body is the source of all evils. This has proven to be a projection of the responsibility for our own desires onto the body conceived as a pseudo-foreign entity, which we would then do best to 'turn away from.' We have begun to see that the source of the myriad conflicting desires is *not* the presence

man, big, little, courageous, etc, and this recognition of multiplicity in the one thing "summon the intellect" *Republic* 523b.

of some foreign entity, but rather the multiplicity within our own identity. This does *not* mean that the warnings about the dangers of life dedicated to ‘base’ pleasures in the dialogue are simply ironic; it does, however, mean that the distinction between body and soul, with their respective pleasures, is far too blunt a tool to determine what temptations we should and should not resist.

If we cannot project our desires for vicious actions onto a foreign entity called the body, and claim that this body, and not us, is the source of all “factions” in the world, *then we must face the fact that there are factions within ourselves*. If we cannot claim that our erotic desire is the result of a cosmic force or divine Eros inflicting itself upon us, then we must inquire into our selves to find the source of that desire. In the face of this, we are driven to wonder, with Socrates in the *Phaedrus*: “whether I happen to be some wild animal more multiply twisted (πολυπλοκώτερον) and filled with desire (ἐπιτεθυμμένον) than Typhon. . .” (230a) Socrates tells Phaedrus that he is not interested in inquiring into the historical accuracy of myths and other “alien” (ἄλλότρια) things until he has achieved self-knowledge, as the Delphic maxim bids (*Phaedrus* 229e). The search for the source of the *unity* and *harmony* of the self will be at the heart of much of the work done in the next chapters.

I demonstrated that Socrates mirrors back to his interlocutors their unquestioned assumptions about the soul; specifically, he tries to reveal to them the reification of the soul inherent in their conception of its nature. I have shown that this traditional, reified conception of the soul which has a “wondrous” hold on the interlocutors – though it is not the *only* such conception that has this power over them, as we will see – is derived from

the conception of the ψυχή developed in the Mystery cults and Pythagoreanism as an evolution of the concept as found in Homer in Hesiod (as argued in Chapter 1). The next chapters will largely be dedicated to developing a conception of knowledge and φρόνησις from the perspective of *embodied* beings – specifically, from the perspective of beings who do not deny their condition as limited and finite by identifying themselves with a mythical pure self or pure soul entombed in a body. This perspective will reveal the complex nature of the ψυχή in a new light, and represent the first steps toward developing a vocabulary for articulating a philosophical concept of the ψυχή outside the limits of tradition. This ontology is based in an understanding of the *activity* of the ψυχή as presented in the *Phaedo* and other dialogues. This account of the soul will turn on the realization of how the soul attaches itself to *unities*, ‘ones,’ which are χωριστός to the physical objects which seem to be the ‘real’ beings in the world – as we will see especially in Socrates’ attack on materialism and in his re-conception of ἁρμονία.

This essential activity of the soul is initially and for the most part caught within the confines of the “cave,” as it were; it is through the process of working toward self-understanding and developing a vocabulary for understanding our experience that we wrest this activity from the domination of the conceptions of the πόλις and begin to think for ourselves; this process, I will argue, is not a precursor to ethical living, but is, in fact, central to harmonizing the soul and living the best possible life: The philosophical life dedicated to uncovering truth rather than acquiring honor or worldly possessions. That is, only when we achieve the self-knowledge that comes from the proper *ontology* of the soul – based in a clear articulation of the proper activity of the soul – can we begin to live the examined life which has control over its own, now-rationally-articulated, goals and

values. Understanding the place of λόγος in the activity of the soul – an activity that lies at the center of the αἰτίαι of our experience – will be the central purpose of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 4
Perception, Unity, and the Activity of the Soul
“Itself Through Itself”

§1 Striving

In this chapter, I show that the path Plato inaugurates for us in the *Phaedo* leads toward understanding the nature of the soul grounded in an awareness of its *activity*. The understanding of and conscious engagement with this activity will be revealed to be the proper ground for *self* understanding; it is on the basis of this understanding and engagement that development of *unity* and *harmony* in the self becomes possible. An understanding of this unity must be grounded in an understanding of how the self becomes an *object* for knowledge. As such, the cash value of one of the dimensions of Plato’s account of knowledge – especially in Socrates’ account of his second sailing – will be coming to understand the *nature* of the unities which knowledge attaches itself to. I will clarify the place of λόγος in the formation and recognition of these unities, *in order that* the possibility of self-knowledge can be grounded in a proper understanding of the soul’s *activity* of knowing. That is, the soul’s activity of gathering things into unities, in accord with λόγος, must be clarified in order to understand how the soul gathers *itself* to itself in λόγος.

In this introductory section, I will offer some general, preliminary remarks to give a sense of the issues that are at play in my reading of these sections of the *Phaedo*.

1.1 Perception and Sensory Knowledge

One of the issues addressed in the last chapter is the repeated argument, initially presented in the mouths of the “true-born philosophers,” that the only knowledge possible for a body is *sensory* knowledge.¹⁶⁴ This leads to an account of the impossibility of pure knowledge of pure forms (by the pure soul) for embodied beings. On this account, all that can be “known” by embodied beings are the physical things which can be encountered with the senses, and not the intelligible basis of these things. I argued that the limitations this places on human knowledge – specifically, the explicit argument that φρόνησις and ἐπιστήμη are impossible for embodied beings (66bff) – *raises the question* of what can be known by finite embodied beings, and calls us to develop an understanding of how we know what we think we know. That is, Plato’s presentation of the strict epistemological limitations argued for by the “true-born philosophers” causes the reader to engage in the *self* analysis of inquiring into what we think we know, how our doxa is operative in our lives, and into the *process* by which we come to this “knowledge.” Reading the *Phaedo*

¹⁶⁴ There is much debate about the place of sensory knowledge in Plato; recently, there has been a refreshing trend to work against tradition and see that the dialogues do not simply claim that no knowledge can be had through the senses, as I will argue below (see also footnote 20 to Chapter 3 above). On this trend, Balskly disapprovingly writes: “It is a measure of the success of empiricism that modern commentators take a very different approach to these passages than their neoplatonist forebears did. In what follows I shall argue that, if they made too much of 'Socrates' anti-empiricism, we make too little of it.” (1996, p 123) Balskly misses the irony of the passages in which Socrates expresses that the philosopher can only come to knowledge “without the body,” and claims that Plato had good reasons to conclude that sense-perception has no place in learning. He then says: “These reasons are, I believe, wrong and I think that Plato may had occasion to reconsider them later in his career.” (ibid.) He is right that Plato did not hold these beliefs about the senses “later” in his career, and that the *Phaedo* presents (intentionally) bad arguments for this conclusion; however, a close reading of the *Phaedo*, as I will carry out here and in the following Chapters, shows that he did not believe them at the time of writing the *Phaedo* either.

acts as a spur – to students in the Academy and to readers today – to *develop* an epistemology. Further, this account of perception makes a clear distinction between the spheres of *activity* proper the body and soul; that is, the body is active in sensation, and the “pure” soul is active *only* in relation to the forms. My account of the activity of the soul “itself through itself” in the *Theaetetus*, as well as a reading of the relation of sensation and δῖονοια in the account of the two sticks as equal in the *Phaedo*, will call this distinction into question, and with it, one of the central pillars of what has come to be known as “Platonic metaphysics.”

Specifically, I will argue that embodied, living humans are *not* limited to only knowledge gained “through the senses,” and I will further argue that sensory experience reveals much more than physical things. This will become clear from a reading of Socrates’ λόγος concerning how we come to know two equal sticks as equal (74aff.), and his account of his “confused” method of explaining the αἰτία of things (96aff). I will turn to a brief reading of some relevant passages in the *Theaetetus* to help develop a conception of the activity of the soul in forming the intelligible unities which we discover in experience; *I will demonstrate that Plato is driving us to consider how we are active in the apparently passive act of perception.*

In looking at these arguments we will see that Plato is pushing us to consider our sensory world as in fact made up *not* of static physical things, but rather of things ‘seen’ in their *striving*. The *intelligibility* of the world which we “joined together” embodied beings inhabit reveals itself as things striving for their *good*, in accord with their εἶδος. That striving appears to us embodied beings in terms of the λόγοι “through” which or

“by” which we hold these objects together into coherent beings, and into a coherent world. *In this light, we will be able to understand Socrates’ claim that we will be blinded to the being of beings if we ignore the way λόγος and νοῦς order and structure the world; we are blinded to the being of beings when we are blinded to the good of beings (98b-100a).*

1.2 The Being of Human Beings, Λόγος, and Life as a “Whole”

Plato’s account of perception will reveal that in perception we interact *not* with a fully self-coherent, isolated entity, but rather with something underway and striving, and something always inherently relational in its being. Things will be revealed as intelligible not only in terms of their physical presence, but also in terms of their projects, and the λόγοι through which we account for their τέλη and their essences. This observation will have significant consequences for understanding the nature of the *self*, and the ψυχή, in terms of our own projects, and the conscious awareness of these projects, or lack thereof. The nature of the ψυχή – as something *other* than a quasi-physical ghostly presence – will be revealed when we attend to the *activity* of the ψυχή, which is revealed in perception. By looking to the *Theaetetus*, it will become clear that *it is the ψυχή “itself through itself” that holds together the multiplicities of bare perception into the beings with which we interact.*

It is through λόγος that the ψυχή gathers beings together into individuals and into coherent situations. Further, when we reflectively turn this activity of the soul toward the self, toward the ψυχή itself, we discover that what we take to be the “self” is

determined by the activity of the soul holding together the self in terms of the λόγοι through which we gather ourselves to ourselves. It is in this activity that we *attempt* to take a conscious perspective of examination toward our selves, toward our own *life*, gathered together and understood as a whole. In this reflective activity of self-examination – which I argue is in principle incompletable, and thus only reaches a tenuous termination in our deaths – we find the distinctively human work of becoming ethical beings.

Socrates insists that to understand the αἰτία of his sitting in the prison we cannot simply give an account of the physical presence of his “bones and sinews. (ὀστέων καὶ νεύρων)” (98c-d) These bones and sinews are also the parts of the body that Socrates claims last for some time in the slowly decomposing corpse after death (ὀστέα τε καὶ νεύρα, 80c-d). Additionally, Socrates claims that he is *not* the corpse that they will see after he has drunk the poison; rather, he says, he will escape them and be gone (115c-d). The “essence” of what is named “Socrates,” then, appears to have the same structure as the objects revealed in perception. That is, it is not only perceptible objects in the world that are understood as striving. I will argue that in dealing with human *situations*, and indeed with humans themselves – *including our own selves* – we are dealing with things that have their being in terms of striving, and in terms of projects; we are not simply what we are. In order to understand ourselves we have to understand the λόγοι in terms of which we account for our own behavior.

With this understanding in hand, we will be better able to understand how the hatred of λόγος is the worst πάθη that a person can undergo. *Just like misunderstanding*

how we are to trust people, misunderstanding how to put our trust (πίστις) in arguments can lead to the feeling that there is nothing certain to be found by turning to λόγος; we then attempt to go straight to the things themselves – to ἔργον instead of λόγος – and are blinded in the process.

I will now turn to a brief discussion of the *Theaetetus* in order to better understand Plato's questions concerning unity and multiplicity – the “one and the many” – as they bear upon the understanding of how knowledge attaches itself to unities through the gathering activity of λόγος. Our central goal will be to look to this dialogue to help develop an ontology of the soul based in this activity, and to understand how the activity of the soul “itself through itself” is related to perception – e.g. the perception of two sticks as “equal.”

§2 The *Theaetetus* on Λόγος and Unity

There are many dangers to looking to other dialogues to come to conclusions about a dialogue one is reading – I do not need to rehearse them here. However, it is both desirable and inevitable that we find resonances between the questions raised in different dialogues. One concern arises when turning to dialogues that are widely considered to be “later” dialogues to shed light on Plato's earlier works. Some would argue that it is a mistake to think that paths of thinking developed in the *Theaetetus* can be brought to bear on the issues raised in the *Phaedo*, which is considered to have been written much earlier in Plato's career – according to the standard accounts of the chronology of the Platonic

corpus. However, I argue with Benardete, Sallis, and many other recent commentators that the only chronology that we should carefully attend to is the *dramatic* chronology indicated *within* the dialogues themselves.¹⁶⁵ With that in mind, a group of dialogues appears which should be kept in mind when reading the *Phaedo* since their dramatic date is set around Socrates' trial and execution; those dialogues are, in order: *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*.¹⁶⁶ Still, the huge variety of contexts and interlocutors with whom Socrates converses in these dialogues keep us from too quickly importing conclusions about Plato's "doctrine" from Socrates' *questions* in those dialogues.

Another aspect of the danger in reading across dialogues is that turning to brief sections of a dialogue, taken out of context, can mislead us. In looking at the *Theaetetus*, we will be following the work of commentators who take proper care in keeping the context of the arguments in mind.

In any case, turning briefly to the *Theaetetus* will help us better understand the way the issue of unity and multiplicity is implicated by *anything* we might encounter, which will help us understand the multiplicity of the self. Further, this digression will

¹⁶⁵ See Howland (1991), Benardete (1986a, esp. p ix), Hyland (2004). Zuckert undertakes the admirable and daunting task of interpreting the whole of the dialogues by interpreting each in terms of its dramatic date (2009).

¹⁶⁶ See Benardete's introduction to his translation of the *Theaetetus*, (Benardete 1986a pg ix). See also Crospey (1995), p ix. Crospey also adds the *Cratylus* to the list, after the *Euthyphro*, but the dramatic date of that dialogue is notoriously difficult to determine (see David Sedley's introduction to his translation of the text for a discussion of the problems). I take very seriously Blondell's attacks on treating this series of dialogues as a single "true hermeneutic object" or as a single "artistic whole." (2002, p 7). However, I am not arguing that we should only read these texts together as forming a single whole; rather, with Benardete, I am arguing that we should consider these dialogues as background and context when considering the *Phaedo*. I feel that I am not putting "too much weight on 'plot'" – which Blondell warns us against – in looking to the *Theaetetus* to flesh-out issues concerning the one and the many in the *Phaedo*.

help clarify the place of the activity of the ψυχή in gathering these multiplicities into the unities which we experience.

2.1 The *Theaetetus* on Parts, Wholes, and the Activity of the Ψυχή

In the *Theaetetus*, at 201aff., Socrates proves to Theaetetus that knowledge and true opinion are not the same. He does this in a way that evokes the trial Socrates – unbeknownst to Theaetetus – is about to face; by using the example of judges, he shows Theaetetus that people can be justly *persuaded* of some opinion, and even if that opinion is true, it could still not amount to knowledge. Theaetetus then adds that he was mistaken when he said he heard someone say that knowledge was true belief; what was said, he now remembers, is that knowledge is true belief with a λόγος. He says, “. . .and of whatever there is not λόγος (καὶ ὧν μὲν μὴ ἔστι λόγος), these things are not knowable (ἐπιστητά) – that’s just the word he used – and whatever admitted of λόγος (ἃ δ’ ἔχει) are knowable.” (201d) With this in hand, Socrates begins to examine what it means to have a λόγος. *The conversation will help clarify what is at stake in our discussion of the way naming and λόγος grant unity to apparently multiple and diverse phenomena, such as Phaedo “himself,” Theseus’ ship, Socrates’ dream, and the “two” that is formed when a one and a one are “brought together.”*

The *context* in which this discussion of λόγος arises in the *Theaetetus* will also give us an opportunity to understand the place of the soul in the gathering together of

these unities. We will see, when we turn to a discussion of ἄρμονία in the *Phaedo*, that it is the activity of the soul which “holds together” multiplicities under a λόγος as described in the *Theaetetus* is the same as that activity which “holds together” the dyad in what John Russon calls the “space of comparison.”¹⁶⁷ Again, in discovering this activity we will clarify the nature of the forms, how being blinded to the good of beings blinds us to understanding their αἰτία; this will, in turn, bring to light a conception of being presented in the *Phaedo* that is neither materialistic nor based in physical presence.¹⁶⁸ With this in hand, I will develop a theory of the *activity* and *nature* of the ψυχή.

Socrates begins by recounting a dream he had (201d); the dream says that knowledge is true belief plus a λόγος, and λόγος means breaking the object of knowledge down into its constituent parts (201e). Thus, the simple elements (στοιχεῖα), having no parts, can't be known; nor can we say of them ‘this’ or even ascribe being or non-being to them – all we can do is name them. Socrates’ re-telling adds crucial

¹⁶⁷ Russon and Sallis 2000, p 71ff.

¹⁶⁸ Gilbert Ryle presents a convincing argument for taking the discussion of parts and wholes in the *Theaetetus* as a discussion which should not be too quickly “settled” with reference to the forms – a mistake which he accuses Cornford of: “The problem discussed in the *Theaetetus* is What is Knowledge? Socrates makes it clear that what is wanted is not a list of things that people know or a catalogue of sciences and arts, but an elucidation of the concept of knowledge - not What is known? but What is it to know? Attention to this simple point might have saved Cornford from saying that the implicit conclusion of the dialogue is that “true knowledge has for its objects things of a different order - not sensible things, but intelligible Forms and truths about them.” Even if Plato had had the Eide fixes that his commentators father on to him, he could not have been so silly as to suppose that a mention of these alleged knowables could be the answer to the question What is it for someone to know something? However pious a man was, he could not think that the assertion, “Only God can be really loved” would be an elucidation of the concept of love.” (1990, p 22-23) Toward the end of his article, which is a good discussion of some of the issues raised in these passages which dovetail with 20th Century analytic concerns with “logical atomism,” Ryle adds: “It is likely to be asked: What then of the Theory of Forms? Is not this after all is said and done, to be read between the lines of this arid grammar-chopping? Surely Plato's interest in that Theory must have dominated his interest in these cruces of logical grammar? Well, I find no internal evidence that Plato was in this dialogue bothering his head at all about that somewhat over-ripe Theory.” (p 44)

elements to Theaetetus' definition – though Theaetetus claims it “was the same in every respect” to what he had in mind (202c). Specifically, Theaetetus had said nothing about *why* certain things might not be able to have a λόγος given about them, and thus be unknowable. Socrates adds to the definition the conception of a λόγος as being an ‘accounting’ given in terms of breaking the object of knowledge down into its elements (201eff). There is no λόγος of the simple elements themselves, since they cannot be broken down, and thus there could be no knowledge of them. Socrates then refutes Theaetetus' definition of knowledge (as true belief with a λόγος) on the basis of the stipulations that *he* himself introduced (202e). As such, we have to wonder why Socrates chooses to tell this dream story version of true belief plus a λόγος; that is to say, it is not entirely clear why he would add the stipulation that ‘atomic’ elements are unknowable to Theaetetus' s definition, and then use precisely that stipulation to refute him. Thus, the immediate question at hand is: Why is Socrates drawing our attention to this problem of the elements? What are we to learn about knowledge in light of this discussion?

For our purposes here, we will be attending to this account of λόγος as it relates to the problem of parts and wholes, and thus to the question of unity and multiplicity which will carry us into a discussion of the activity of the soul ‘itself through itself’ which draws multiplicities into the unities of experience. Ultimately, this will help us understand how the soul perceives equality in the two sticks in the *Phaedo*, and will help us understand the importance of the passages concerning ἁρμονία in the *Phaedo*.

One thing that should strike us as questionable is the dream's assertion that these elements are sufficiently simple that they admit, not only of no division, but of no

predication whatsoever; we cannot say of the element that it is a “this,” or that it ‘is’ or ‘is not’ (201eff.). This is a strong claim. It is unclear why anything should be considered so simple that it cannot even be spoken of in these ways. Further, it is difficult to maintain that despite this radical simplicity, it can still be named. It is a strange claim, and should give us pause. In any case, we come out of the dream theory into its refutation concerned with how anything could be as simple as these elements are said to be.

2.2 The Sum of its Parts

In the refutation, Socrates chooses letters as his example of elements.¹⁶⁹ Specifically, he speaks of Sigma and Omega, as elements that make up a syllable, SO. The argument turns on a rather heated debate where Theaetetus puts up a good fight by maintaining that the whole is more than the sum of its parts (203c-206c); specifically, the issue that Socrates raises is the question of whether or not a complex *thing* is reducible to the aggregate of its parts, or if the complex *thing* is in fact a separate entity arising out of the parts, but not reducible to it. He asks, “Do we mean by the syllable [the] elements . . . or some single look (ιδέα) that has come to be when they are put together?” (203c) Theaetetus first answers that the syllable is nothing more than all of the parts. Socrates quickly shows that this would make all knowledge impossible, since the impossibility of knowing *each* of the elements (since they are indivisible) would mean that we couldn’t know *all* of them, and thus the syllable would be unknowable as well. (ibid.)

¹⁶⁹ Socrates is playing on the word στοιχείον, which can mean both ‘element’ and ‘letter.’

With Theaetetus' agreement to this argument, he says that they should turn to the idea that “the syllable comes to be (γίγνομένη) one look (ιδέα) out of those several elements that fit together (συναρμωπόντων) and it similarly holds no less in letters than in anything else.” (204a)¹⁷⁰ Socrates then says, in a crucial move, that if the harmonized unity is some single *idea* that has “come to be” “out of” the elements, and is “other” than the elements, then “there must be no parts of it.” (204a) Theaetetus is understandably puzzled by this assertion, and challenges it. Socrates runs him through a refutation troubled by semantic play and erroneous conclusions in an attempt to persuade Theaetetus that his account of knowledge as true belief plus a λόγος, based in an analysis of the elements of what is known, is faulty. Socrates then concludes with the dilemma that if a whole has parts, then it must *be* the parts, and nothing else, and if it has no parts, then it is just as unknowable as the elements in its simplicity (205d). Let us look at this argument.

In order to demonstrate this conclusion, Socrates turns to some examples of wholes which have parts and, he claims, *are* just the aggregate of the parts. The first example he chooses is the number six. He asks: “For example, whenever we say one, two, three, four, five, six, and we say twice three or thrice two, or four and two, or three and two and one – in all these cases are we saying the same or other?” Theaetetus answers, simply, “The same.” (204b-c) Socrates concludes that the “same” that we are speaking is six, which is just *all* such accountings of six, and nothing other than this all.

However, his use of the number six is a troubling example that seems to point in the

¹⁷⁰ It is important that we note the use of the term συναρμώζω which is connected to ἁρμονία – harmony; we will be turning to the arguments that the soul is a “harmony” when we have a better understanding of multiplicity and unity. It also interesting to note the ambiguity in the phrase “comes to be” (γίγνομένη), which mirrors Socrates' wondering, in the *Phaedo*, at how two ones when “brought close to one another” “make” two.

opposite direction, even though he gets the answer he needs from the budding mathematician.

First, how are we to confirm that, if someone *says* “one, two, three, four, five, six” he *means* six? Why not 21? We have to know *ahead of time* what is meant by the speaker to treat “one, two, three, four, five, six” as six – we already have to know the *context* of the speech to understand its meaning. Each number is complete in a way Sigma and Omega are *not* complete (we will return to this point below); while complete at each number, this process of counting is also *never* complete, so how do we know he is stopping at six, and not just resting? In order to follow the speech we have to have a sense that what is indicated is the *whole*, the completed six, and we have to have this whole in view *before* the speaker begins counting. It is our knowing, *ahead of time*, the nature of the whole that allows us to make *sense* of the speech. The intelligibility of the phenomena is only possible on the basis of a προδοκέω, a fore-having. Socrates draws our attention to this problem by including the process in the question: “we *say* twice three or thrice two. . .” (204b emphasis added). However, then he returns us to the problem by asking “or four and two, or three and two and one. . .” The same problem arises when we ask: How do we know to take the *sum* of the numbers and not treat them as two or three groups? That is, how do we know the speaker doesn’t mean a group of four and a group of two? We will see that this is the *same* problem that is indicated in Socrates wondering, in the *Phaedo*, if the cause of one and one making two is that the two ones were brought “close to each other.” (97a) In each case, what is needed to understand how the activity of the soul, having the *whole* in view *beforehand*, prior to the counting, makes understanding possible.

Benardete has an excellent analysis of this passage in his commentary; on this point he says “The *soul* of the teller which is invisibly present in the telling does this gathering.”¹⁷¹ Here we see Benardete subtly bring together some of the issues we have been wrestling with, and will continue to wrestle with. Specifically, he points to the place of the *ψυχή*, and to *λόγος*, as central to the act of gathering multiplicities into unities. Benardete continues, “Theaetetus is too adept at mathematics to hear what Socrates says in any but a mathematical way. His beautiful speech, in which he recognized the soul as a whole in itself, has run away. He would never have come to recognize it at all, if Socrates had not enslaved him to the illiberality of precise speech”¹⁷² We will now turn back to an account of Theaetetus’ “beautiful speech” on the soul – a speech which has been unfortunately forgotten by him; this beautiful *λόγος* of the soul plays a central role in how he *should* offer his answers to Socrates’ questions. Specifically, we will find Theaetetus’ forgotten speech to be central to the understanding of unity, multiplicity, and the role the *form* as the harmonious unity which arises from the aggregate, and which is greater than the sum of its parts. I will show that this account of the activity of the soul is necessary for understanding knowledge – which is unsurprising in context of the *Theaetetus* – and thus, *self*-knowledge.

¹⁷¹ Benardete 1986, I.174, emphasis added.

¹⁷² Ibid.

2.3 The Soul “Itself through Itself” and the Determination of “Being and Benefit”

When speaking of Theaetetus’ “beautiful speech” about the soul, Bernardete is referring to one of the most important passages in the dialogue. This passage forms the final refutation of the equation of knowledge with perception, and it immediately precedes Theaetetus’ offering his next definition of knowledge, that is, that knowledge is “opinion”; it is this definition which leads the discussion along the path from knowledge as opinion, through *true* opinion, to true opinion plus a λόγος. In this passage, the place of the ψυχή in the gathering of multiplicities into intelligible wholes begins to become clear. The account given of the gathering activity of the ψυχή here in the *Theaetetus* will have great weight for our understanding of the way the soul is implicated in the activity of thinking and naming which Socrates puzzles over in his autobiography, and in his account of his second sailing in the *Phaedo*. As such, it is prudent to spend some time analyzing this passage.

At 183d, Theaetetus tires of Socrates’ philosophical questioning. Theaetetus, demonstrating his vitality and his eagerness to engage in dialectic, asks that Socrates continue his analysis by examining those “who assert that all is at rest.” Socrates says that he had met Parmenides as a youth (a clear reference to the dialogue *Parmenides*), and that he is in awe of him (183d). Socrates refuses to engage in an analysis of Parmenides’ argument that all is at rest for fear that it would take too long, and preclude the maieutic enterprise of birthing Theaetetus of his ideas about the nature of knowledge. In the

interest of this midwifery, Socrates returns to Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception at 184b.

Socrates begins by asking Theaetetus if it is the eyes *by* which we see (ὅ ὁρῶμεν τοῦτο εἶναι ὀφθαλμούς), indicated by referring to the sense organ in the dative case, or if it is rather *through* (διὰ) the eyes that we see (184c). He is asking if the eyes are the *agent* which does the seeing, or if there is rather some other subject which does the seeing *through*, by means of, the eyes. Theaetetus again demonstrates his acuity by answering that it is *through* the eyes that we see (ibid.).¹⁷³

Socrates is pleased with the answer, saying “That’s because it is surely dreadful (δεινόν), my boy, if many kinds of perceptions sit in us as if in wooden horses, but all these do not come together into some single look (ἀλλὰ μὴ εἰς μίαν τινὰ ιδέα), regardless of whether it’s the soul or whatever one must call it, by which we perceive through these as if they’re tools all the perceived and perceptible things.” (184d)¹⁷⁴ Thus, by some activity, the objects of each of the senses are gathered together into intelligible unities. Socrates goes on to explain why, as he says, he is being a “stickler” (διακριβοῦμαι – 184d) and seeking what he is afraid is “illiberal” (ἀνελεύθερον)

¹⁷³ For an excellent discussion of these passages, see Burnyeat 1976.

¹⁷⁴ The introduction of the power of the soul is significant in the discussion of perception in the dialogue. As McDowell puts it: “Up to this point, the mind has not figured in any account of perception given in the dialogue.” (1973, p 185) Cf *Republic* 523bff, where Socrates argues that the activity of the “intellect” (νόησις) is “summoned” (παρακαλέω) by perceptions which “go over to the opposite sensation – e.g. from Bigness to Smallness, as in perceiving your ring finger. I will discuss this below, in connection to the similar passage in the *Phaedo* at 102bff. Each of these passages serves to clarify the activity of the soul – and *specifically*, of νοῦς – that is detectable in *any* act of perception, but which is most obtrusive in perceptions of the kind mentioned in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* in which sensation (alone) “produces nothing healthy.” (*Republic* 523b) I will argue that the act of νοῦς by which we are able to see objects as unitary, intelligible wholes shot-through with meaning – even objects of perception which participate in “opposite” εἶδει – is understandable only on the basis of understanding of how the *soul* possesses these categories *before-hand*. This will become more clear when we turn to the account of seeing the sticks as equal in the *Phaedo*.

precision (ἀκριβείας) in their speech (184c). He seeks to establish that it is not *by* the eyes that we perceive, but rather that it is *through* the eyes that the *soul* perceives the *being* and *unity* of things that are perceptible. He seeks to establish this point so that he can make a claim about what the activity of the soul is *itself through itself*. Without this unifying activity of the ψυχή, we would be left with the δεινὸν conclusion that the *self* does not perceive, only the individual organs of sense.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, on the basis of this distinction, Socrates seeks to demonstrate that knowledge – gained by the soul itself through itself – and perception are, finally, different (190d-e).

Choosing to question Theaetetus instead of to “meddle on his behalf” (184e), Socrates proceeds to establish that the “tools” through which we perceive the “hot things, stiff things, light things, and sweet things” belong to the body (ibid.). Secondly, Socrates notes that whatever is perceived by one sense cannot be perceived by another sense (184e-185a). We cannot perceive the sweetness of a sugar cube by the eyes, only the whiteness of it. This move is critical for Socrates larger argument, which will identify the work of the soul as that which allows for the experience of unified objects, as opposed to “bundles” of perceptible qualities.

Next, Socrates says that since we cannot hear what we see, or see what we hear, “Therefore, if you think anything about both [seeing and hearing] together (περὶ ἀμφοτέρων διανοῆ), you couldn’t be perceiving anything about both together through the one organ (ὁργανοῦ), or in turn through the other.” (185a) Socrates then elicits Theaetetus’ agreement that sound and color both *are*, that “each of them is other than the

¹⁷⁵ Cf Burnyeat: “. . . the message of the model is that the horse is insensate; the power of perception belongs exclusively to the warriors within. The warriors, that is to say the senses, carry on their perceptual activity in such a way that neither the horse itself nor any part of it can be credited with the perceiving that takes place inside its hulk.” (1976, p 30)

other and the same as itself,” and “that both together are two, but each is one.” (185a-b) Theaetetus agrees to all of this, but is less certain when answering Socrates’ question if he has the “*power* (δυνατὸς) to examine whether the pair are unlike or like each other,” answering a tentative “maybe” (ἴσως – 185b). Socrates then rules out any of the *organs* of sense as that with which we are able to make these judgments; in this connection, he establishes that it is not by any of the *powers* of perception that such judgments are made (185b-c). So, it is neither by the eyes nor by the power of sight that we judge that sound exists, nor by sight or the eyes that we determine that seeing and hearing are different (or the same). Socrates also now introduces the possibility of a δύναμις, a power, which is conceptually different from the *organ* of sense.¹⁷⁶ There is, on the one hand, the eye – the *organ through* which we see – and on the other hand there is the *power* of sight which is exercised (by the soul or “whatever one must call it”) by means of the organ of sense.

Socrates then asks Theaetetus to name the *organs* through which this common *power* works: “But now what is the power (δύναμις) through that reveals to you what’s common to all things as well as to these, to which you attach the names “is” and “is not” and whatever we were just now asking that applies to them? What sort of organs will you allot to all these, through which whatever is perceptive in us perceives each sort?” (185c) Theaetetus – showing himself to be one of the most remarkable interlocutors in the Socratic cannon – does *not* answer Socrates on the terms of the question as posed; that is to say, Theaetetus neither suggests a possible organ through which he is able to make

¹⁷⁶ The concept of δύναμις is central to the logic of the *Theaetetus* as a whole. This can be seen from the frame-dialogue, in which Euclides and Terpsion – two Megarians who, according to Aristotle, deny the reality of δύναμις – wonder at how Socrates was able to predict how Theaetetus would turn out as an adult after meeting him as a youth. Unfortunately, we cannot delve too deeply into that issue here. Suffice it to say that understanding δύναμις would allow us to understand the different powers and activities of the soul without resorting the bad ontology of dividing the soul into reified “parts.”

these judgments, nor does he answer “I don’t know,” as we might expect. Rather, Theaetetus responds: “You mean being and not-being, and likeness and unlikeness, and what’s the same and other, and also about one and the rest of number having to do with them. And you are evidently asking about the odd and the even, and as many other things as follow along with these, through which of the things that belong to the body we perceive them with the soul.” (185d) Here, he has already identified the soul as the agent in such perceptions.

Socrates applauds his answer, and Theaetetus continues: “Well by Zeus, Socrates, I at least would have no way to say (ἔγωγε οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιμι εἰπεῖν), except that it seems to me there’s absolutely no such special organ for these things as there is for those others (οὐδὲν τούτοις ὄργανον ἴδιον ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνοις), but the soul itself, through itself (αὐτὴ δι’ αὐτῆς ἢ ψυχῇ) appears to me to observe the common things involved in all things (τὰ κοινὰ μοι φαίνεται περὶ πάντων ἐπισκοπεῖν).” (185d-e) Socrates praises Theaetetus for this answer by underscoring the distinction between soul and body: “Because you are beautiful, Theaetetus, and not ugly as Theodorus was saying, for one who speaks beautifully is beautiful and good.” (185e)

Significantly, Socrates then admits to having some opinions of his own, and repeats Theaetetus’ phrase “the soul itself through itself,” telling Theaetetus “you did me a favor and freed me from a very long speech, if it appears to you that the soul itself through itself examines some things, and some things through the powers of the body. For this, which was my opinion too, I wanted it to get to be your opinion as well.” (185e) Socrates admission that he holds such an opinion is especially significant in the

Theaetetus since he has just claimed that he is merely a “midwife” of philosophy, and is barren of ideas.¹⁷⁷

Socrates then begins a list of things that the soul itself through itself examines. They include being and nonbeing, similar and dissimilar, the same and other; Theaetetus answers that it is the soul itself by itself “desires,” or “stretches itself out toward,” (ἐπορέγεται)¹⁷⁸ each of these. Socrates then asks about beauty and ugliness, good and bad. Theaetetus answers, “It’s my opinion that it’s the *being of these things in their mutual relations* (ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα πρὸς ἄλληλα σκοπεῖσθαι τὴν οὐσίαν) which the soul most especially examines, calculating in itself (ἀναλογιζομένη ἐν ἑαυτῇ) the past and the present things relative to the future.” (186a-b, emphasis added) Socrates stops Theaetetus, saying “Hold it (ἔχε δὴ)” (186b) This “Hold it” is interesting; it could indicate that Theaetetus has gone too fast in his thinking, and made a leap that Socrates feels is unwarranted, which would explain why Socrates then proceeds by returning to a case of sensation through the body (specifically softness and stiffness). Or, the “Hold it” could indicate that Socrates wants Theaetetus to hold onto this realization, or hold himself in the condition of the realization that he has just made – to hold onto the idea that Socrates has delivered him of with regard to the work of the ψυχή, and not let it be taken away as a “wind-egg,” a still-born idea.

In either case, Socrates proceeds, in the penultimate step that he needs to finally refute the equation of knowledge with perception, to establish another distinction between that which the soul “reaches out toward” through the body and that which the

¹⁷⁷ Cf Sedley 2004, p 109.

¹⁷⁸ We will see the importance of the term ὀρέγω in the discussion of the Equality Argument in the *Phaedo*. See also the opening line of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: “πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει.” (980a)

soul examines itself through itself. The experiences which “stretch to the soul through the body (ὅσα διὰ τοῦ σώματος παθήματα ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνει)” are there by *nature* (φύσει) (186c); on the other hand, calculations (he uses the term Theaetetus introduced - ἀναλογίσματα) “with regard to *being and benefit* (πρὸς τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν) come about, to whomever they do come about, with difficulty and in much time through a lot of work and education (πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας)” (ibid, emphasis added). This passage indicates that these calculations – that have to do with recollection of forms – do not come about naturally, by some immediate perception; rather, *our παιδεία influences and even makes possible the ability to see what particulars participate in such forms as goodness and beauty and even being (οὐσίαν)*. Our education and the culture in which we are raised influences our judgments about the beautiful and the good, and seemingly about any judgments that the soul makes itself through itself. Παιδεία, then, is a process of cultivating and developing the basic activity of the soul – an activity which can be seen to be present in any act of perception. The being of the beings revealed in even a simple act of perception are said to be dependent on *how* we have been educated; also, the ‘benefit’ of anything we might encounter is determined by the activity of the soul based in the kind of “work and education” we have undergone.

Rather than an atemporal contact with the forms, Plato is presenting us with a growing, changing *process* of education as the basis for knowledge and for the basic activity of the soul. We begin to understand why both the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedo* begin and end with images of *death* and of a setting sun; these images call to mind the finitude and temporality of the *life* – ideally, a *philosophical* life – in which occurs the *παιδεία* and development necessary for the soul to make judgments concerning the

“being and benefit” of the things we encounter. Knowledge and virtue happen in the context of embodied, finite human existence; they can only be understood when we face this truth, and do not forget ourselves and pretend to divinity.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the *Phaedo* – and to some extent every dialogue – can be read as a document defending Socrates’ choice of what he took to be the best life. That is, the *Phaedo* must be understood as, in part, a defense of the decision to devote one’s life to an examination and transformation of the self through a dedication to philosophy. I argued that the education and turning of the soul can be understood as a process of development from trust in things to trust in λόγοι. At that time, it was unclear what sort of transformation would take place in one’s life if one engaged in this ‘turn to the λόγοι.’ With the understanding that we have developed by looking to the *Theaetetus*, it has become clear that *trusting in λόγοι is in fact not directed toward a fundamentally different object than everyday, uneducated life*. Rather, we have begun to see that in attending to what we encounter in everyday life – everything from simple objects like a knife or a chair to complex political situations like the conflict with Sparta – we are *already* engaged in λόγοι. The very *being* of any of these things, of anything we can encounter or make an object of concern, is made accessible to us *as a result of our education, and as the result of our own personal history*. What we see as having being, and what we see as benefiting us is not something that comes purely or directly to us through the senses; rather, what we take to be the being of any being, and what we take to be of benefit to us, is the result of the activity of the soul. The soul, working through the senses, provides intelligibility to the world on the basis of our education (παιδεία) and

the way we have engaged with things in the past (πραγμάτων). To know the activity of the soul, then, is to know ourselves, and to engage with the fundamental ordering principle of our individual world.

2.4 The One and the Many

Returning now to the main thread of our digression into the *Theaetetus*, we recall that Benardete notes Theaetetus' apparent failure to "Hold it," as Socrates asks. Theaetetus is not able to bring his insight about the soul to bear when answering Socrates' questions, later in the dialogue, concerning the possibility that a whole is something more than the sum of its parts. As quoted above, in relation to Socrates' example of counting at 204b-c, Benardete notes,

The *soul* of the teller which is invisibly present in the telling does this gathering. Theaetetus is too adept at mathematics to hear what Socrates says in any but a mathematical way. His beautiful speech, in which he recognized the soul as a whole in itself, has run away. He would never have come to recognize it at all, if Socrates had not enslaved him to the illiberality of precise speech.¹⁷⁹

In arguing that Theaetetus is unaware of the place of his own "invisibly present" soul in his understanding of Socrates' speeches, Benardete shows how this gathering can happen *unbeknownst* to the person doing the gathering; that is, the gathering can happen "unconsciously." This gathering provides the principle of completion which provides the context in which the parts get their meaning *as* parts of a whole.¹⁸⁰ Thus, as we will see

¹⁷⁹ Benardete 1986 I.174.

¹⁸⁰ It is in understanding how this *gathering* takes place – and in understanding how this gathering happens in accordance with λόγος – that we will be in a position to answer Watanabe's question when he approaches these sections of the *Theaetetus*, which he claims contain "(possibly the most) important lessons Plato gives us." (1987, p 343) In his words, the puzzle of the passage is

further in looking at Socrates' other examples, it seems that the whole does not get its meaning from being a summation of the parts; rather, it begins to appear that the parts only have meaning as parts in the context of the whole – a context provided invisibly by the gathering action of the “rational” soul. *This will appear as precisely the structure of a harmony, as will become clear in our discussion of the arguments concerning ἁρμονία in the Phaedo.* Further, we find here the suggestion that the *context* provided for the intelligibility of any thing, and of any λόγος, includes the person's *habits, history, and character*; for Theaetetus, it is his mathematical training and *skill* that are the source and cause of his inability to hear what Socrates says “in any but a mathematical way.” Also, we see that Socrates' demanding process of elenchos is able reveal this aspect of the soul to Theaetetus, evoking his beautiful λόγος, but he is unable to hold onto it!

Benardete notes the difference between counting, and the enumeration of syllables. In counting, as we said, the process is complete at every number, and yet also incompleteable and infinite: “Five is as much a whole as six, and four as five, and so on; at each summation there is completion . . . The sound *so*, on the other hand, determines from the initial hearing the phonetic shape of its every bit, apart from which it is not a syllable. Indeed, one can go further and say that the vocative Socrates as a whole controls

as follows: “[Socrates] says the elements can be named but have no *logos* though they are perceptible, while the things composed of them can be known, stated and thought with true belief. To interpret these words, you have to know what the 'elements' are and what the 'composition' means, and this in turn requires that you at least have a grip on the motivation and purpose of this whole theory. And here you will be left with few hints. On a superficial reading the Dream seems to have begun too abruptly and, maybe, too dogmatically.” (ibid) In my reading, by showing how this discussion flows out of Theaetetus' “beautiful speech” about the soul, I hope to make it clear that this Dream account, and the issues Socrates raises in dealing with this account, dovetail perfectly with what has come before in the dialogue, and with our concerns in reading the *Phaedo*.

the enunciation of its first syllable, but six has no effect on the counting of two.”¹⁸¹

Benardete is beginning to sketch an account where the whole is ontologically prior to the parts. Obviously, this account will be important to us when we examine Socrates’ argument against Simmias’ account of the soul as a harmony at 94bff, where Socrates argues that the parts control the whole.

Benardete continues his account of the passage:

Wholes become most manifest as whole when something is missing from them (cf 186a4), but numbers are never caught short. . . Theaetetus, therefore, cannot avoid agreeing that the whole and the all are the same, for at any moment the number is a total, and just as in a whole nothing is missing.

What then is the problem of whole and part? If S and O are each a part of the whole speech (λόγος) SO, and no part can be a part unless it takes part in a whole, then S takes its character as a part of the speech from the whole speech SO, and likewise O. S and O therefore, have each as its own speech the whole speech. . .¹⁸²

It begins to become clear that any given part of a whole takes its being from the whole of which it is a part. Thus, the relations to the other parts, and to the whole *as* something ontologically distinct from the parts, *are not* external to the part *as part*. When we understand something as a part of a whole we find that the place of the part in the order of the whole is internal to the being of the thing understood *qua* part. Thus, the whole, *as* whole is something more than a tallying of ‘all’ the parts, and, as we will see, determines the nature and the order of the parts.¹⁸³ Benardete is pointing to how the λόγος of each part already includes that whole, and thus the being of each part *qua* part includes

¹⁸¹ Ibid. I.174.

¹⁸² Ibid. I.175.

¹⁸³ In the introduction to his translation of the *Theaetetus*, Joe Sachs speaks of Jacob Klein’s study of this dialogue in his book *Plato’s Trilogy*: “The evidence gathered by Klein points to a structure in which being is not a genus of which motion and rest are species, nor an aggregate of which the two of them are independent parts, but a whole in which each constituent is what it is only by its togetherness with the other.” (2004, p 2)

relations to “external” things – to the other parts, and to the whole.¹⁸⁴ With Benardete, *we begin to see that it is the “invisibly present” ψυχή of the one forming, or hearing, the λόγος in which two things are held together in a relation that ‘creates’ the whole by which the parts are understood, by gathering the phenomenon into a whole in accord with the λόγοι which the soul holds in view in its fore-having.*¹⁸⁵

Socrates’ next example is equally troubling. He asks “The number of the plethron (100 feet) and the plethron are the same. Aren’t they?” (204d) Is the number of a span of distance the same as that distance? It seems that they are *not* in fact the same. The span is complete, a single unbroken unit *without* any parts; the *measurement* of the span produces those divisions; the divisions do not precede the measuring which is a dividing. Aristotle makes just this point when he argues against Zeno’s paradoxes.¹⁸⁶

Socrates moves on to consider an army; he asks “And further, the number of the army and the army, and similarly for all things of the sort? For all the number is all that

¹⁸⁴ See the discussion of this point in Russon 2009, Ch. 1. Russon argues, for example, that “. . . the basic “unit” of our hearing is not the individual chord but the relationship of the chords. . .” (p 14) There, Russon uses the example of music, of rhythm, and of perception of visible patterns to show that perception of form is an act of the individual, but is not thereby rendered an arbitrary choice on the part of the individual; these forms answer to cultural preconditioning, to our habits, and ultimately to *meaning*. We will return to this point in our discussion of materialism and the αἰτίαι of experience.

¹⁸⁵ We will soon begin to see how this is not a simple creation *ex nihilo*, nor are all such creations equal; all such holdings must ultimately answer to the multiple articulations, the joints, in the matter the λόγος is about. This point will be made decisively clear when we turn to the ethical *consequences* of our gatherings – which is where we are headed with this discussion. This point will be made more explicit when we attend to Socrates’ account of how ‘one’ and ‘one’ “come together” to form ‘two.’ That is, this *account does not mean that false judgment is impossible*. In this light, it is quite clear why Plato turns, both in the *Theaetetus* and in the following discussion in the *Sophist* to discuss the possibility of false judgment. Our analysis here is unfortunately restricted to an account of the activity of the soul in knowing, and in interacting with the intelligibility of our world; thus, we cannot fully deal with the issue which Plato seems to say is raised by this account, specifically, the issue of ψευδής speech.

¹⁸⁶ See Aristotle’s *Physics*, 239a – 241b

each of them is?” (204d) Is an army simply a number of men, just standing around? Clearly not. This is a point commentators have not failed to notice, but it is difficult to say what it is that is missing from an account of an army that states that it is a number of men. The most common point made is that ‘order’ is missing from the account; thus the whole army is not just a lot of men, it is a lot of men ordered in a certain way; this is a point that can apply to the later discussion of the enumeration of the parts of a wagon at 207a ff. – parts which simply do not make a wagon if they are not put together in the right way.

However, “order” has widely different meanings in the case of a wagon and that of an army. Surely the parts of any whole have to be organized in some way in relation to one another; in the case of an army, in order for it to be an army, it has to be a collection of men who are organized in certain ways *and* trained in certain ways, *and* directed towards certain things – they have to have a common aim. It seems that in the case of an ordered group of people, one has to give an account not just of the people needed, but of the skills of each in relation to the position they hold within the group. Thus we see that the enumeration of elements in this case seems to have to extend down into an account of the different elements themselves in terms of *their* elements; the elements of an army are themselves complexes, both physical and non-physical. Thus, the soldiers have to be analyzed as having certain physical aspects, as well as skills, intentions, and specific histories; all of which are necessary to the account of each soldier *as a soldier in terms of the goal of the army*. The analysis of each soldier will be different if the army is purely defensive than if it is an aggressive force bent on genocide and pillaging and destroying the enemy.

This observation raises the issue that elements within complexes can be seen as wholes composed of parts within themselves; that is, *the delineation of what is an element and what is complex seems to depend not merely on the nature of the thing but also on the level of generality at which we are working*. For example, at another level of generality, we can say that it takes at least two armies to make a war.¹⁸⁷

It is important that what we take away from this discussion is an understanding of how knowledge attaches itself to *wholes*. Those wholes are not simply dictated by the things we experience, but are also determined by the contexts in which we approach the things; for example, I experience a car as a unitary whole *until* something breaks, and I have to take it apart.¹⁸⁸ What we will see is that the way we hold things in our experience,

¹⁸⁷ This is the central point of the article by Mitchell Miller, “Unity and Λόγος.” Miller makes the distinction between the part, the whole, and “nature” of the whole. He says that any complex is just an aggregate of parts, as Socrates claims explicitly, but the parts do not constitute the οὐσία, the being – what Miller calls the ‘nature’ – of the whole. Rather, it is this nature, which in itself is simple and unitary, that determines the order in which the parts are organized. He says further that the object of knowledge is not the whole, but this unitary nature. That is, what we know when we know an army is an army in its unitary nature. It is the nature of the army which determines what parts it must have. I argue that these observations – which show the object of thought to *not* be a simple, atomic, self-identical entity, but rather to be constituted by an act of the subject, and to be multiple, diverse, and shot-through with relations – can help us understand problems that some commentators on the *Theaetetus* have had with the account of falsehood. E.g. it can help us solve what Lyle Angene has called “the problem of the fugacity of the object of thought.” (1978, p 361ff) Angene treats the passages of the *Theaetetus* concerned with falsehood to be primarily dealing with the problem of what it means for something be an “object of thought.” (p 363) See also Cornford 1957, p 113ff, for another discussion of how the dialogue seems to give a problematic “psychological rather than logical” account of “what it means to think of *an* object.” Mistakenly treating objects of thought as isolated, atomic beings with no internal, essential relation to the world, *or to the knower who is, in fact, central in identifying their being*, causes many problems for these commentators. When we see *how* the object of thought arises as a unitary nature beyond its parts, we can understand these problems, and thus develop a more sophisticated account of *falsehood*.

¹⁸⁸ Cf Benardete 1986, pg 177: “The wheelwright must know the hundred pieces [of the wagon], but the wheelwright’s superior – whoever knows what kind of wagon circumstances require – does not need to know anywhere near that number.” Thus, I am arguing, with Benardete, that the extraordinarily strict requirements that Socrates puts in place for “knowledge” at 207aff are to be

by the acts of our ‘invisibly present’ souls, determines the way the good, the goal or τέλος of the thing in question is understood; the second sailing will show that revealing the being of things we encounter necessitates understanding the good of a thing. We *might* think that the question of the good of a thing, the τέλος of a thing, or the context in which we approach a thing, is *external* to considering the nature of the thing itself by itself. We are beginning to see that this conception of perception as an atomic thing being apprehended and considered by a pure disembodied and de-contextualized mind is not true to the conception of knowledge that Plato is presenting us with in the *Phaedo*.

We can begin to see the importance of this observation when we turn to the two examples Socrates chooses to show that in learning we attend first to the elements before we learn the wholes in the *Theaetetus* – specifically, the experience of learning to read and write, and learning music. When we think about these examples, we will see that the opposite of what Socrates says appears to be the truth. Socrates says that in learning music, as in learning to read and write, what we learn is initially the individual letters and

taken somewhat ironically, and as a provocation for thought. Thus, I am arguing against Wheeler (1984) when he argues that due to the incredible constraints “Plato” (*not* Socrates) puts on knowledge, only forms can be the object of knowledge: “Since “knows” creates a transparent context and all aspects of an object are known if any are, we cannot be acquainted with objects which have an unsystematic and indefinite number of aspects. . . So, no sensible object can be the object of knowledge.” (p 363) I am interested in reading the *Theaetetus* as concerned with the *activity* of knowledge – especially insofar as this activity is definitive of the human soul. Thus, rather than focusing on how the text might delineate the *objects* of knowledge, I read the text, with Benardete and Ryle among others, as posing provocative questions about how knowledge occurs (cf. 196eff.). As Ryle puts it: “Notice that Socrates is not saying that we cannot, but rather that we can and do know facts about colours and noises. But knowing facts about colours and noises is not the same thing as seeing colours and hearing noises. Commentators who love to find Plato being rude about sense-perception, construe his denial of the equation between knowing and sensing as such a piece of rudeness. It is no such thing.” (1990, p 23) The sensible object can be an object of knowledge, certainly (cf Davis 1980, p 569); the *Theaetetus* seeks to explicate *precisely how knowing* an object and *sensing* an object are different activities.

the individual notes. He argues that this shows that “the genus of the elements admits of a knowledge more vivid and authoritative than that of the syllable.” (206b)

However, if we think about learning to read, what we discover is that everyone who learns how to read comes to the task from *already knowing how to speak*. We know the words and the *meaning* of the words before we come to have any idea that these words are “actually” “made up of” letters. When we approach this, we find that the idea of words being composed *out of* letters is already somewhat misleading in that it places the written word above the spoken word – we certainly have reason to expect that Plato would be hesitant to give the written word such primacy. The same observation can be made of learning music. In becoming musical, what we learn is to listen to and appreciate songs, melodies, and music as such. It is only later, well after we have developed a taste for certain harmonies and structures of music through hearing them and dancing to them that we come into the “lyre-player’s studio,” as Socrates puts it, to break down our understanding of melodies into chords, and further into individual notes; this process is analogous to our time learning to write when we already have a grasp of the language. There can be little doubt that this process will alter and improve our understanding of music and of language, but Socrates is wrong when he claims that these examples show that knowledge of elements is primary.

§3 Conclusions

Having seen the problems outlined in the dialogue with treating the ψυχή as a quasi-physical, reified entity which travels to another topos after death (that is, if it does not float around graveyards scaring people), we have now turned to understanding the soul on the basis of its activity. In addition to the way the soul – as the living, animating force of the body – holds the body together against the decomposition that occurs after the departure of the ψυχή, we have found that there is an important sense in which the soul gathers and holds together the unities that we experience in perception and thought. We have found that knowledge – including *self*-knowledge – attaches itself to these harmonious unities determined by the activity of the ψυχή in accord with λόγος.

In drawing the multiplicities of phenomena into intelligible unities, it is the soul “itself through itself” that determines the “being and benefit” of everything it encounters. Thus, we have found that the activity of the soul is seriously implicated in the intelligibility of the world. When we turn to the second sailing passage in the *Phaedo*, I will show that the determination of the being and benefit of beings which are rendered intelligible in their *being* is possible only on the basis of an identification of the *good* of that being. That is, as I will show, *any* act of intellection in which the subject “understands” what it encounters relies upon an act of the soul which draws the multiplicity of phenomena it encounters into an intelligible, unified πρᾶγμα *on the basis of an assumption about the good of what is encountered*. Plato is asking us to consider

how this gathering is essential to the constitution of the world we inhabit and to take seriously the fact that for the most part this activity is rooted in *unexamined* assumptions about being and the good.

Further, it has begun to become clear that the *individual* is implicated in this process – specifically, we have found that the *παιδεία* of the individual is essential in determining the “being and benefit” of phenomena. Thus we argued – with Benardete and Ryle – that while sensory perception is *not* knowledge, there can be knowledge of sensory objects and of human situations; we *can* know that this is a wagon, and that this act is courageous. The status of that knowledge is, however, of a different order than simple perception since the *activity* of the soul is “summoned” (as it is in looking at a finger that is both big and small) to determine the being of what is perceived; that is, the self is not *passively* receiving perceptual information – e.g. “this is white” – but is rather making an *active* judgment – e.g. “this is sugar” – which draws upon the education, personal history of the individual, and especially upon the *λόγοι* that have a “hold” on the individual. With this in hand, we can begin to see the limitations of the “true-born philosopher’s” account that knowledge is only possible for disembodied beings, since the only awareness embodied beings are capable of is simple sensory perception. In the next chapter, by looking at the account of perceiving two sticks as “equal,” we will continue to explore the way that embodied knowledge implicates the activity of the soul, and goes beyond simple passive reception of perceptual images. This will, of course, help us develop a better understanding of how knowledge functions for embodied human beings, and thus how self-knowledge is possible. We will also be continuing to develop an

ontology of the soul, rooted in an understanding of the soul's activity; this ontology will be the necessary ground for any philosophical self-understanding.

That is, to know the self is to know the principles upon which this – initially unconscious – gathering and this judgment of being and benefit takes place.

Chapter 5

Recollection and the Activity of the Soul

§1 Equality

In this section, I will present an extended interpretation of the argument from recollection and, specifically, Socrates' example of the knowledge of equality itself. My initial goal is to clarify what Socrates means when he says we sense that things "strive" (βούλομαι, or ὀρέγω), at 74d and 75a. Socrates is arguing that the things of this world "fall short of" (ἐνδεής) the beings by which they get their *names*. In order to make this argument, he turns to the experience of things as "equal" to one another. For example, in order to have this experience of two sticks being equal to one another, we must already possess a conception of what equality itself is (74e-75a). Socrates shows that we cannot simply derive that conception from experiences of equal things (by, for example, a process of abstraction), since we already have to possess the conception of equality in order to experience the things in the world as equal in the first place (75a-c). Thus, Socrates argues, we must have existed prior to birth, and in that prenatal existence, we must have come into "contact" with the forms, such as equality itself, and thus the soul is immortal.

There are strong reasons for doubting the interpretation of this passage which mythologizes the origins of knowledge by hypothesizing a time of learning before

birth.¹⁸⁹ In order to offer an alternate interpretation of the theory of recollection, it is necessary to simply keep in mind some of the issues that have arisen already in our interpretation of the dialogue. Specifically, I demonstrated that the dialogue warns that one's *προδοκέω* can have a “wondrous” hold on one. Socrates repeatedly claims that being ignorant of one's own ignorance is a dangerous obstacle to philosophy. We are cut off from the possibility of discovering the truth if we do not acknowledge the fallibility of our opinions. Further, we have seen that many of these unexamined concepts are operative in our experience without our being aware of them – just as a Homeric conception of justice is operative in the people of Athens, and as Protagoras' doctrine is seen to be operative in Theaetetus, Protagoras being the “father” of the opinion of which Socrates' midwifery will deliver him. With this in mind, it is easy to see how a theory of recollection *might* be developed which conceives *ἀνάμνησις* to be a process of uncovering the structures of valuation and conceptualization that we have taken over from the οἱ πολλοί, from the poets, and from our “indoctrination” in the ideas of the

¹⁸⁹ See Dimas 2003: “In addition to presupposing that the forms exist, this claim presupposes also that our souls knew them in a disembodied state, which would seem to be completely eliminating the chances of demonstrating the pre-existence of the soul in a non question-begging way. Even worse, the assumption that the soul knew the forms in a disembodied state does not bring any closer the conclusion that we form concepts by recollecting. Having known the form of the Equal before our birth and forgotten it is no guarantee that our coming to form the concept of equality in this life is the result of recollecting that previous knowledge. Even though our souls may possess a forgotten knowledge of the forms, we may still be forming concepts on the basis of perception alone without recollecting that past knowledge.” (p 188) On this point, see also Ackrill 1973 “There may be a lurking danger for Plato's program. For if reminding is to explain concept-formation, can a precondition for reminding be recognition or something akin to it?” (p 183). Dimas (in agreement with Ackrill) is arguing against what he describes as an “influential account defended by several adherents of the traditional interpretation, the philosophical aim of the recollection passage in the Phaedo is to account for concept-formation and thus explain our ability to engage in conceptual thought in addition to simply perceiving.” (p 186) He lists Cornford, Bostock, and Gulley as proponents of this view.

polis.¹⁹⁰ In order to substantiate this suggestion, however, a close reading of the passages concerning recollection are in order.

1.1 Prelude to the Argument

There are many puzzling elements regarding the way the argument from recollection arises in the *Phaedo*. At 72d, Socrates concludes the argument from opposites that we discussed briefly in Chapter 2. There, it became clear that Simmias and Cebes found the argument to be unconvincing. Cebes does not offer an attack, nor comment of any kind, on the argument (in order to not upset Socrates on his final day, we suspect – cf. 84d); rather, he immediately offers *another* argument, which he finds more convincing, and which he feels leads to the same conclusion – the argument from recollection (ἀνάμνησις). Cebes is mistaken to believe that these two arguments are simply in accord, as they present different conceptions of the soul, and of the possibility of learning.¹⁹¹ Socrates has been working out the implications of the “true-born philosophers’” conception of philosophy; we have already seen that they deny the

¹⁹⁰ This possibility has been considered before. See Dimas 2003: “If Plato is independently convinced that the forms exist and can be known by human souls anyway, exactly what is the philosophical gain of insisting that perception makes us recollect a knowledge our souls had of them before they were born into a body? Why not say more simply that with perception as stepping stones we can both form concepts and (some or all of us) discover these entities and attain knowledge of them, partially or fully, during this life? Unless we find answers to these questions, the recollection thesis in the *Phaedo* would seem hopelessly *ad hoc*, motivated simply by the fact that it is able to deliver the further thesis that our souls pre-existed their bodily birth.” (p 193-194)

¹⁹¹ Cf Gadamer, 1980, p 26: “As if these two proofs could actually compliment each other! For certainly it cannot be overlooked that “soul” in the one means something quite different from “soul” in the other. The Pythagoreans do not think at all in terms of the Socratic “soul” which knows itself.” For a contrasting view, see Piper 2005. He argues, wrongly in my opinion, that the arguments leading up to Simmias and Cebes’ objections amount to a single “composite argument.” He fails to notice that the arguments present widely different conceptions of the nature of the “soul.”

possibility of learning *while embodied*. What we will find in the argument from equality is that the body is, in fact, *not* an impediment to learning the nature of the Equal itself; rather, it is precisely through examining our perceptions of sticks *as* equal that we come to recollect the nature of equality itself.¹⁹²

Cebes, “interrupting” and taking up the argument again (ὑπολαβών) says,

And besides, Socrates . . . this also goes along with the argument you are in the habit of making often (ὄν σὺ εἴωθας θαμὰ λέγειν) which – if it’s true – says that our learning happens to be nothing other than recollection (οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ἀνάμνησις τυγχάνει οὔσα); and according to this argument, I *suppose* (που) it’s necessary (ἀνάγκη) that we’ve learned at some previous time what we now recollect. But this is impossible if our soul was not somewhere before being born in this human form (ἀνθρωπίνῳ εἶδει) here. So in this way too the soul seems to be something deathless. (72e-73a emphasis added)

Socrates is said to be in the “habit” (εἴωθας) of making this λόγος often (θαμὰ).¹⁹³

Also, attending to the phrasing of this initial presentation of the argument, it is *Socrates’* habitual argument that all learning is recollection. It is, however, *Cebes’* interpretation which claims that the argument from recollection *necessitates* that the original acts of learning take place in a time before birth in which the soul was necessarily *somewhere*.

Cebes, after briefly stating Socrates’ habitual λόγος that learning “happens to be recollection” (ἀνάμνησις τυγχάνει οὔσα), *supposes* that this theory necessitates the pre-

¹⁹² Cf Burger 1984: “. . . while [Cebes] might think that the teaching of the genuine philosophers is supported by the [recollection] argument, it is in fact completely undermined by it. Whereas they speak of death, or the separation of psyche from body, as the condition for the acquisition of phronesis, the recollection argument supposedly accounts for the possibility of learning throughout life, when the psyche is united with the body, and particularly as a result of perception.” (p 70) Cf Davis 1980: “The argument does not claim, as Kebes suggests, that all learning is recollection. On the contrary, it seems to assume the possibility of acquiring some knowledge through the senses (75a). When we compare two sticks, for example, to see if they are equal in length, we invariably find that sensible sticks fall short of true equality. To know that means two things. It means that we have some knowledge of these particular sticks. That our senses can provide us with. And it also means to know that which they fall short of. That is not possible by means of the senses.” (p 569)

¹⁹³ The use of the term εἴωθας is interesting, as it is central to the discussion of recollection of dissimilar things in the equality example.

existence of the soul – specifically, he supposes the theory necessitates that we were capable of an initial act of learning before entering the human εἶδος.

Simmius then interjects that he cannot *remember* the “demonstrations” (ἀποδείξεις) for this – that is, he cannot remember what it was that showed-forth this fact that learning is ἀνάμνησις (73a). He asks Cebes to remind (ὑπόμνησον) him, to put him in mind of that which shows-forth, which demonstrates this fact about learning (ibid).

Cebes responds by *telling* Simmius that when human beings are questioned – especially about mathematical diagrams, which is an explicit reference to the *Meno* (which we will turn to in a moment) – they “tell everything as it is (αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν πάντα ἢ ἔχει)” (73a). Simmius remains unpersuaded, and says he needs to “undergo the very thing the account is about (δέομαι παθεῖν περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος)” (73b). Instead of asking Simmius the proper questions and allowing him to undergo learning *as* recollection, Cebes attempted to tell him the truth of the matter in the form of repeating a theory he has heard before. Simmius tells Socrates that as a result of what Cebes has told him, he has almost been *persuaded*, and remembered, but he does not say that he has *learned*. Socrates is apparently unsatisfied with this, and begins to question Simmius.

Before we turn to Socrates’ questioning and the argument from recollection itself, it is prudent to make a digression to discuss the presentation of the recollection theory in the *Meno*.¹⁹⁴ In this digression, it will become clear that this playful introduction to the

¹⁹⁴ It should be noted that many commentators take the theory of recollection in the *Meno* to be importantly different in content from that in the *Phaedo*. Specifically, as Sharples argues: “. . . the Theory of Forms as found in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* is not developed in the *Meno* and should not be read back into that dialogue.” (1999, p 353) See also Sharples 1991, p 147-149. Others take the recollection thesis as a proof for the existence of the Forms. E.g. see Jacqueline 1996: “Socrates’ purpose in examining Meno’s slave is to demonstrate that even if knowledge cannot be

argument is, in fact, central to the proper understanding of the *work* of recollection. That is, it will become clear that the account of learning Plato is presenting is *not* typified by immediate, pure, direct access to a transcendent truth, but rather is presented as a *process* of uncovering the truths of what is always already present in our *experience*.¹⁹⁵

1.2.1 Digression on the *Meno*: Context

When turning to the *Theaetetus* above, I stated my reservations about turning to other dialogues to come to conclusions about the dialogue at hand. However, as I argued there, the *dramatic* date of a dialogue can serve as a marker to help understand the ideas presented in one dialogic context in a larger horizon. Further, it is prudent to investigate indications *within* dialogues which explicitly point to other works in the corpus; we have seen how the discussion of recollection in the *Phaedo* points to the *Meno*. It is important that we not turn to other dialogues in order to come to *conclusions* which we will then import into our reading of the *Phaedo*, or worse, to form an account of Plato's belief system at some hypothetical period of his development. However, if we *cautiously* turn to another work to deepen our understanding of what is at stake in posing certain questions, we can avoid many of those dangers, and enrich our sensitivity to the dialogue at hand.¹⁹⁶

acquired, the soul is in permanent possession of knowledge of the Forms, and so has no need to acquire it." (1996, p 128)

¹⁹⁵ Cf Sallis 1996, p 86.

¹⁹⁶ See Klein (1965) for an example of the 'reverse' of this practice here. Klein turns to the *Phaedo* to help clarify the concept of ἀνάμνησις as it appears in the *Meno*, as he says: "even at the risk of isolating these themes from the dramatic context in which they appear." (p 109)

The *Meno* is a complicated dialogue, and the presentation of the theory of recollection happens within the context of a larger conversation. Our account of the equation of learning with ἀνάμνησις must take account of the dialogue as a whole. While we cannot fully do justice to this context in this dissertation, I will try to present some sense of that whole in my discussion.

The presentation of the theory comes as a reaction to “Meno’s paradox,” which he presents at 80d. There, he claims that learning is impossible since we cannot search for what we do not know, since, not knowing it, we won’t be able to recognize it if we find it; further, if we do not know it, we won’t know what to seek in the first place. Meno does not present this paradox in a vacuum, but rather in reaction to Socrates revealing Meno’s ignorance concerning virtue.

Socrates repeatedly refutes Meno’s definitions of virtue, and Meno says he feels as if he has been stunned by the torpedo fish (80a). He exclaims that after having given, thousands of times, “a great many speeches about virtue, and before many people, and done very well, in my own opinion anyway; yet now I am altogether (παράπαν) unable to say what [virtue] is.” (80b)¹⁹⁷ Socrates, at this embarrassing admission, offers to lead an investigation into the nature of virtue, “and look together for whatever it is.” (80d) Meno’s response is not to begin this search, but rather to attempt to derail the possibility of any human learning (ibid.). Meno attempts to evade the ego-damaging insight of his own ignorance, and in so doing evades the possibility of benefiting himself by seeking this knowledge.

¹⁹⁷ All translations come from *Plato’s Meno*, George Anastaplo and Laurence Berns translators, *Focus Philosophical Library*, 2004.

In this response we can see the abstracted and academic distance from which Meno raises his questions about virtue and learning, and thus the divorce in him between λόγος and εργον.¹⁹⁸ This becomes clear because ‘Meno’s paradox’ is in conflict with his “open” (in a certain sense) and questioning bearing toward Socrates throughout the dialogue.¹⁹⁹ Rather than believing genuinely that learning is impossible, he is constantly asking Socrates to give him new facts and theories to fill what Klein has called his “enormous storehouse of knowledge.”²⁰⁰ The impossibility of learning is just one more theory that Meno has learned and shoved into this ‘storehouse of knowledge’ without any kind of examination, and now it sits inert, next to the theory he received from Empedocles that color is an effluvium from things. Considering Meno’s presentation of the paradox, on the one hand, claiming that learning is impossible, and his activity on the other, as he seeks to learn new theories, one has reason to wonder what good it would do Meno for Socrates to give him another theory of virtue to pile on top of his other theories; it would seem to do as little good as proving to this inquisitive fellow that learning is possible.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Much of my analysis of the *Meno* will be drawn from Gonzalez’s fine discussion of the text in *Dialectic and Dialogue*. On this point, on Meno’s stance, he notes: “. . .it suggests that Meno’s question is not inspired by any practical dilemma, but is ‘academic,’ that is ‘sophistic.’ . . .there is no real thirst for knowledge behind his question.” (1998, p 154) Thus, as Gonzalez notes, there is reason to disagree with the reading of Seeskin: “There is, however, no reason to think that in asking about how virtue is acquired, Meno is anything but sincere.” (1987, p 118) It is essential to my reading that *Socrates* takes Meno to be insincere, and *specifically* caters what he says to inspire Meno toward genuine questioning into virtue – that is, to turn his *soul* toward virtue, and not merely toward knowledge of it from an ‘academic’ distance, nor toward the sophistic appearance of such knowledge.

¹⁹⁹ Cf Sallis 1996: “But Meno is oblivious to this conflict between what he says and his saying of it.” (p 78)

²⁰⁰ Klein 1965. See also Sallis, 1996, p 77, and: “Meno’s memory consists only of traces left by what others have said.” (p 95)

²⁰¹ It has been suggested that Meno is specifically trying to coax Socrates into giving a Gorgias-like speech on virtue, perhaps so that he can copy it. See Arieti 1991, Sayre 1995.

If Socrates' task is to turn Meno's soul, we should expect something very different than the presentation of theories in an eristic play designed to refute Meno on his own ground – a refutation which would please Meno and leave him completely unchanged. It is, indeed, something very different that we get. In order to understand *why* Socrates has a “habit” of often presenting this theory of recollection (as is said in the *Phaedo*), we must understand that the recollection thesis is anything but another epistemological theory for Meno's storehouse, or for the storehouse of the history of philosophy, or for that of Simmias and Cebes.

I will argue that Socrates' answer is presented as *ethical* advice; this advice is intended specifically to spur Meno (also Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, and by extension, Plato's readers) to begin questioning and inquiring *into what they already know*.²⁰² When we turn to the second sailing passage in the *Phaedo*, we will find that this process begins in attending to the λόγοι through which we present the world to ourselves. The theory of recollection, rather than being intended to simply reveal Plato's “belief,” is presented by Socrates to spur Meno to begin questioning in a new way; specifically, in preface, it is intended to get Meno to begin to examine himself, rather than to play with theories kept at a safe distance from his life – for example, beneath the earth or in the

²⁰² Cf I. N. Robins 1997: “Socrates' arguments for recollection in the *Phaedo* differ in several respects from the demonstration with the slave-boy in the *Meno*. *Some differences lie in the relations of Meno and Simmias to the arguments*. Meno listens to Socrates' argument and observes the experiment of recollection in another, his slave-boy. He appears to assent to Socrates' conclusion, but does not apply the thesis to himself. For in persisting with his original question, whether virtue can be taught (Meno 86c4-d2), he reveals that he does not see the implications of treating learning as recollection. For he accepts the argument that since there are no teachers of virtue, it cannot be taught. But the absence of teachers in the conventional sense is irrelevant to learning as recollection. Nor does he apply to himself Socrates' inference from the recollection-thesis – an inference that begins to answer the question what virtue is – that we shall be better, braver and less lazy if we persist in seeking and if we do not believe that we cannot find and ought not to seek what we do not know (Meno 86b I-c2).” (p 438, emphasis added) See also Wilkes 1979, p 146-147.

heavens. This consideration will raise another question, which will inform our discussion of the second sailing passage in the *Phaedo*, about the limitations inherent in Meno's conception of λόγος as propositional knowledge.

The dominant theme of the *Meno* is, of course, the knowledge of *virtue*. In answer to Meno's initial question – which opens the dialogue – of whether or not virtue is teachable, Socrates makes the outrageous statement: “I happen to not know at all (παράπαν) what that thing virtue itself is” (71a), let alone whether or not it is teachable.²⁰³ He says that not knowing what virtue *is* (τί ἐστὶ), how could he possibly know what *kind* of thing (ὁποῖόν τι) it is – that is, whether or not it is the kind of thing that is teachable. Socrates then makes the following analogy: He asks, “Or does it seem possible to you that someone who has no cognizance (γινώσκει) of Meno at all (παράπαν), who he is, could know (οἶδα) whether he is handsome or rich or well-born, or the opposite of these?” (71b) This is obviously a strange and problematic analogy. Surely Socrates has *some* acquaintance with virtue, and so could say *something* about it, even if he cannot articulate fully, παράπαν, what it is. Surely, then, there is some marked difference between Socrates' relation to virtue and someone's relation to Meno who has no idea who he is. What is Socrates pointing us toward when he makes this strange analogy between knowing a person a knowing virtue?

This is not an idle question, as the analogy between knowing a person and knowing an εἶδος is raised subtly at several places in the dialogues. I argued in Chapter 1 that the word αὐτός (57a) is significant in its place as the first word of the *Phaedo*.

²⁰³ On the ambiguity in the translation of παράπαν in this clause, see Gonzalez 1998, p 331, note 4. See also Klein, 1965, p 45.

Αὐτός is the same word used throughout the dialogues to refer to Goodness *itself* or Beauty *itself*. There, it is used to refer to Phaedo himself, and to subtly present the issue of Phaedo’s “sameness” with himself over time. Additionally, the *Theaetetus* opens with Euclides and Terpsion (two Megarians, who Aristotle describes as not believing in potentiality) wondering at how Socrates was able to predict how Theaetetus would turn out later in life having only met him as a youth (142b-c). With the prevalence in that dialogue of the question of stability maintaining itself beneath the flux of experience, we are forced to wonder, with Euclides and Terpsion: What was it in Theaetetus which maintained itself through the changes of his growing into manhood, and thus allowed Socrates to predict the virtue with which he would live and die? An εἶδος in some sense provides the underlying stability which maintains identity through flux, and thus allows for knowledge. That which is named by a proper name, such as “Phaedo,” in some sense presents the same stability.²⁰⁴

We cannot work this issue out fully here, but in order to understand Socrates’ analogy in the *Meno* between knowing a person and knowing an εἶδος, we need to attend to what it means to know someone.²⁰⁵ What do we know when we know a person? On the one hand, what we learn is a collection of facts about a person: She comes from San

²⁰⁴ We recall Burger’s comment: “To say that things receive their names from the εἶδει in which they participate might seem to suggest, as its paradigmatic illustration, the individual person designated by his proper name. The proper name operates like the Athenian λόγος that each year declares the sacred ship, despite its being worn away part by part, to be the very “ship of Theseus” . . .” (Burger 1984, pg 161).

²⁰⁵ Cf Sallis 1996: “. . . Meno himself . . . does not know who he is. This is the question especially of the first half of the dialogue, in the dimension of *ergon*, and we see how at the very beginning this question, ‘Who is Meno?,’ not only is posed but also is more or less explicitly linked to problem of whole and parts in such a way as to suggest that Meno is one who is oblivious to this issue.” (p 66). In this dissertation, I have focused on the issue of the relation between self-knowledge and the self/ψυχή as mediating force which draws parts together into intelligible wholes. Sallis is here identifying this complex of issues as at the heart of the first half of the *Meno*.

Antonio, she went to college in Austin, she is a vegetarian, etc. It can even be said that without learning these facts, we never really get to know a person. However, getting to know someone is in no way limited to the gathering of these facts. These facts could just as easily be learned without ever even meeting a person – just as we say, incorrectly, that we ‘get to know’ a person by reading their biography. The fact is that all these statements can do is tell us ὅποιόν τι, what *kind* of a person someone is, and can never give us the τί ἐστὶ, who they are in themselves. These propositions which tell ὅποιόν τι are the kind of information we could pass on to someone else, but we can never give someone a feel of what it is like to know someone they have not actually met.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ As Gonzalez puts it: “Socrates then asserts the priority of the question concerning *what* something *is* (τί ἐστὶ) over the question concerning *what kind* of a thing (ὅποιόν τι) it is. . . . What is the meaning of the sharp distinction he makes between *what (ti)* a thing is and *what kind* of thing (*poion*) it is? He explains that one cannot know whether Meno is handsome, rich, well-born, or he opposite if one does not know altogether *who* Meno is. . . . The point seems to be that before one can know Meno’s properties, one must know Meno himself.” (1998, p 155) Gonzalez goes on to argue that this is a strange formulation, since it is seemingly only *through* learning properties – of Meno or of virtue – that we come to know the thing itself. Thus, he argues, “the *poion*-question seems here to be the condition for answering the *ti*-question.” (ibid.) His conclusion is that Socrates must mean that we have to become personally *acquainted* with Meno in order to know if any of the things we have heard about him, describing his properties, are true: “This acquaintance with Meno serves as the ground for knowing his properties and is clearly distinct from knowing his properties The example of knowing Meno also in this case parallels the later example of knowing the road to Larissa. . . .” (1998, p 156) Also, see p 157 for his account of how knowing a person is not reducible to propositional knowledge. I will argue that it is precisely acquaintance with virtue that Socrates is insisting we develop, as the cultivation of our own souls, rather than taking refuge in λόγοι. There is, however, a great deal of debate about this interpretation. Nehamas 1992, p 300, Fine 1992, 225ff, and Dimas 1996 argue that there is no distinction being made between “knowledge by acquaintance” and “knowledge by description.” Bluck argues that there is such a distinction, claiming that “knowledge by acquaintance” is nonpropositional, as I will argue below, but that it also entails the ability to give a λόγος (1956, p 528). He describes acquaintance as “an intuitively acquired teleological understanding.” (ibid.) His paper is a reply to the argument by Cross, 1954, who claims that there is no “knowledge by acquaintance” at work in Plato, or in the *Meno*. See also Bluck’s “Knowledge by Acquaintance’ in Plato’s Theaetetus,” (1963). Bedu-Addo argues that knowledge is, for Plato, knowledge by acquaintance “in Russell’s sense, with *non-sensible realities*.” He argues that “though one cannot know what a thing is like (ποιόν τι) who does not know what it is (τί ἐστὶ), the actual process of recollecting what a thing is begins with the “stirring up” of innate true opinions about what it is like (ποιόν τι)” (1983, p 230) Thus, he argues that sense-experience is essential to the process of recollection.

This, of course, mirrors the example Socrates uses of the journey to Larissa (97a-b). No matter how accurate a map we follow, even if it allows us to get there on the first try, we still do not have the experience of traveling a road that we have traveled before. No matter how good the map, we still have the anxiety of traveling a road for the first time; no matter how good the description of a person, we still have the anxiety of meeting them for the first time. In the *Meno*, Socrates calls Anytus “daimonic” for making this mistake, and claiming to know the sophists without ever having any dealings with them (92b). Anytus says that he can “easily” still know “what these people are (οἳ εἰσιν), whether I am without experience of them or not.” (92c) Anytus claims to know the τί ἐστὶ of the sophists without having any experience of them, and Socrates wonders at this, and says that Anytus must be a diviner to have this knowledge without any experience of them (*ibid.*)²⁰⁷

This distinction between getting to know someone and learning facts about them further allows us to see why the poet Theognis is not in fact contradicting himself, as Socrates claims he is at 95dff. In the first passage Socrates quotes, Theognis speaks of *living* with good people, drinking and eating with them, and so “from good men you will be taught good things.” (95d). In the second passage Socrates quotes, Theognis claims that “by teaching you will never make the bad man good.” (95e). Considering the distinction between actually getting to know a person and hearing propositional claims about them – and the fact that this was presented as an analogy for the knowledge of virtue – we can see how Socrates is somewhat misleading *Meno* in indicating that there is a real contradiction in the poem. Specifically, Plato is pushing his audience to understand

²⁰⁷ Cf Sallis 1996, p 99. He identifies Anytus’ failing as his having “opinions about the whole which remain oblivious to the parts. . .” (*ibid.*)

an important distinction between two kinds of learning: On the one hand, there is the kind of learning that takes place in what we think of as “schools”; in this paradigm, there is a teacher with knowledge, and the teacher passes this knowledge along to the students as if they were empty jugs waiting to be filled by the instructor. On the other hand, there is a kind of learning which takes place when we live with something or someone – as Theognis says, it is by living with, and sharing food and drink with good people, that we will be ‘led by their example,’ so to speak. Socrates is misleading Meno, in claiming Theognis contradicts himself, in order to mirror back to Meno his own failure to make this distinction.

The point of Socrates’ analogy between knowing a person and knowing virtue seems to be, then, that the kind of knowledge one can get from descriptions is only able to touch the ὁποῖόν τι, the what *kind* of a thing a thing is, and cannot give, in λόγος, the τί ἐστὶ.²⁰⁸ This inability to be simply stated in propositional speech does *not* mean, certainly, that the thing spoken about has no εἶδος. Further, it is important to note that any statements that are made *about* a thing are not thereby rendered *false*; rather, they are revealed as incomplete. Claims and descriptions in λόγος, as limited to being claims about the ὁποῖόν τι, are not false. Meno’s definition of virtue as seeking what is good and being able to get it is not false, it is simply empty in its inability to capture the τί ἐστὶ of virtue; neither is defining Justice as giving to each its due *false, per se*, only too far abstracted to capture the τί ἐστὶ of a living, collected knowledge of what Justice itself by itself, *is*. As Gonzalez notes, these propositional claims, as limited to the ὁποῖόν τι, tell

²⁰⁸ Cf Francisco Gonzalez 1998, Chapter 6. On the definitions offered by the slave-boy, he says: “However, this defect of the two definitions, namely, that they both state only *poion ti* and not *ti esti*, can be remedied by the actual process of inquiry.” (p 169)

us of the *relational* qualities of a thing, what *kind* of a thing it is – whether or not it is teachable, whether or not it is the kind of thing that always comes along with color, or always limits a solid – and they do not tell us τί ἐστὶ.

In claiming to offer us the truth of virtue or a person, however, these claims pose a serious danger to genuine philosophy – a danger that is presented in Meno’s character. We can rest content in possessing these claims about virtue, and this possession can blind us to the need to engage in genuine philosophical inquiry – which is always self-inquiry. This is, most certainly, Meno’s problem. Having given many fine speeches about virtue, having at his disposal endless claims about what kind of a thing virtue is, he feels no need to search for what it, in itself, is. He is ignorant of his own ignorance *because* he knows so much.²⁰⁹ He is, as Aristotle warns us in Book 2, Chapter 4, of the Nicomachean Ethics, at 1105b10: “taking refuge (καταφεύγοντες) in λόγος,” believing that he is philosophizing, but is actually “doing something similar to those who will listen to the doctors carefully but do none of the things they order.”

In keeping at this distance from the matter of virtue itself – i.e. the cultivation of his own soul – Meno cuts himself off from the real issue at hand. As such, as we mentioned earlier, Socrates does not need to give Meno another theory of virtue, but to try and awaken him to the truth of virtue – that is, to the fact that it is only in self-inquiry, in the experience of seeking for virtue, that one can hope to experience, first-hand, the τί

²⁰⁹ Sallis’ interpretation of the *Meno* aims to show that the dialogue is a “concrete presentation of that side of Socrates’ practice by which he is attached to the city.” (1996, p 64) He argues that one form of this service to the city is exposing the ignorance of ignorance. On Meno’s ignorance of his ignorance, see 71bff, and Sallis’ comments on p 67, esp. in note 3.

ἐστὶ of virtue.²¹⁰ This mirrors the example of the slave-boy. The slave-boy is asked to tell Socrates the length of the side of the double square (82d-e). In asking this, Socrates asks him to say the square root of 8, a number which is ἀλογον, irrational. Socrates asks him to say the ἄρρητος, the unsayable.²¹¹ This is not just a trick on Socrates' part, but a carefully chosen example to get Meno, and us, to realize this very important point about learning and about virtue: There simply is no λόγος that can be given which will capture the τί ἐστὶ of virtue, which is revealed only in the process of genuine seeking. This search is a process which cannot begin if we are closed off to our own ignorance by the many and fine λόγοι we possess about virtue. In asking Meno, and other interlocutors, to give him, in λόγος, the τί ἐστὶ of virtue, Socrates is asking for what my argument here claims cannot be given. This is not simply an eristic trick. Rather, it is an attempt on Socrates' part to awaken his listeners to a failing in the way they approach learning; he attempts to reveal to them their own ignorance *not* in terms of an inability to state simply in λόγος what they know, as it is often interpreted. Rather, it is an attempt to turn their souls toward another kind of seeking that goes beyond discovering "true" statements about virtue.²¹²

²¹⁰ Cf Gonzalez 1998: "[Socrates is trying to get] Meno genuinely to *inquire* for the first time in his life, *not because inquiry is a means to an adequate definition of virtue, but because inquiry is itself an essential part of being virtuous.*" (p 163)

²¹¹ Sallis notes "that in the problem which Socrates poses the given side and the side sought are incommensurable and that, consequently, an answer in terms of the length of the given side cannot (in Greek mathematics) be given; the side sought can only be drawn or shown. . . The geometrical problem mirrors the more general character of the entire discussion; it is a matter of showing, of exhibiting the myth of recollection." (1969, p 92) See also Klein, 1965, p 99.

²¹² Many commentators strongly defend the notion that the *Meno* is calling for *propositional* knowledge as the definitive understanding of virtue that Socrates claims we should seek. See, for example, Fine 1992, p 220, note 24, et al. On the other hand, see Gonzalez 1998 p 157ff. Also, Grene 1966, argues that knowledge by acquaintance, which she agrees is active in the *Meno*, "transforms the person himself who attains knowledge." (p 21) Thus, acquaintance with virtue "would be indistinguishable from *becoming virtuous.*" (Gonzalez, 1998, p 158)

For Meno, this would mean turning his attention from propositions and theories about virtue, and to the conceptions of virtue that are embodied in his own life. Socrates argues, at 77c and following, that all people seek what they see as Good. I will spend some time on this passage, since this observation – one dimension of the Platonic principle that to know the good is to seek the good – will be central to our understanding of Socrates’ attack on materialism in his autobiography.

At 77b, Meno presents his third attempt at defining ἀρετή. Continuing his tendency toward the accumulation of knowledge, he quotes an unknown poet who writes that virtue is “both to rejoice and to be capable in beautiful things (χαίρειν τε καλοῖσι καὶ δύνασθαι).” Meno alters this slightly, claiming it is to *desire* (ἐπιθυμοῦντα) beautiful things and “to be capable of providing them for oneself.” (77b) Socrates argues that this is true of all people. First, he equates the beautiful (καλός) with the good (ἀγαθός). He then claims that anyone who seeks something bad is seeking something harmful to themselves (77d), and since no one would knowingly seek to harm themselves (78a), no one knowingly seeks the bad. Thus, desiring and seeking the good cannot be ἀρετή, since all people by nature desire the good. We can thus discover what a person understands the good to be by looking at their *actions*. That is, while people often say one thing and do another, one conclusion of this argument Socrates makes is that their true conception of the good is to be found in their *actions*, not in their speech – in their ἔργον rather than their λόγος. This is because while a person might say that doing X is harmful

to them, if we find them doing X, their words must have been disingenuous, since no one knowingly seeks what is harmful to them (78a).²¹³

We can see from this that while Meno's speeches about virtue are kept at a distance from his deeds, he, too, *embodies* a conception of virtue; Meno, like all people, has a conception of what is Good, what is choiceworthy, and he embodies this conception in his pursuits. The posing of the paradox – his λόγος – is revealed as abstract and dead for him precisely in its contrast to his εἶργον – his living engagement with the world which testifies to his faith in learning, in spite of what he might say.²¹⁴ This opens up another sense in which we can understand what Klein is referring to when he speaks of Meno's "storehouse of knowledge." Not only is his memory a repository for every theory he has heard from Gorgias and the other sophists, but his character testifies to an accumulation of conceptions of the Good which he embodies; we can see that what he *should* say is *not* that learning is impossible, but rather that what he considers good is the accumulation of propositional knowledge (trivia, we might say). His conception of the choiceworthy is evidenced by his relish of Socrates' definition of color as an effluvium (76d), and by his comportment toward λόγοι in the entire dialogue. For example, at 77a, after praising Socrates' definition of color as an effluvium, Meno says that he would

²¹³ In the final Chapters, I will argue that the central meaning of Socrates' call for us to harmonize our λόγοι in the *Phaedo* is *not* the development of some sort of coherence theory of truth, but rather that we harmonize the λόγοι through which we organize our world into an intelligible structure in which we are called to *act*. Thus, the harmonization carried out in response to the "hypothetical method" in the *Phaedo* is a harmonization of our *souls*.

²¹⁴ Thus, I argue that in order to understand the presentation of the paradox, it is essential to understand Meno's *character* – for Sallis, as we noted above, his lack of self-awareness is key to this character. Thus, I am disagreeing with accounts such as that by Franklin, who claims that "Plato notices a problem with his philosophical method. The problem concerns the ability of the method to sustain real learning, and so to produce knowledge. This problem is represented in the dialogue by Meno's paradox. Plato solves the problem with a theory that recasts all learning as the recollection of things we knew before we were born." (2001, p 413)

“stay around” Socrates if he would promise to tell him about “many other such things.” Socrates identifies why Meno is so pleased by such definitions, telling him it is because they are “in accordance with the way in which you have been habituated (συνήθειαν).” (76d) Thus, it is not only *specific* λόγοι with which we become *habituated* or indoctrinated, but also “styles” of λόγοι, of argumentation. This will become important when we examine how a habit of accepting materialist arguments is at play in Socrates’ autobiography.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates identifies Protagoras as the “father” of Theaetetus’ conception that knowledge equals perception – an opinion that Theaetetus had taken over ‘unconsciously’ from what he had heard people say, and which was birthed as a wind-egg through Socrates’ midwifery (151e-152aff.); in the *Greater Alcibiades*, Socrates implicitly names Homer as the father of Alcibiades’ conception of Justice (112a-b), which caused him to see justice and injustice in the world even from the time he was playing children’s games (110b); in a similar way, Socrates is here pointing out to Meno, and to us, that everyone has a conception of the Good which he or she has inherited; each person pursues, consciously or not, this conception of the Good. Insofar as this conception is unexamined, it operates at an unconscious level – as the sense of Justice operates in a child crying foul in a game, and as the word “know” operates in Socrates’ discussion with Theaetetus about whether or not they “know” what it means to Know, which he calls attention to at *Theaetetus* 196dff. In any case, whether we are aware or not, these conceptions are operative in our lives.

The process by which we become, to use a strong word, ‘indoctrinated’ by the conceptions of the polis, just as we take over our language from the οἱ πολλοί,²¹⁵ is the initial process of learning by which we do not merely acquire a set of theories (like getting birds for our aviary in the *Theaetetus*); rather, it is this process by which we become who we are – in the sense that it is in this process that we acquire the conceptual structures by which our world is ordered, and evaluate our experience. In the *Meno*, this process is embodied in the character of Anytus; at 92e, Anytus names all Athenians as the true teachers of virtue. In a sense he is correct, in that his own conception of virtue has been taken over, unexamined, from the οἱ πολλοί. With this in mind, we can begin to see how learning is always *self*-inquiry for Plato, and begin to strip the myth from the theory of recollection; that is to say, it is the initial process of learning that takes place as we grow up that is properly called learning, and what people usually call “learning” is actually the process of recollection whereby we examine and call into conscious awareness what we have already learned at some previous time – a time that, with reference to the characters of Meno and Anytus, and to the *Theaetetus* and the *Alcibiades*, we can understand to take place in *this* life.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ This connection between the process of learning our first language and learning the conception of virtue dominant in our culture is intimated in the *Alcibiades* at 111a. The acquiring of a first language is certainly a case that should cause us to re-examine our usual conceptions of learning and teaching.

²¹⁶ Many commentators understand Socrates’ presentation of recollection in the *Meno* and *Phaedo* to be taken literally. See Rowe, 1993, p 11. Most take this to be a theory of Plato’s “middle period,” and to be abandoned later in his career. E.g. Gulley 1954, p 200ff, Hackforth 1955, p 77, Cornford 1957, p 5 and 28, Irwin 1955, p 315, et al. My account will save Plato from the charge of “naïve” nativism of which he is accused. As Rawson says of Cowie’s interpretation: “she and others agree that Plato’s nativism, as expressed in Platonic recollection, is in that sense quite naïve: namely that many or all true propositions are already in our minds since birth, because we already knew them in a previous form of life, and can know them again by recollecting (or in a process closely analogous to recollection).” (2006, p 139) Several commentators take Plato to claim, un-ironically, that everyone is born with true propositions already “in their head,” but that

Socrates famously claims in the *Apology* that the “unexamined life is not worth living”; he further reveals that what is dangerous is not ignorance as much as failure to *recognize* one’s own ignorance. In secondary literature, this fatal self-ignorance is usually characterized as the inability to articulate these conceptions in simple propositions. As such, in being unable to give a definition of courage or justice or virtue, we are often thought to lack real knowledge.²¹⁷ However, the reading of the *Meno* that I have presented gives us strong reasons to believe that the inability to fully articulate our conception of virtue is not the essence of the failing that Socrates is interested in; rather than trying to get Meno to come up with more numerous and eristically powerful definitions of virtue, he wants Meno to turn inward to an examination of the conception of virtue which he embodies, *and by this process of self-cultivation, to become acquainted with the process of virtue itself*. It is precisely in undergoing the process of self-inquiry that Meno can come into contact with the τί ἐστὶν of virtue. Thus, the process of seeking is *in itself* valuable, and is not valuable solely in terms of any λόγος to which it might give rise regarding what virtue is. This is made clear when Socrates tells Meno, concerning the mythological aspects of his story about ἀνάμνησις and the immortality of the soul:

we have forgotten them; e.g. Vlastos 1965, p 164.

²¹⁷ Again, Bluck argues that the ability to give a propositional account of virtue is not the *essence* of virtue – which he characterizes as acquaintance with virtue, and as non-propositional – but that this acquaintance gives one the *ability* to give an “explanatory account” of virtue. (1956, p 528) It should be noted that his account of the nature of “acquaintance” differs from my own, in that he takes the model for acquaintance to be “pure” contact with the forms, which I criticized in Chapter 3, “That Plato’s *own* theory was of some kind of *episteme* by direct ‘acquaintance’ (*connaitre*) of simple Forms is a reasonable inference from what is said in the *Phaedo* about the soul in a state of purity beholding pure Form.” (p 527) I argue that such *episteme* of the forms is impossible for human beings, and thus we need a different conception of how we can become acquainted with virtue while maintaining Bluck’s insistence that this acquaintance will be transformative of the soul.

And for the rest of the points I would not assert myself altogether confidently on behalf of my argument; but that in supposing one ought to seek what one does not know we would be better, more able to be brave and less lazy than if we supposed that which we do not know we are neither capable of discovering nor ought to seek – on behalf of that I would surely battle, so far as I am able, both in word and in deed. (86b-c)

Socrates asserts that it is precisely in the *seeking* that we become better and braver – more virtuous. We can achieve virtue provided we seek after that which we do not know, which requires that we recognize our failings, *and see them as spurs to action*.

This observation reveals another aspect of Meno's problem that is figured in the image he makes of Socrates as the torpedo-fish: Meno sees Socrates as a predator who numbs his prey into inaction, rather than as the gadfly who spurs people into action.²¹⁸ In this equation of ἀπορία with numbness, the real danger of Meno's approach to philosophical questioning is made clear. Socrates is not trying to show Meno the inadequacy of any particular definition of virtue; rather, he is trying to spur him to turn away from playing idly with "external" λόγοι, and "taking refuge" in them, toward an examination of his own soul, to the conception of virtue that lies unexamined there, and to the kind of λόγοι that are "written in his soul."

²¹⁸ Cf Sallis 1996, p 64, and Klein 1965, p 91. Socrates jokes that Meno is trying to get him to make an image of him in return, but Socrates refuses. Klein remarks: "When, according to Socrates himself, it seems to be Socrates' turn to present an image of Meno, he refuses to play the game. Why? Is it not, because there is no need for any image? Meno's soul, in Meno's lifetime, will presumably be stripped 'naked' by Socrates: Meno will be shown as what he is, for all to see." (1965, p 90)

1.2.2 Digression on the *Meno*: Recollection

With this brief discussion of its context, I will now turn to the theory of recollection in the *Meno*. The account of philosophical work I have just outlined in my reading of the *Meno* poses the danger of presenting philosophy as nothing more than the exposition of our already-held beliefs. It remains to be seen how this process of self-inquiry relates to the critical project of philosophy, whereby we call into question the ideas we have taken over from the οἱ πολλοὶ and our wise teachers. This is, of course, precisely the problem that Socrates intends his account of ἀνάμνησις to address. Put simply, unless in the process of self-inquiry we have access to the truths of virtue – that is, not only access to the beliefs that we already have taken over about virtue, but also to virtue itself – then either philosophy is useless to bring about change, or it must examine something other than the self, and be something other than ἀνάμνησις. One way to phrase this issue is to ask: If the second sailing is a turn to λόγοι, how does the philosopher move beyond the λόγοι which she examines to reach truth?

Meno responds to his stunning *not* by immediately taking up Socrates' offer that, in recognition of their ignorance about the nature of virtue, they should seek it together; rather, he challenges Socrates by saying, “And in what way will you seek, Socrates, for that which you know nothing at all (παράπαν) about what it is?” (80d) Socrates first points out how “eristic” this argument is – that is, how unproductive it is in finding the

truth of virtue.²¹⁹ Socrates begins to answer him by repeating something he claims to have heard from “both men and women wise about things divine,” but then he stops himself, and seems to begin considering something (81a). Meno, impatient to add another theory to his storehouse, interrupts Socrates’ thinking and asks, “What is it, and who are those that say it?” (ibid.) Apparently, Meno is as interested in who speaks as in the truth of what is said.²²⁰ Socrates then proceeds to give an account of the ‘theory of recollection’ *specifically* in answer to the paradox. It is important to keep this *context* in mind when interpreting his account of recollection.

There are many different ways to approach this crucial passage; I will focus on one aspect of the presentation of the theory of recollection: Socrates claims that all nature is συγγενοῦς, akin. He says that he has heard this account from priests, priestesses, and poets who have taken care (μεμέληκε) to be able to give an account in λόγος of those things they have “taken in hand” (μεταχειρίζονται) (81a).²²¹ Socrates claims to have learned from them that, since “all nature is akin (συγγενοῦς) and the soul has learned all things, there is nothing to prevent someone who recollects (which people call learning)

²¹⁹ Cf Klein’s discussion of this paradox: “According to this view, everything “unknown” is separated and isolated from everything else. This view ignores the way the “unknown” generally presents itself as “unknown,” circumscribed by questions that arise “naturally” whenever we become aware of some inconsistency or lack of connection between the “known” pieces of our experience. It is true, our familiarity with these “pieces” tends to obscure their intrinsic incompleteness as well as their mutual relationship. An attempt to refute the argument directly would inevitably confront us again with the problem of the “whole” and its “parts,” . . .” (1965, p 92) See also Sallis’ discussion, 1996, p 78, which follows Klein’s interpretation. My own analysis of Socrates’ response will focus on the essential *interconnectedness* of things. I would also like to add that our own ignorance often appears based in our active engagement with the world, and thus often arises from a failing in the way our souls gather the world into its intelligible order.

²²⁰ Cf Klein 1965, p 93.

²²¹ For an account of this passage that takes Socrates to be presenting an actual myth that he (or Plato) heard, see Sharples 1991, p 147-148 and 1999, p 355. I take Plato to be using the priests and priestesses as a device to further distance himself from the account, and Socrates is using it perhaps to appeal to Meno’s sense of respect for authority.

one thing only from discovering all other things, so long as he is brave and does not grow tired of seeking.” (81d)

The obvious line to take on this passage is to emphasize ἀνάμνησις and point out that it is the fact that we have learned all things in a past life that makes learning possible. However, this does nothing to show how the learning that went on before we were born was immune to Meno’s paradox. On that reading, in answer to the question, “how is learning possible” Socrates has answered, “we *already* learned everything, so there is no paradox.”²²² There *is* a lot of wisdom in this playful answer, but it does not directly deal with the paradox. The key to the account of learning in the theory of recollection in the *Meno* is kinship (συγγενοῦς).

We will emphasize kinship, the συγγενοῦς, the grown-together-ed-ness of the *soul* with what is known. This term, συγγενοῦς, is what will primarily occupy us. It can mean ‘kinship,’ as well as an inborn, connate, natural power or ability, and can also denote ‘being of the same kind.’ This term will be our focus because neither having been really ‘close’ to the truth before birth, nor having all truths be akin to *one another*, will allow us learning unless we have some kind of a συγγενοῦς, or inborn, access to that web of truth. It is in identifying how this natural connectedness with the truth places us in what Sallis calls a “mediating” position between full knowledge and total ignorance that

²²² Cf Sallis 1996: “. . . it hardly suffices to appeal to the immortality (repeated rebirths) of the soul . . . Aside from the intense questionableness that permeates the entire issue of immortality, such an account would, in effect, simply transfer the problem from this life to previous lives. . .” (p 82)

we will come to understand how the “theory of recollection” seeks to answer the paradox.²²³

What, then, are we to understand to be the nature of this συγγενούς, inborn ability to know, specifically, virtue? Put simply, it is because we are the kind of being which can be virtuous. We are akin to virtue because virtue is one of our possibilities in the world. Learning is understood as recollection because it is the development of our natural striving for knowledge, and as such is the development of the essential characteristic of the ζῶον λογόν. Learning – and, I will argue, specifically the development of *self*-knowledge – is a movement toward our τέλος. Human learning is like a plant growing toward the sun.²²⁴

It is by developing our συγγενούς, inborn, possibilities in the world that we come into contact with truth; we can better understand this by looking at the example of the slave-boy, and his relation to the geometrical problem Socrates poses to him (82bff.). It is the slave-boy’s συγγενούς spatiality, his innate being as a spatial being that allowed him

²²³ Sallis 1996, p 80ff. Sallis writes: “Things which are akin belong together . . . they can be gathered together without violence being done to them, gathered together even in such a fashion that what they are is made manifest in and through the gathering.” (p 81)

²²⁴ As Sallis puts it: “. . .the *Meno* especially brings to light the appropriate comportment of man as one of mediating between part and whole; it exhibits such mediating as that which enables man to be what he properly is. Since that which allows man to be what he properly is constitutes nothing less than human virtue itself . . .” (1996, p 64) Insofar as it is the activity of the soul to gather parts into intelligible wholes, consciously examining the λόγοι through which we engage in this “mediating” activity – which Sallis identifies as central to the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* – is to engage ourselves with the virtuous condition of our souls. While the relation of parts and wholes initially appears as an ontological or epistemological issue only, Sallis is here correctly identifying the *ethical* aspect of any such inquiry by identifying how the development of the *excellence* of the *essential* and defining *work* of being human is at issue in these texts. It is our *nature* and the proper self-relation necessary for our *natural development* that is being revealed in these conversations. This stance of man as “mediating” force must, of course, be central to any discussion of the second sailing. Cf Sallis 1996, p 41-43.

to recollect in answering Socrates' questions.²²⁵ Socrates could simply have told the slave-boy the answer, but we all know that something would be lost if he did not guide the boy to come to the understanding himself. In a certain sense, of course, Socrates leads the boy along with his questions; nevertheless, the boy's answers are his own – they are the product of his own thinking and his own consideration of the spatial relations between the images Socrates physically drew in the sand. These are relations which he, as a spatial being, is immediately, naturally, συγγενοῦς aware of and thus has access to.²²⁶ Further, Socrates insists that, at the end of his questioning, the slave-boy has not yet achieved real knowledge – he has the kind of 'knowledge' that is not yet tied-down, and could wander away from him like the statues of Daedalus (97d-e).

He will not have real knowledge until “someone were to ask him these same questions many times and in different ways.” (85c) Then, he will “understand, he himself taking up the knowledge out of himself.” (85d) What the boy needs is not to be told the answer in the form of a proposition, and being able to regurgitate that proposition is explicitly said by Socrates *not* to be understanding. What he needs is to begin tirelessly searching, working in geometry *in order to draw out into realization the possibility of being 'geometrical,' so to speak, that is one of his inborn possibilities as a spatial being.* The boy, as spatial, *can* understand spatial relations and thus *can* understand geometry. The process of learning that he undergoes is the realization of one of his natural possibilities based in the kind of being he is. Analogously, it is our συγγενοῦς possibility

²²⁵ It is also critical that the slave-boy is able to understand Greek. Cf 82b.

²²⁶ This echoes and parallels what Socrates helps Glaucon to realize in book 7 of the Republic: We cannot put or 'pour' knowledge into someone's soul, or put sight into their eyes (518b). Also see Symposium 175d.

of being virtuous, or seeking the Good (as Socrates, again, argues that at some level *all* human beings do) that allows us to recollect – i.e. to know by embodying – virtue.

In the process of self-inquiry we come into contact with the truth of the soul, not just with the accounts of soul that we might have accepted in the past. We come face to face with what it takes to overcome temptation and fear, and the truth of virtue that the overcoming of these forces embodies. That work on the self, on the soul, by its very nature allows the philosophical life to be more than a working out of our presuppositions and allows it to be critical of these preconceptions *because the truths of virtue are the truths of the soul*. Virtue is one possibility for the ordering of our soul, and we are able to come into contact with that truth *insofar as* we take our work in philosophy to be other than playing in λόγοι kept at a comfortable distance from the self, as Meno understands it. The work of comparing λόγοι in pursuit of victory in eristic contests – designed to present the appearance of virtue – will never access this συγγενοῦς possibility of virtue; thus, surprisingly, such a conception of philosophy, while at first seeming to be the only possibility for philosophy to be critical, in fact closes off the challenges that appear in the philosophical life which seeks the truth of virtue in self-inquiry. That is, as we return to the *Phaedo*, we will see that self-care is the development of the reflective stance of self-examination which is the “recollection” of our definitively human συγγενοῦς possibility.

With these observations in mind, we see that Meno’s failing, in keeping his theoretical work at a distance from his living εἶργον, is not just any failing; it is a failing which cuts him off from the critical insights made possible by the process of self-inquiry. Meno’s love for λόγοι reveals itself to be a particularly dangerous form of misology;

specifically, it is a form of misology which does not recognize itself as such due to the way it “takes refuge” in arguments. For Meno, philosophy will always be the search for λόγοι to justify his current understanding of virtue, and will never achieve access to the truth of virtue; that truth is here understood *not* as a propositional truth which can be achieved through objective logic, *nor* as a truth that our soul had access to in a time before our birth, but rather, it is understood as accessible because this truth is a συγγενοῦς possible way of being of the kind of being that we are. Thus, our access to self-criticism, and thus the change that is the path to virtue, is contingent upon us not being like Meno.

Despite what has been seen here concerning the inadequacy of *Meno's conception of λόγος*, we are not “free” of dealing in λόγος as a result of this discussion. When we attempt to turn away from *theoria* to *praxis*, we find that in seeking to understand our deeds, our works, and our occupations, we discover *not* just our souls or ourselves as radically isolated individuals; rather, we discover a world of things and other people – we discover a situation. This situation is presented to us, gathered around us, in and through λόγος. Reflecting on this situation discovers a world gathered around us; it discovers things gathered and laid out before us on which, and in which, we find ourselves called to act. This gathering and laying out happens through λόγος. To think that we are free of λόγος by turning simply to εἶργον cannot be a *final* answer, as we will see in turning to the second sailing. We might ideally be able to turn directly to an apprehension of beings in their being; however, we will find that Socrates insists that we not forget the human condition of being *between* knowledge and ignorance, as Sallis puts it, and at a distance

from the truth of beings. Rather than being free of λόγος, by attending to the advice that Socrates seems to be giving Meno we see the question of the *nature* and place of λόγος raised in the text, and thus framed by the dialogue itself.

In the *Meno*, when discussing the difference between knowledge and true belief, Socrates states that what is necessary to ‘tie down’ belief is precisely a λόγος (97e). Considering this in light of the fact that the slave-boy is said *not* to need to be told the answer as a proposition in order to tie down his understanding of the geometrical problem, we must obviously begin to think of a non-propositional conception of λόγος. The slave-boy does not need the “kind” of λόγος that propositionally states the answer; he needs the “kind” of λόγος that is synonymous with the matter appearing to him in a new way.

Heeding the advice, and *polemical* warning, about the conception of λόγος of which Meno is guilty does not free us from dealing with λόγος; rather, it raises the question of λόγος for us from within the dialogue. If this reading of the *Meno* is correct, we must take very seriously the limitations of *any* conception of λόγος which would distance it from the kind of ‘writing in the soul’ discussed in the *Phaedrus*. We are driven to hypothesize another kind of λόγος, the “brother of this one and genuine,” from *within* the consideration of the search for virtue in the *Meno*. Thus, when thinking with the *Meno*, we have to take seriously the limitation pointed to in the *Seventh Letter*, where λόγος is said to be unable to reach the τί ἐστὶ (342a-343b). Thus, considering the place of the phenomenon of λόγος as it appears completely intertwined with human life and human ἔργα, we are driven to wonder how it might be possible to overcome these limitations; or, failing that, we are to consider how to understand the human work of

philosophy as working *within* these limitations – without resorting to the sophistry of taking refuge in the eristic play of λόγοι, understood as “arguments.” I will contend that the presentation of the power and place of λόγος in human life presented in Socrates’ account of his second sailing in the *Phaedo* answers this call for a richer conception of λόγος.

1.3 Equality, Recollection, and Eros

Returning to the account of recollection in the *Phaedo*, we note that upon eliciting Simmias’ agreement that the knowledge of equality must have been acquired before birth, Socrates tells Simmias that their “present argument isn’t about the Equal any more than it’s about the Beautiful Itself and the Good Itself and the Just and the Holy and, as I say, about all those things upon which we set the seal ‘that which is,’ in the questions we ask as well as in the answers we give.” (75d)²²⁷ This immediately raises the question: Why did Plato choose equality as his example?

Commentators have noted that this is weighted example which gives rise to problems. For example, Dorter argues that equal sticks fall short of equality itself “not in the degree of equality, but in the degree of clarity, precision and certitude with which they are capable of manifesting equality, i.e., of appearing equal.”²²⁸ Surely two sticks are not “fully” equal, and thus this account makes sense. However, this account does not seem to be as generalizable to all instances of form, which the argument requires. For

²²⁷ We note, in advance, that Socrates locates the identification of the Being of anything about which we say ‘itself’ in the act of questioning and answering.

²²⁸ 1972, p 206-7.

example, at 75c-d, Socrates says that the “same” is true of “the Greater and the Less.” As Ketchum notes: “One can be as certain that a given mountain is greater than a given ant hill as one can be of anything.”²²⁹ Thus, it does not seem that “clarity” is at issue. We might further wonder how a sunset can fall short of ‘sunsetness,’ or how a human being strives to be, but falls short of, human being itself. How is a human being not “fully” a human being in the way these two sticks are not fully equal? In any case, it is clear that debates such as these arise given the specific, and provocative, choice of equality in this passage.²³⁰

It is important for us to see that the choice of equality is not arbitrary, even beyond our assumption that Plato never chooses such things arbitrarily. To that end, it is interesting to note that, in his description of recollection, Socrates plays in a cryptic way on the issue of *similarity*. We are immediately driven to think about the relation between similarity and equality.

In his elucidation of ἀνάμνησις, Socrates uses examples of recollecting Cebes. He says that we can certainly recollect him from a picture or an image of him, but also that we can recollect him by seeing his lyre or his cloak. As Burger puts it, Socrates “seems to go out of his way to observe that recollection can be aroused by a reminder that is unlike that to which it points, as well as by that which is like it.”²³¹ This is a troubling passage, indeed. Socrates needs to demonstrate that recollection takes place when aroused by things *similar* to that which is recollected. It is, however, not clear why

²²⁹ 1979, p 243.

²³⁰ See also Gallop 1999, p 127-130. I will be ignoring the famous problem of ‘self-predication’ in this discussion, as it has received more than enough attention. Until it is clarified in what way forms are transcendent it is out of place to wonder at whether or not the form of equality is itself equal, or if the form of Greater is great, or greater than anything.

²³¹ Burger 1984, p 73.

Socrates introduces the stipulation (at 74a and 74c-d) that this recollection can also occur from *dissimilar* things.²³²

The specific example Socrates uses to (seemingly superfluously) introduce the possibility of recollection from dissimilar things subtly introduces an *erotic* element into the consideration of recollection.²³³ He says, “Don’t you know, then, that lovers (οἱ ἐρῶσται), when they see a lyre or cloak or anything else that their boyfriend was in the habit of using, are affected in this way: They recognize the lyre and they grasp in thought the form of the boy (ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ παιδὸς) whose lyre it was. And that’s recollection. Just so, somebody who’s seen Simmias often recollects Cebes.”

²³² I find the suggestion of Ketchum, Gosling and Burnet to not attend to the specifics of the text. Ketchum writes: “The present interpretation is, I think, strengthened by the fact that it solves a problem that has troubled commentators. Twice Plato warns the reader that it makes no difference, for the purposes of the argument, whether or not equal sticks, which remind us of equality, are like or unlike equality (74c11-d2, 76a1-4). Since it seems clear from the “striving to be such as” metaphor that Plato does regard being reminded of a Form by its instances as a case of being reminded by similars, the warning seems out of place. The solution is that Plato does not regard being reminded of equality by equal sticks as a straightforward case of being reminded by a similar. An equal stick is both equal (to something) and unequal (to something). So equal sticks, though like equality, are also unlike equality. Being reminded of the equal itself by seeing equal sticks is a case of being reminded of something by a thing that is both similar and dissimilar to it. Though it is a case of being reminded of something by a similar, it can also be described as a case of being reminded by a dissimilar. The fact that Plato issues this warning immediately after arguing, on the present interpretation, that equal sticks are both equal and unequal is, I think, evidence for that interpretation.” (1979, p 248) Surely he is right insofar as one is speaking about the example of the painting of Simmias in its relation to Simmias, but it certainly does *not* explain the lengths to which Socrates goes to show how recollection actually functions in human life. Cf Gosling 1965, p 126, Burnet 1911, p 74.

²³³ Cf Davis 1980: “The cloak is not obviously a cause of recollecting anything. It is not obviously an image. That is especially clear since what it reminds us of, in Socrates' example a beloved boy, is not really like it at all. What then is the connection between the two? It is clearly the unmentioned lover. At 75b Socrates uses the language of love to suggest that an image yearns to be like that of which it is an image. While the cloak certainly does not yearn to be like the beloved boy, there is a yearning involved. In this case the disposition to connect two things is not present in the things themselves, but in the one who connects them, in the lover.” (p 571)

(73d). It is said, then, that *eros* can call to mind (διάνοια) an absent object beyond our immediate perception.²³⁴

This shows, among other things, *that the personal history and emotional state of the person doing the recollecting has a substantial effect on the act of recollection.*²³⁵

²³⁴ Sallis notes: “The connection between *eros* and recollection, playfully alluded to here, is developed extensively in the *Phaedrus*.” (1996, p 88) We are reminded of the *Phaedrus*, where it is argued that it is the erotic desire for the beautiful as ἐκφάνεσταιον (250d) – as that intelligible form which most brightly shines in the sensible world – that draws the mind ‘upward’ to contemplation of the intelligible forms. Cf Sallis 1996, p 153ff. I am thus disagreeing with Akrill, and with the standard claim, that the example Socrates gives that is of the most significance is the picture of Simmias which causes us to recollect Simmias himself (73e9-10). The claim is that this example is of central importance due to the fact that this is the example which most resembles recollecting the forms from encountering a particular that participates in that form, and thus resembles the form just as the picture resembles Simmias. However, this argument simply assumes an answer to the issues that Socrates is calling to attention with these examples, and in so doing, ignores the examples themselves. Cf Akrill 1973. See also Morgan 1984: “In the course of his description of recollection (73c 1-74a8) Socrates gives a series of examples of cases of anamnesis, all of the general form that someone perceives x and recalls y. The final example has someone perceiving a picture of Simmias and recalling Simmias. The application of Socrates' account of recollection to the knowledge of Forms follows the same general pattern: someone perceives equal sticks or stones and recalls the Form of the Equal. This, Plato says, is a case of recollection by similars. Hence, if the order of the examples is meant to draw Simmias (and us) closer and closer to the final case as one of recollection by similars, then surely the case of Simmias' picture and Simmias is meant to parallel, in the closest possible way, that of the equal sticks and the Form of the Equal.” (p 244) Morgan goes so far in ignoring the specifics of Plato's examples as to claim that Plato *should* have used a “wax or stone statue,” “rather than a picture,” as his final example – that is, in order to make Morgan's own interpretation more clear; thus, rather than doubt his own ideas about the forms, Morgan suggests that Plato should have written the text differently so that it would fit better with later (mis)interpretations of the text to which Morgan adheres. Robins 1997 (p 440ff) disagrees with Akrill's interpretation of this passage by pointing to the significance of the other examples; however he, too concludes: “It is clear that the example of recollecting Simmias on seeing a picture of Simmias comes closest to the recollection of the Equal and other Ideas. Just as each Idea shares a name with the corresponding perceived objects, so Simmias and his picture are both called Simmias.” (p 441) Rather than treating any one example as “closest” to the experience Socrates wants us to consider, I argue that *all* of the examples are intended to raise in the reader's mind the *question* of, and thus *concern* with, the *activity of the self in constituting perceptual experience*. Cf Davis 1980: “. . . it is clear that the things of this world are not images in the sense that pictures are images. Pictures by themselves point beyond themselves. Sticks are more like the example of the cloak; they point beyond themselves without immediately appearing to do so. The problem is the compatibility of these two kinds of recollection. The yearning, so necessary to an object's pointing beyond itself, comes from different sources in each case.” (p 571)

²³⁵ This observation certainly problematizes Hackforth's claim, when discussing the argument from recollection, that “there is, of course, no suggestion that we can recollect past *experience* at all.” (1955 p 77) The standard line taken on this passage is to emphasize that only *philosophers*

That is, it is not the case that all people will recollect X when they see Y, as if there was some universal, objective connection between X and Y that determines recollection.

Rather, if Y is someone to whom I have an erotic attachment, and X is a lyre that even *looks like* the lyre that my lover plays, that lover will be called immediately to my mind; the presence of this lyre will not have that effect on anyone who does not share my erotic attraction to that person. Only someone who knows Simmias and Cebes to be frequent companions could recollect the one upon seeing the other. This observation, of course, fills out the claim made above – in connection with the activity of the soul as identifying the “being and benefit” (πρός τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν) of anything sensed in the *Theaetetus* (186c) – that it is on the basis of education and engagement with things that we determine the being of anything we encounter. Our soul engages in the activity of recollection of our boyfriend when we see his lyre on the basis of our engagement with him.²³⁶ This can stand as a rather severe form of ethical advice which should be drawn from a reading of the dialogues: *Be careful what we engage ourselves with! For it is out of the habits that we develop in our engagements and our education that we will be made able to access the very being of things. Further, it is from out of these habits that the soul will determine what is of benefit.*

can engage in “true” recollection, since that requires comparing particulars to forms, and only philosophers have knowledge of the forms. See Franklin 2005, who phrases the traditional interpretation thusly: “Recollection is supposed to explain the advanced understanding displayed by Socrates and Simmias (74b2-4). Furthermore, it seems to be a necessary condition on recollection that one who recollects also perform a comparison of sensible particulars to Forms (74a5-7).” (p 289) Franklin argues that the passage is, rather, intended to explain *all* learning, not just the “sophisticated” learning proper to philosophy. He seeks to demonstrate “the continuity of ordinary and philosophical learning.” (p 289)

²³⁶ Cf Davis 1980, p 571-573. By pointing us to the work of the *soul* in identifying the “yearning” present in Socrates’ examples, Davis draws attention to the deeper import of this passage: “. . . all images contain elements of yearning *which originate not in the image but in the imager.*” (p 572, emphasis added) To miss this point of Socrates’ examples is to forget “. . .the *self* which is very much present in any act of recollection.” (ibid.)

Further, the phrasing: ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος is suggestive. Into our thought we *receive* the εἶδος, the form, *of the person evoked by the experience*. While λαμβάνω certainly has the sense of taking, and even seizing by force, here, it also seems to indicate an event in which the person recollecting is largely *passive*; that is, as is clear when we attend to the experience that Socrates is calling us to consider, there is a sense in which we do not *choose* to receive the “image,” the εἶδος, of our lover into our minds. Rather, upon seeing the lyre we receive the image, without willing it, into our thought. The paradigmatic case with which Socrates introduces his account of recollection begins with the everyday, human acts of recalling. Further, the use of the term εἶδος to describe the image of the lover which appears in our διάνοια reminds us of the subtle connections between knowing an εἶδος and knowing a person that we have seen arise repeatedly in this discussion, and in our digression into the *Meno*.

From these facets of the seemingly superfluous addition of Socrates’ example of recollection of the lover from a lyre or a cloak, it is clear *that recollection does not happen in a vacuum*. Recollection is a *human* phenomenon that occurs in the context of interpersonal and political life. The nature of the specifically *erotic* example that Socrates chooses from the infinite number of available choices signals that Plato wants us to consider the place of the erotic desiring *body* in the act of recollection – a point that will be underscored when we understand the place of physical perception in the presentation of the argument concerning sticks and stones.

In *all* situations in which something becomes intelligible, a “whole” must be manifest through which the parts of the situation appear as having *meaning*. As Sallis argues: “Just as the equal itself, as the whole in which equal sticks, stones, etc. are

gathered up, must be somehow manifest in advance so likewise with all other such wholes. Yet, they cannot be immediately manifest; their manifestness must also involve a concealment.”²³⁷ In the last chapter, I argued that one essential aspect of this concealment is a *self*-concealment; that is, it is the *invisibly* present soul which does the gathering, according to Benardete’s reading of the *Theaetetus*. *To become involved with the soul is to become involved with the gathering of beings into their intelligibility*. To examine one’s self is to examine the intelligibility of the world. To put this gathering into order such that beings can become manifest in the truth of their being is to put the *soul* in order. Sallis continues: “Recollection is the movement of the soul correlative to that movement of manifestation in which a whole becomes manifest through an image.”²³⁸ In the *Phaedo*, the *image* that performs this mediating force is shown to be the λόγοι through which we gather things into their intelligibility – including our own selves. Here, in this passage in the *Phaedo*, we see further how these λόγοι are drawn not simply from some pre-natal contact with the forms, but from our own personal history and political and erotic engagements – from our παιδεία. Sallis continues: “In this fundamental sense, recollection is a mediation between whole and parts. As such, recollection is founded upon the capacity of man, with his peculiar mixture of knowledge and ignorance, to apprehend an image *as* an image, that is, to apprehend the original that shows through it.

²³⁷ 1996, p 90.

²³⁸ 1996, p 91. On the ability to see an image *as* an image, see Klein 1965, p 114. Klein identifies this power as εἰκασία. He goes on to articulate the connection between εἰκασία and πίστις (p 115). A philosopher must be *aware* of the mediation of λόγος, aware of the second sailing which tells us that λόγοι *are* images. Seeing the λόγοι as images is a necessary precursor to the ‘upward way’ of dialectic, and inquiry into the truth of beings.

Recollection is founded on the non-immediate manifestness of the original wholes to the human soul.”²³⁹

2.4 What it Takes to Recollect Equality

In addition to cloaks and lyres – *dissimilar* things from which something can be recollected – Socrates also presents the example of a portrait of Cebes. This example is more central to Socrates’ primary argument in this passage; specifically, Socrates needs to demonstrate the fact that the cause of recollection need not be *equal* to that which is recollected in order to maintain the ontological separability of the forms. By introducing recollection from similar things, he raises the issue of the *inferiority* of what causes the recollection to what is recollected; it is this inferiority that is crucial to Socrates’ argument that equality itself must be recollected, from before we were born, he claims.²⁴⁰ Thus we see that *evaluation*, the ability to make claims to what is better and what worse, and thus comparison in terms of the *good*, is central to the logic that Socrates is evoking when he points to inferiority. Socrates states: “But at least whenever somebody’s recollecting something from similar things, isn’t it *necessary* (ἀναγκαῖον) for him to

²³⁹ 1996, p 91.

²⁴⁰ On the inferiority and difference between the equality of the sticks and the equality of the equal itself, Ketchum writes: “There is good reason for expecting Plato to explain both the meaning and the truth of this claim in the *Phaedo* itself. For in the *Euthyphro* (6e) it is assumed plausibly and without argument that holy deeds are such as the holy itself. The idea is fairly clearly that something is such as the holy if and only if it satisfies the definition of the holy. Since Plato denies in the *Phaedo* that equal sticks can be such the equal (74e1), it seems he owes his reader an explanation.” (1979, p 244) However, Ketchum assumes that Socrates is unironic when he demands a definition of the piety which will satisfy any interlocutor, or satisfy Socrates himself. As such, it is not clear that even in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates was committed to saying that the “presence” of piety in any pious action was enough to satisfy the claim that “pious deeds are such as the holy itself.”

undergo this as well: to note whether or not, with respect to similarity, this thing somehow *falls short of* (ἐλλείπει) what he's recollected?" (74a, emphasis added) It is thus said to be *necessary* that we – the specific individual beings that we are, with our own erotic attachments and histories – engage in an *act of comparison* whenever we recollect from similar things. Specifically, it becomes clear that to recognize two things as equal is to engage in an act of comparison *in light of better and worse*, and thus, it presupposes an awareness of the good.²⁴¹ The activity of the soul which holds a unit in view does so in the light of the perceived *benefit* of the object; that is, the being of anything encountered is tied up with an account of the *good* of that being. This observation will be central to understanding Socrates' second sailing.

The ability to recognize equals also implies the ability to hold *two* things as both the same and different; we have to see the two things as the same in order to claim that they are equal, but we have to *simultaneously* hold them apart as two different things in order to have *two* things to compare and call 'equal.'²⁴² Burger notes that this fact about

²⁴¹ See also Republic 479aff.

²⁴² This *relational* quality must be central to Socrates' choice of equality, as opposed to Beauty itself, or Courage itself, or any non-relational form. Cf Ketchum, who noted the difference between relational and non-relational forms (1979, p 245). This distinction is discussed in Gallop's extended discussion of this passage (1999, p 113ff). The classic discussion of relations vs. qualities in the *Phaedo* is Castaneda 1972. He argues: "Contrary to the monolithic consensus among Plato scholars, in the *Phaedo* Plato did distinguish, and soundly, between and qualities, and dealt with genuine puzzles that arise in attempting to understand the nature of relational facts." He does an in depth reading and re-interpretation of 102bff. – i.e. the "Simmias is both big and small" example, and decides that Plato does make a clear distinction between relations and properties. He is thus disagreeing with Cornford (1957, p 283ff), and many others, who claim that Plato treated the claim: "that a man partakes in tallness in the same way that he partakes of beauty," (ibid.) See Castaneda's debate with Gallop in Gallop 1978, 1999, et al. I disagree with the terms of the debate: I think that Plato was *obviously* aware of the difference between relations and qualities, and in that sense I agree with Castaneda. On the other hand, I do not agree with much of Castaneda's interpretation of this specific passage. I feel that the problems that Socrates leaves his interlocutors (and us) with are intentional provocations to think more clearly about

equality makes it a strange example for Socrates to use: “Since equality seems to require at least two relata, how can there be ‘the equal itself’?”²⁴³ She notes that Socrates does not immediately insist that there is such an entity, but asks Simmias if there is such a being, and Simmias agrees, swearing by Zeus that they will claim there is such a being, adding: “wondrously so!” (74b) Indeed, it is wondrous that such a thing exists, but it is not clear that Simmias wonders about this adequately; it is important that we do not block our own experience of wonder at this existence by referring too quickly to a pre-established understanding of the “Theory of Forms.”²⁴⁴ Socrates seems to underscore this difficulty – the difficulty that the Equal itself seems to require a strange doubleness within itself – by subtly and inexplicably switching to the plural; that is, Socrates switches from speaking of The Equal itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον) to speaking of The Equals themselves (αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα) at 74c, asking: “Is it possible that the Equals Themselves at times appeared to you to be

participation, are intentionally incomplete, and not intended to “solve” these problems, as I will discuss in Chapter 8. That is, I am sure he chose a relation intentionally, as it helps express his point that no particular that is short is not also tall, and vice versa. Cf *Republic* 523aff, where relational qualities are said to “summon δίανοια.” The fact that Socrates does not explicitly deal with a problem he (to my mind) *obviously* points out does not mean Plato himself was unable to deal with that problem.

²⁴³ Burger 1984, pg 74.

²⁴⁴ Cf Roochnik 2001: “In the asking of this question—what is the equal itself?, what is justice?, what is beauty?—does the human subject somehow impose or project or construct a conception of reality, or is a window opened to being in itself? It is unclear. Only this is known: the “what is it” question is sparked by a dissatisfaction with the multiplicity of particular examples of the equal, the beautiful, and the just, and reflects a desire, an *orexis* (appetite, longing, yearning), to capture some unity in order to stabilize the flux of experience. But to desire X does not imply that X is real (except qua object of desire), and so it is far from certain whether such entities have an objective existence independent of human cognition, or whether human beings construct them through the use of abstract nouns coupled with intensive pronouns. In this context, consider again Socrates’ use of *oregetai*. He tells us that imperfectly equal things like sticks and stones “strive to be like the equal, but fall short” (75b1–2). This is strange: how can sticks and stones strive for anything? Recall that earlier in the dialogue Socrates used the same verb to describe the philosopher as one who “strives for being” (65c9). In other words, the verb associated (at 65c) with the subjective disposition of the philosopher is applied to objects at 75b. Does Socrates anthropomorphize? Does he project his subjective state on to putatively non-human objects? The reader is invited to wonder about the status of these “itselfs” that inform our experience.” (p 252–253)

unequals or Equality to be Inequality?”²⁴⁵ What might the Equals Themselves be? How are they related to The Equal itself? How are any of them related to particular equal things? Simmias does not wonder enough to ask these questions. In any case, let these problems be enough for us to assume that Plato wanted us to think through the issue of equality carefully.

We have seen that any recognition of equality involves comparison, and comparison in light of the *good*. This comparison includes, as I noted above, the ability to hold two things together *as* the same while maintaining their difference; this ability will be central to our understanding of Socrates’ perplexity at how ‘one and one come together to form two’ in his autobiography. It also requires introducing the *qua*. As Russon states in his essay on the *Phaedo* entitled “We Sense That They Strive”: “If comparison thus means to **hold them together** as the same *and different*, then it must be the case that there is a respect in which they are not the same, which means their sameness can only be in some respect; that is, they are only equal *qua* . . . : Indeed only unequals can be equals.”²⁴⁶ As Socrates says, “Look at the matter this way: Isn’t it the

²⁴⁵ For a discussion of the scholarly debate on the move to plurality here, much of which seems to me to miss the point by taking the *nature* of the existence of transcendental forms for granted, see Appoloni (1989). The most famous discussion is, of course, Mills 1957. See also Haynes 1964 p 17ff. Haynes provides a reasonable refutation of Mills’ claim that the move to plurality implies that equality must be self-predicable. These discussion do not take this strange move to plurality as an opportunity to re-think the nature of the forms. Rather, they take it as a logical or philological puzzle to be solved within the paradigm established as the Platonic Theory of the Forms. Cf Wedin 1977, Hackforth 1955 (p 69).

²⁴⁶ Russon 2000, pg 72 boldface added. This point can be seen clearly in Socrates’ initial claim that there is a *necessary* act of comparison that takes place when someone recollects based in similarity; there, he says that it is “*with respect to similarity* (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα) that this thing falls short. . .” (74a, emphasis added) Socrates claims that the individual recollecting “undergoes” (προσπάσχειν) the experience of comparing that which causes the recollection to the thing recollected *in terms of, qua* the specific quality which is the source of the recollection.

case that equal stones and sticks, while being the same, sometimes appear equal from one point of view and from another not?” (74b) Thus, the act of seeing the two sticks as equal can only be from a certain perspective, and for certain purposes – two sticks can be equal *qua* fuel for a fire and unequal *qua* building material.²⁴⁷ Thus, again, the specific perspective and intentions of the *individual* doing the comparing are central to the act of “holding together” that takes place in any recognition of equality, and indeed, any act of recollection in which beings become manifest.²⁴⁸

We will find that the act of “holding together” is critical to understanding the way ψυχή organizes experience in light of λόγος. We cannot, then, understand the phenomenon of equality – that is, of any two things *appearing* as ‘equal’ *qua* some purpose – without understanding the place of the *activity* of the *soul* of the individual making the determination. The “subject” (and, as we will see, λόγος) is implicated, then, in the determination of any quality. With this realization, it becomes clear why Plato saw the position of Protagoras – that ‘man is the measure of all things’ – so dangerously seductive as to serve as emblem for the misological tendencies of people who take to philosophical thinking in the wrong way.

²⁴⁷ With this observation – the introduction of the *qua* – we can add something to the debate about what “attribute” makes the equal itself different from the equal sticks. Mills says: “what is the attribute which Plato asserts to belong to equal sticks and stones but not to belong to *auta ta isa*. Hitherto it has been almost universally assumed that the attribute in question is that of seeming to one man equal but to another man unequal; however, N. R. Murphy (*The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* - p. iii-n. 1) has suggested that [this phrase] at 74b 8-9 means 'equal to one thing but not to another', and on this interpretation the attribute would be that of 'seeming equal to one thing but not to another thing'.” (1957, p 129) I argue that *both* of these meanings are at work in the passage, and in Plato’s analysis of the difference between sensible particulars and the intelligible forms with which *the soul* makes sense of them.

²⁴⁸ Thus, I am disagreeing with the standard claim that, as Ketchum puts it, the way equal things fall short of equality is that: “Equal sticks may be both equal and unequal; equal to one thing and unequal to another.” (1979, p 244) Cf Mills 1957, Owen 1957. Introducing the *qua*, and attending to what Socrates says at 74b concerning “point of view,” shows this interpretation to be false.

In order for thinking in terms of equality to be understood, it is necessary to advance, as Russon argues, “beyond the notion of isolated atoms and to occupy a *space of community*, a space of which the units to be compared are members.”²⁴⁹ In taking two sticks to be equal, then, we have to understand that the act of comparison involves a space of thinking in which the two units are held together *as a dyad*. This space of comparison is essential to the dyad. “The shared community is how the two make one dyad.”²⁵⁰ The shared community is an act of ‘mind,’ it is *we* who hold the two together and thus create the dyad – an act which, as we have seen, is at some level determined by our own situatedness, including our erotic attachments.²⁵¹ Further, we will find that it is an act of λόγος which gives us the space of comparison in which the two things are taken *qua* some quality, and held together *as* a dyad. It is in virtue of some story we tell about the things, some act of *gathering* the two things together and *laying* them out in front of us *qua* some quality that they can appear as the same, and/or as a dyad. We will be blinded to this fact, and to the essence of equality and the dyad, if we think sameness *simply* resides in the thing itself. We have to turn to the λόγοι in which the two are *presented* as a dyad to share in Socrates’ wonder at the phenomenon of two becoming one, and to follow the path that Socrates marks toward understanding its cause. As we have seen, an understanding of the *good* – illustrated by the necessity to hold things

²⁴⁹ Russon 2000, p 71, emphasis added.

²⁵⁰ Russon 2000, p 72.

²⁵¹ We have noted that Sallis identifies this activity of the soul as essential to human being, and thus to the definitive virtue of being a human; in drawing beings into manifestness in light of *wholes* (which are, in some sense, in view beforehand, like equality), we engage in the essentially human activity which places us in the mediating position between knowledge and ignorance. Sallis turns to an account of this activity, as it is presented in these passages in the *Phaedo*, in order to explain the way all things are said to be συγγενοῦς in the *Meno*. See Sallis 1996, esp. p 80-91.

together as a dyad defined *in its being* by the axes of better and worse – is central to understanding the cause that Socrates identifies in his second sailing.

Initially, the sticks simply ‘are what they are’ – i.e. two inert sticks presenting themselves to sensory experience. Upon reflection, however, we find that the articulation of the experience of the two sticks as ‘equal’ (or as big, brown, beautiful, useful) requires that we recognize these other dimensions of the experience of them; while initially they ‘are what they are,’ and while this is *true*, it becomes clear that the sticks are *more* than what they are. It becomes clear that they strive – i.e. that they occupy a context which is far more rich than can be revealed by the account which takes their being to be primarily ‘atomic’ entities unrelated to the context in which they are experienced, and which thus takes their ‘coming-to-be and passing away’ as an event to be described in the purely *materialistic* terms of the ‘first sailing.’

2.5 Better and Worse

In order for us to be able to think in terms of equality, we also have to be able to recognize that the comparison happens in the context of *imperfection*. If two things are *perfectly* equal in every way, there will not be two things, but one. In holding the two things together as “the same,” and at the same time holding them apart as two things to be compared, we hold them *as* equal *qua* some standard of measure which we choose in comparing them; again, the two sticks might be equal in size or color (from one point of view), or they might be equal in usefulness for starting a fire etc. Russon states, “The *qua* itself – the quality – that is featured in the comparison must be a reality that both share,

but is exhausted by neither . . . a comparison can only be effected in a space governed by the axes of greater and lesser, better and worse.”²⁵²

We remember, of course, that Socrates (later in the dialogue) offers his “confused method” of stating the αἰτία of things – for example, of how two ones, when “they come close to one another” (97a), become a dyad – precisely because he felt that materialistic explanations obscure the *good*. Russon states: “Comparison, we might say, is the mode of existence within the space of question and answer illuminated by the good.”²⁵³ We see here how Plato’s choice of equality as an example directs us to think of how better and worse – that is, thinking in light of the good – are necessary components to naming (the cause of) anything in terms of its participation in a “form” which it cannot “exhaust.”²⁵⁴

When we turn to the second sailing, we will not merely be looking for the “relational qualities” of a thing, but to its “essence”; it is the αἰτία of a thing being *what it is* that Socrates ventures to “answer” with his confused talk of participation in a form. We will

²⁵² Russon 2000, p 72.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ This fact – that the particulars are said to “fall short” of the forms for which they strive – has occasioned much debate. See Gosling: “This passage, in which Socrates undertakes to show that what we usually call knowledge is in fact recollection, is notorious in discussions of the Theory of Forms. For here more clearly than anywhere else Plato seems to say that particulars are imperfect imitations of forms, that they never really have the properties they seem to have. The apparent instances of equality and beauty strain after but forever fail to attain to perfection in those properties for which they strive. Our women are never quite beautiful, our democrats never quite equal, our incomes never really big.” (1965, p 151) Gosling disagrees with this common interpretation: “The peculiarity is this: that while talk of similarity and inadequacy is prevalent, the actual argument that *ts isa* and *auto to ison* are *different contains no hint at all of any imperfection in the equality of ta isa; there is no suggestion that any given pair of sticks is never quite equal.*” (p 152, emphasis added) However, while she is right to say that things *are* equal and beautiful, she fails to see that qualification inherent in any such claim about a particular; she fails to see the importance of the *qua*. Since these sticks *are* equal, but only *qua* color or size, and not *qua* sturdiness, their relation can never *exhaust* what it means to be equal, any more than the very real beauty of a woman can exhaust what we mean with the word “beautiful,” which we apply to songs, sunsets, and souls, as well as to bodies. Gosling mounts a commendable attack on this position, but fails to see the importance of the choice of equality as the example, and thus fails to see that two particulars which had *perfect* equality would no longer be *two* things.

have as our central issue the question of the λόγοι with which we present *ourselves* to ourselves as a unitary identity; thus, we will be asking how we are equal *to ourselves*. We will be interested in the standard, the *qua* in terms of which we compare ourselves to the stories we tell ourselves of what we are, and of what we could be in the future, and of what we were in the past. What standard *do* we employ? This question will appear as the central Platonic question: What is the best life? Will our heroic image be Achilles or Odysseus? Will it be Theseus, or will it be Socrates?²⁵⁵

2.6 Multiplicity and Internal Difference

In order to understand this question of unity, and of the source (αἰτία) of that unitary identity, we have to understand the nature of the multiplicity with which we are faced; this issue of unity over multiplicity has arisen in several places in the dialogue. I have argued that the faulty arguments for the immortality of the soul present how *not* to think of *human* multiplicity – specifically, as simple duality between divine and mortal, ψυχή and body.²⁵⁶ We have repeatedly seen how λόγος is central to the *act* of gathering multiplicity into a unity; here, we see how the notion of the *qua* is central to holding things together in a comparison *as* equal, i.e. as *a* (unitary) dyad. Clarifying the place of the *act* of the soul in granting unity through λόγος, including the act of *naming*, will be

²⁵⁵ Gadamer notes: “As Nietzsche has so aptly put it, this figure of the dying Socrates became the new ideal to which the noblest of the Greek youth dedicated themselves instead of to that older heroic ideal, Achilles.” (1980, p 22) Cf Davis 1980: “Throughout the Phaedo Socrates' apparent praise of death is, beneath it all, a praise of a certain kind of life. In that sense he is competing with the *poets*.” (p 567, emphasis added) As Oliver Goldsmith put it: “People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy.”

²⁵⁶ In the next chapter I will discuss the account of internal conflict in the *Republic*, and show that Plato presents the ‘tri-partite soul’ as equally incapable of accounting for the phenomenon of the multiplicity of the self.

central to our project of developing a richer conception of λόγος than that which we saw is characteristic of Meno, who understands λόγος to be simple propositional statements. As Sallis argues, it is precisely his inability to recognize the importance of the problem of parts and wholes that defines Meno's ignorance of his own ignorance, and his lack of self-knowledge.

Russon argues that in order for us to understand how a thing can be held together with another thing and compared *qua* some quality, we have to see how the thing holds that difference "within itself."²⁵⁷

He begins: "Those that differ must hold themselves apart as determinate, separate identities if they are to *be* different; that is, to differ, they must *be*. They must, then, be themselves – indeed, be equal to themselves. . . but if they themselves differ from each other, then their very identities are already involved in relations with those from which they differ."²⁵⁸ Being clear on this point is important for us because the interrelatedness of the being of "things" with each other and with the space of the "shared community" will be essential to understanding how turning to the λόγοι reveals the being of "things" in the light of the good. Russon continues,

To differ from another is already to be different within oneself, that is, to already have in oneself the relation to the other from which one is differing. In other words, then, the dyad is only possible if each member both *is* and *is different*, which means equal with itself and different from itself: Thus the relations of equality that hold *between* the members also hold *within* each member. This means, first, that being, sameness, and difference are inseparable and, second, that to be is to set oneself into comparison with others. In other words, to differ – and, therefore, to defer the closing of one's identity to the measuring up to one's others – are intrinsic to each of the members of the comparison. The compared

²⁵⁷ Russon 2000, p 72.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

things themselves evoke their others and their spaces of comparison from within themselves. To be is to invite comparison, to invite imitation.²⁵⁹

Again, what we are trying to understand is how the *Phaedo* reveals phenomena as presenting us with a multiplicity, even when they appear unitary. This will allow us to better understand the act of λόγος which presents them as a unity in accord with the structure of μέθεξις (participation) in an εἶδος. In this analysis, we will come to see how the *being* of anything only appears in the light of the good. I have demonstrated that to understand a thing in terms of equality, we must go beyond thinking in terms of a metaphysical universe composed of discreet atomic entities. In the passage above, Russon argues further that the relationship to other beings is *internal* to any thing, any “this.” The identity of any thing is deferred to the extent that it is always open to new formations of relations to other things – including incorporating the ‘judgments’ of others. These relations do not simply alter the space of community in which things exist and gain their meaning; rather, the very identity of things *already* takes into account what might initially be thought to be “external” *situations* of relation, comparison, and imitation.²⁶⁰ This observation is essential to understanding why the paradigmatic example

²⁵⁹ Ibid. p 72-73

²⁶⁰ It should be clear that I am reading Socrates’ account of recollection the *Phaedo* as an account of how knowledge and judgment happen in an “everyday” context. That is, I do not suppose Socrates to intend us to think of the process he describes here as a matter only for philosophers, or specialists who have clear ‘vision of the forms.’ The kind of perception that Socrates refers to seems to indicate that forms are relevant to understanding *every* act of perception, and not just acts of perception informed by philosophically sophisticated understandings of concepts like equality. While the philosopher is one who takes the cue from the “striving” character of things to actively *investigate* the nature of equality, or justice, etc, *anyone* who makes sense of their experience does so in light of the forms. Thus, I am disagreeing with the basic standpoint of papers such as that of Bedu-Addo on these passages (1991). Specifically, I do not think Plato intended “knowledge of the forms” to make sense experience irrelevant, but rather to *inform* sense-experience such that true judgments can be made. Thus, there is some sense to Bedu-Addo’s generation of two “types” of recollection – the type proper to people who are learning, on the one hand, and the type proper to philosophers who, he supposes have “Achieved complete

Socrates chooses of a ‘thing’ which cannot be explained by the ‘first sailing,’ and thus necessitates the turn to the λόγος, is a complex, political, human situation – his sitting in prison – and not an atomic being. *How does one delimit a complex human situation into “this” situation? Further, how does one gather something as complex as a human life into “this” life?* It seems that any decision we make about the unity of such an object of concern and care will be shot through with relations beyond measure. Thus, any attempt to ‘name’ the being of a being, to delimit it as the being that it is, and thus draw it into manifestness as the being that it is, will be to define that being *not* in isolation, but precisely in its relations of sameness and difference to (every) other being.²⁶¹

§4 Conclusions

According to the “true-born philosopher’s” account of philosophy, all that can be known by a body are the sensible particulars which are constantly in flux, and these cannot properly be said to be objects of knowledge. According to this epistemological position, there is a radical disjunction between the knowledge possible while we are embodied and ‘true’ knowledge, which is only possible for a disembodied soul. What we have seen in this chapter is that Plato is presenting us with a quite different account of knowledge; as Sallis argues, humans live precisely *between* the full knowledge of a pure soul in contact with pure forms and the total ignorance of being involved in total

recollection of Forms.” (p 30) However, I do not see that there is so radical a distinction to be made between philosophers and non-philosophers, and I further do *not* think that “complete recollection of Forms” is possible for human beings, and should *certainly* not stand as the distinguishing mark of the philosopher.

²⁶¹ Cf *Theaetetus* 208cff, where Socrates tests the hypothesis that to give a λόγος is “to have some sign to say by means of which that which is asked about differs from all things.”

unintelligible flux. By attending to perception, we find that it is *not* an activity simply ‘of the body.’ Rather, we have discovered that the act of perception involves an activity of the soul, *through* the body. It is precisely the *soul’s* activity that allows us to perceive *objects*, unitary and whole, and not just a bundle of perceptions existing in us like soldiers in a wooden horse. In connection with this, we have begun to see that the being of the objects revealed by perception are not simply physical, material objects, but are rather better understood as beings discovered in their *striving*.

I have also shown that perception – for example, the perception of these two sticks as ‘equal’ – involves not only an unconscious synthesis in order to hold the objects together as unitary individuals, but also a *world* and a *context* in which the perceived object derives its meaning. This led us to the understanding that the *Phaedo* is arguing for a “metaphysical universe larger than that of isolated entities.”²⁶² Objects of perception – wagon, wall, army, 6 – only make *sense* in the “space of comparison” in which the soul holds them in the activity of understanding. Just as the speech “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6” makes sense only if the “invisibly present” soul of the hearer knows ahead of time that the speech is intended to denote “6,” so, too, does a part of a wagon, or the wall around Athens, only appear as the sensible object it is in light of an understanding of the context in which it appears. That context, the “whole,” must be “somehow manifest in advance.” However, this manifestness must also involve *concealment*.²⁶³

An essential aspect of this context has appeared in terms of the “striving” that appears in the identification of any *situation* as necessary to achieve a set of goals – e.g. these two sticks are “equal” in terms of my needs for kindling. The perception of the two

²⁶² Russon 2000, p 72.

²⁶³ Sallis 1996, p 90.

sticks has appeared to not simply detect “what they are,” in the sense of detecting the bare physical presence, the materiality, of the sticks; rather, in perception, what is revealed is a *situation*; with reference to the account of recollection at 73d, we found that whether or not recollection takes place depends in part on *personal* involvement in the situation – for example, erotic attachments. Recollection is a *human* phenomenon that occurs in the context of interpersonal and political life.

This situation, as I have demonstrated, involves identifying a ‘space of comparison’ within which the stick is identified as that which it is – i.e. identity is revealed to be contextual and relational. This identification necessitates being able to determine the being of the object in terms of the *good* – i.e., judgment of “better” and “worse” is implied in identification of any object or any situation as striving. This identification also reveals the necessity of the *qua* – i.e., identifying any thing by *name* (as a wagon, or an army, or as equal, big, or good) is identifying it in *terms* of, *qua*, some particular quality of the thing.

By looking to the *Theaetetus*, we discovered that the *work* – the essential activity – of the ψυχή is holding together the sensory “data” into coherent, sensible things existing in a context in which they can be understood. We saw that the *unity* which arises from this activity of the ψυχή – that which is *named* with reference to the forms – is more than the sum of its parts. We will now turn to the account of the soul as a *harmony* in the *Phaedo* to begin to understand how it is these unities – identified by the ψυχή in terms of λόγος, in terms of the names we give and the stories we tell – which are the essential “parts” of the human world in which we live, and not atomic physical entities, materialistically understood.

Chapter 6

Ἀρμονία

§1 Bodies and Harmonies

We have discovered that the perception of anything as equal, or good, or as a ‘this,’ is only possible due the *activity* of the self drawing the multiplicity of a phenomenon together into a unitary ‘this,’ in accord with λόγος. In so doing, the self determines the ‘being and benefit’ of everything it encounters. Plato has shown us that this determination happens in accord with the λόγοι that the individual making the judgment accepts as true; further, this determination involves their own erotic, social, and interpersonal history, as well as the broader metaphysical context in which we apprehend anything – be it a wagon, an army, or two equal sticks. These judgments about the being of phenomena are possible on the grounds of the soul’s power to draw together, gather up and hold, a multiplicity into a unitary ‘this.’ In this chapter, we will find that the activity of the soul in drawing the multiplicity of phenomenal field into ‘beings’ is identical to the structure of identifying a *harmony* as a unitary ‘this’ beyond a simple conglomeration of parts. That is, to identify any being as the being that it is requires being attuned to the harmony between the ‘parts’ of that being – whether it be a wagon or a courageous act.

In this connection, we will also continue to examine the significance of the fact that the *self* views itself as a unitary ‘this.’ This view holds sway when we attend to our life as an object of concern, attempt to care for our soul, or simply say “I.” This

identification of the self has the structure of a (more or less) harmonious ‘this’ which arises out of the multiplicity we encounter when we attend to our own identity. Thus, we will continue to explore the activity of the self in gathering itself to itself as a unity, in accord with λόγος.

In this chapter, I will spend some time examining the details of Simmias’ argument against the immortality of the soul. Simmias presents the λόγος that the soul is a harmony – a λόγος which, as we have seen, Echebrates says has always had a “wondrous hold” on him. The introduction of Cebes’ and Simmias’ counter-arguments is a central, important turning point in the dialogue. Before presenting Socrates’ response to these arguments, Plato calls attention to them by returning to the frame-dialogue between Phaedo and Echebrates long after Socrates’ execution. They express their feeling of ἀναταράξαι at being “thrown down” upon hearing these λόγοι after having been so convinced by Socrates’ earlier arguments (88c). It is at this moment that we get the “digression” on misology which we discussed earlier – a “digression” which has been called “the existential center of the dialogue.”²⁶⁴ As such, we must keep in mind that Socrates’ response to these λόγοι will have some bearing on the danger of misology – said to be the most dangerous πάθη a person can undergo, and devastating to the life of philosophy.

One of the factors that we discovered when looking at the danger of misology was the issue of *trust* (πίστις). I showed that central to the danger of misology was holding to λόγοι in the wrong way – as Socrates says, without the proper τέχνη of λόγος. The

²⁶⁴ Piper 2005.

παιδεία that the *Phaedo* intends to engage in – and the specific lessons we are to draw from Socrates’ response to Simmias and Cebes – will have some bearing on how we hold to λόγος; thus, we will be attentive to how these responses frame the issue of the place of λόγος in the activity of the soul in order to fill out our understanding of the place and importance of λόγος for the self-care and self-knowledge that, I have argued, is the ultimate goal of the philosophical life, of Socrates’ questioning, and of the dialogues themselves. Thus we will be attentive to a way of holding to λόγος and being *serious* about λόγος which is distinctive of the *mature* philosopher, and which is lacking in the sophist, the ἀντιλογικός, and the misologist. Of course, central to this discussion will be an awareness of the danger posed by the hold that unexamined, traditional λόγοι have on us.

Indeed, in this chapter I will show that the way one holds a λόγος, and the reasons why one is convinced of the truth of a λόγος, is an *explicit* theme of Socrates’ response to Simmias (as well as to Cebes). This should not be surprising to us, since we have taken proper care in being attentive to the way Plato has prepared the ground for us to receive these arguments which, while being explicitly about the immortality of the soul, are indeed about so much more.

In this vein, we are further reminded that, as I argued in Chapter 2, we come into these responses ready to hear about a philosophical *process*, a *life*, which develops and grows from youth to maturity; that is, in these pages we are attuned to listen for

something *other* than a philosophical doctrine with access to eternal and unchanging truth.²⁶⁵

I will show that Socrates' defense points to an ontological difference between harmony as a *physical* and *composite* joining of physical parts, to an 'other' sense of ἁρμονία as the relation between λόγοι that we hold to be true. This sense of harmony will crucially foreshadow how we are to understand the practice of philosophy as described in the second sailing, where Socrates describes a process by which we can begin to deal with cognitive dissonance and internal dissent by making sure that our beliefs are "consonant" (συμφωνεῖν) with one another (100a).

I will also argue that the presentation of the soul as a harmony is never fully refuted by Socrates' response. The specifically *materialistic* form in which Simmias presents this theory is shown to be faulty. However, other conceptions of the soul as a harmony arise which Plato wants the reader to seriously consider, whether or not this is supposed to be his final "teaching," or a doctrine to be taken over by the reader. I will show that the arguments presented in these passages reveal the soul to be fundamentally embodied, just as the living body of a ζῶον is fundamentally ensouled. As such, I will show that Socrates' arguments, in pointing to ontological difference, are not able to prove *personal* immortality of the individual soul – as I will argue is the case with regard to his 'final' argument in response to Cebes.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Cf Burger 1984: Socrates' response to Cebes "turns out to be the unfolding of a techne that generates trust in logos, and Socrates' own intellectual development a reflection of the necessary *progression* of philosophic thought itself." (p 135)

²⁶⁶ This fact – that Socrates' arguments are able to show that the soul *as such*, the *form* of the soul continues to exist after death, but not the *individual* soul – is true of many of the arguments he makes. E.g. see Davis' comments on the first argument: "[Cebes] senses the inadequacy of the first argument; it had not sufficiently preserved the *individual* soul, the self." (1980, p 568, emphasis added)

In connection with the discussion of self-mastery at 93aff., which argues for an internal multiplicity and dissonance, I will turn to consideration of the theory of the tripartite soul in the *Republic*. I will show that the context in which this theory is presented indicates that it is not a final answer to the question of the diversity and conflict experienced in the self. This theory was not intended to be taken to be Plato's teaching on the nature of the soul. In its specific inadequacies, this theory will point to a "longer road" to an understanding of the ψυχή, and of its internal complexity. I argue that this longer path is, in part, being followed out in the *Phaedo*.

1.1 Introduction to the Images of the Soul

The introduction of Simmias and Cebes' attacks on Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul has become quite a famous moment in the Platonic corpus. A long moment of silence – presumably fraught with the "simply absurd" πάθος Phaedo described, pleasure mixed together with pain – follows Socrates' seeming proof, based on the likeness of the soul to the incomposite forms, that the philosopher shall have no fear that the soul shall be scattered with the winds upon death (84a-b). Into this silence, Simmias and Cebes are heard whispering to one another. When Socrates notices this, he prompts them to continue the conversation by expressing doubt that his proofs have, in fact, settled the matter. Socrates says: "What is it? You think there is something lacking in the previous argument, do you? Certainly, in many ways it's still open to suspicions and counter-attacks – if that is, somebody is going to go through it sufficiently (ικανῶς

διεξιέναι).” (84c) Socrates confirms that he wants the discussion to move to a higher level – to criticize what has been said in order to continue thinking through the matters at hand – by saying that he does *not* want to change the subject: “Now, if you two are considering something else, I have nothing to say. But if you’re perplexed (ἀπορείτον) about all this, don’t hesitate to speak up yourselves and go through it if it appears to you that it could’ve been said better.” (ibid.) Socrates thus indicates his desire to continue inquiring into the subject of the nature of the ψυχή, and the possibility of its immortality; specifically, he invites Simmias and Cebes – and by extension, readers of the dialogue – to cast doubt on the strength of the arguments he has offered by “going through” (διεξιέναι) what has been said thoroughly. Simmias and Cebes, of course, do *not* choose to thoroughly examine and go through what has been said, but rather offer *other λόγοι* about, and images of, the soul that disagree with the account Socrates has been formulating.

Simmias and Cebes have been resisting the temptation to offer these new accounts due to their fear that it will unpleasant for Socrates to hear an account of the soul as death-bound on the day of his execution. (84d) In response to this, Socrates offers his famous image of the swan, singing most beautifully when it senses that it must die. Like the swans, Socrates claims to be a servant of Apollo, and as such to be a prophet singing of the good things in Hades.²⁶⁷ The mistake that Simmias and Cebes make – mistaking Socrates’ calm as a façade attempting to cover a deeper fear of death which they should not disturb with their counter-arguments – is similar in structure to the mistake that

²⁶⁷ There might be a note of irony in the reference to the Appolonian power of prophecy. In the *Apology* (20eff) Socrates reports a delphic (thus, Appolonian) ‘prophecy’ which proclaims Socrates to be the wisest man; it might be ironic in that this claim to highest wisdom only comes as result of his knowledge of his own ignorance, while in the *Phaedo* he is claiming knowledge of what no living man can know.

people make when hearing the swan song. In both cases, people *project* their *own* fear of death, and through that projection, misinterpret what they experience: “But humans, because of *their* fear of death, tell lies against the swans and say they sing out in pain, wailing for their death.” (85a, emphasis added) Socrates assures them that this is not the case; he will not be disturbed by an attack on the arguments for the immortality of the soul. Simmias and Cebes should feel free to say anything they want, “as long as the Athenian Eleven allow it.” Socrates reaffirms that he views death as not being misfortune. (84e) Considering that he has just plainly stated that the previous arguments leave room for doubt about the nature and immortality of the soul, we once again are driven to ask *why* he is so calm facing death. His mention of the political powers which control the prison also reminds us that he is engaging in this conversation against the advice of the jailer, and despite the fact that the conversation may increase the physical suffering of his death. We are left to wonder how his discourse on the soul can be thought to be a threat to the *polis*, and thus why it might be disallowed by the Eleven.

In the preface to his argument, Simmias foreshadows the second sailing.²⁶⁸ Simmias begins by saying that it is difficult (παγχάλεπον), if not impossible (ἀδύνατον), to “know anything sure (σαφές) about such matters *in our life now*.” (85c, emphasis mine) However, he claims that it is only a “soft” or “effeminate” (μαλθακού) man who does not investigate such matters “from all sides” and not back down until he is “worn out (ἀπείπη) with investigating.” (ibid.) The courageous man must “learn or discover what’s the case (ἢ μαθεῖν ὅτι ἔχει ἢ εὐρεῖν ἢ), or, if that’s impossible (ἀδύνατον), he must sail through life in the midst of danger, seizing on the best and least

²⁶⁸ This connection is also noticed by Ross 1982.

refutable (δυσεξελεγκτότατον) of human accounts (ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων), at any rate, and letting himself be carried upon it as on a raft – unless, that is, he could journey more safely and less dangerously on a more stable carrier, some divine account (λόγου θείου).” (85c-d)²⁶⁹ Socrates, then, *would seem to be echoing Simmias* in giving the account he does of the second sailing. Of course, in that passage, the metaphor is slightly altered by Socrates, providing *oars* to direct the course of the ‘raft’ upon which we sail through the dangers of life – which is subtly different from Simmias’ image of floating without power or direction of our own. We will return to this point in the next chapter.

1.2 Soul as a Tuning and Personal Immortality

Simmias begins his account by specifically referencing Socrates’ last argument in isolation – the “Affinity Argument” which states that the soul is “most like” the incomposite and incorruptible forms, and thus “less likely” to suffer decomposition in death; he seems to ignore the other arguments offered. He begins by stating that someone could give the “same account” (τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον) about “a tuning and a lyre and its strings” that Socrates gave about the soul. Specifically, it could be said that it – both the tuning and the soul – is something “invisible and bodiless and something altogether beautiful” while the physical lyre and its strings are “bodies and body-like and composite, and are earthlike and akin to the deathbound.” (86a) Socrates has just argued that the soul

²⁶⁹ We note that Simmias, in the last two passages quoted, uses the term ἀδύνατον to refer to the “impossibility” of discovering clear knowledge in “such matters.” He is literally wondering if it is in our *power* to know such things with certainty. Considering our account of the activity of the soul – that is of the “power,” the δύναμις of the ψυχή – we note that Simmias is wondering if the ψυχή possesses the δύναμις to achieve certainty in matters concerning the afterlife. Thus, the dialogue is posing the question: What is it within the power of the soul to know?

is “more like” the divine and deathless, and thus less “likely” to suffer decomposition and to perish with the body. Simmias argues that the same case could be made for the tuning of a lyre, but Simmias implies that it is *obvious* that the tuning does not continue to exist “somewhere” (86c) after the instrument is destroyed.²⁷⁰ Simmias does *not* argue for this position, but simply asserts it as *prima facie* obvious. As such – in claiming that it is undeniable that the tuning of the lyre (and by analogy, the soul) would perish when we cut the strings and smash the instrument (or the body) – *Simmias fails to make a distinction between the particular instance of a tuning necessarily imperfectly present in any particular lyre, and the ‘ideal’ tuning of a lyre.*

At this point, Simmias has levied an argument against Socrates’ most recent argument that is quite damning *if* we accept his “obvious” premise that the tuning is destroyed when we cut the strings, *but Socrates does not directly respond to this attack.* He does *not* reformulate or restate the Affinity Argument in order to show why Simmias’ attack is not fatal. Instead, he goes on – after asking to hear Cebes’ objection, and after the digression concerning the danger of misology – to elicit Simmias’ agreement that the soul cannot be a tuning on *other* grounds; specifically, Socrates argues that the conception of the soul as a tuning is inconsistent with (Simmias’ conception of) the Recollection Argument – which is not the same as responding to his attack on the Affinity Argument. That is, in his argument, Simmias claims that the soul is not merely *like* a tuning – in being invisible and “more like” the divine – but rather that the soul *is* a tuning.²⁷¹ It is this stipulation – which is not essential to his attack on the logic of the

²⁷⁰ This passage reminds us of the connection between being and presence in a τόπος that we discussed in Chapter 3, and which, I argue, Plato is driving us to overcome.

²⁷¹ Ronna Burger shows this to be an error on Simmias’ part. She argues that soul as harmony is an *image*, but that Simmias “quickly forgets its status as an image, transforming it into an analysis

Affinity Argument – that Socrates chooses to contest. That is, Socrates does *not* go on to show that the tuning of a lyre *can* continue to exist, nor to claim that there is a dis-analogy between the argument concerning a lyre and the Affinity Argument. Instead, by getting *Simmi*as to agree that the soul as a tuning is inconsistent with one of *Simmi*as’ other beliefs – which he claims he holds more dear, as we will see – Socrates dismisses his argument by dismissing *only* that the soul *is* a tuning, not addressing the possibility that it is “like” a tuning.²⁷²

Considering this fact – that Socrates does not directly attack *Simmi*as’ argument – what are we to read in Socrates’ “usual keen look” and his smile in response to *Simmi*as’ argument? (86d) This argument should be analyzed with special care for several reasons:

1. Socrates does not attack this aspect of the argument directly,
2. he smiles in response,
3. he says that what *Simmi*as’ is saying “is certainly just,”
4. Socrates asks for others to respond to the argument (a rarity in the dialogues, to say the least), and
5. Socrates then ‘buys time’ – possibly to compose his response – by asking that *Cebes* offer his objection before he answers *Simmi*as. (86d-e)

of the physiology of the psyche.” (1984, p 105) Considering the Pythagorean overtones to the dialogue, and the fact that, as Aristotle says, the Pythagoreans considered the whole universe to be, in some sense, *ἄρμονία καὶ ἄριθμός* (*Metaphysics* 986a), it is tempting to hypothesize a Pythagorean origin to this theory. However, the specific *interpretation* that *Simmi*as presents of this theory is *materialistic* – presenting a “medical” sense of *ἄρμονία* as a balance between hot and cold and wet and dry (cf *Symposium* 188a) – and is thus at odds with the Pythagorean teaching of the transmigration of souls (For a fuller discussion of this point, see Burnet 1920, p 295-297 and Hackforth 1955, p 101-103). *Simmi*as’ conception of harmony misunderstands the sense in which all things are a harmony and an *ἄριθμός*. It is to this misunderstanding that Socrates responds in his attack, as I will show. As such, the sense in which *this* harmony *here* participates in the universal proper tuning, and unalterable relation between notes, is at play in Socrates’ refutation; thus, as I will show, it is immediately clear that Socrates’ refutation of *Simmi*as’ (and *Cebes*’) presentation of images of the *ψυχή* is not merely concerned with the nature of the soul, but is rather concerned with the proper understanding of *μέθεξις*, the *χωρισμός* between the sensible and the intelligible, and as Socrates says, of *Cebes*’ *λόγος*, that in order to address it, he must “concern himself with the cause concerning generation and destruction as a whole.” (95e)

²⁷² Cf Burger 1984, p 123.

Simmiias, getting caught up in his image, argues that the soul *is* a tuning which arises out of the proper balance and measured harmony of the “parts” of the body – we will see that his identification of these “parts” is revelatory to the source of his inspiration. He states:

. . . you’ve gathered that *we* take (ὑπολαμβάνομεν) the soul to be just this sort of thing – that while our body is strung and held together (συνεχομένου) by warm and cold and dry and wet and the like, our soul is, as it were, a blend and tuning of these very things, whenever, that is, they are blended with one another in a measured and beautiful (καλῶς καὶ μετρίως) way. If, then, the soul turns out to be some sort of tuning, it’s clear that whenever our body is relaxed or strained without measure (ἀμέτρως) by diseases and other evils, it’s a necessity that the soul perish right away, even though she’s most divine (θειοτάτην) – just as do other ‘tunings’ in sounds and in all the works of craftsmen – while the remains of each body stick around for a long time until they’re burned or rot. (86b-c emphasis added)

Simmiias identifies the harmony of the soul to be a harmonious ordering of *physical* elements conceived as forming opposing pairs – hot and cold, wet and dry “and the like.” This idea obviously has roots in Pre-Socratic physical philosophy – to which Socrates will respond in his autobiography. However, Simmiias shows himself to be largely ignorant of any details; he merely repeats a general account that he assumes is accepted by the unspecified “we” that he refers to. In addition to pointing out the unphilosophical way in which Simmiias has come to accept this λόγος, it is precisely the *materialism* inherent in the image that Socrates chooses to respond to in his more direct attacks on this conception of soul as harmony. In so doing, he will provide Simmiias, and us, with the opportunity to think of the nature and importance of an *other* conception of harmony, one not based in simply *physical* tensions and oppositions.

In any case, we see that Socrates does not “directly” respond to the attack on his flawed Affinity Argument. In order to do so, Socrates would have to show that the tuning could, *in some sense*, continue to exist after the destruction of the lyre. In order to do this, he would have to make an ontological distinction between *this* tuning *here*, and the ideal harmony of a perfect tuning for a lyre. It is this ideal tuning to which the musician “looks” when tuning an instrument, which cannot be perfectly instantiated in any physical instrument, and which is not destroyed with the cutting of any set of strings. It would presumably have been quite easy to get Simmias to agree to this, since he has emphatically endorsed the existence of the forms. We will see that Socrates accomplishes *precisely this ontological shift* subtly in his attack on Simmias’ account of the tuning (by pointing to non-physical conceptions of ἁρμονία) and in his final argument for the immortality of the soul (by pointing to the forms as causes). *However*, Socrates does *not* respond to Simmias explicitly with this line of argument because, as we will see, *to do so would only prove the continued existence of the form of the soul as such, and not any individual, personal ψυχή*. I will show, in discussing the final argument for the immortality of the soul, that this is all Socrates is able to prove, and not *personal* immortality. That is, the turn to the ideal form of the tuning of a lyre which is not made explicitly by Simmias, and toward which Socrates merely gestures, will prove *only* that the harmonies and ratios inherent in the proper *ideal* tuning continue to exist after the strings of *this* lyre are cut; this turn is insufficient to prove that *this imperfect* tuning present *here* in *these* strings continues to exist after the strings are cut and the instrument destroyed.

Moreover, while not himself making the distinction between a particular tuning, and the principle of tuning itself, Socrates does provide us with – both in his account of a non-physical harmony and in his later invocation of the forms – the tools necessary to make this distinction, and to contemplate the importance *and nature* of the distinction for ourselves. Again, it is critical that we at least *attempt* to read the dialogue without importing later accounts of the nature of this ontological distinction by referring to what we have come to know as Plato’s “Theory of the Forms.” Considering the Pythagorean sources of this λόγος – as Aristotle says, and as the frame of this dialogue indicates – we would do well to attend to the relation between *this* tuning here and the principle and proper measure of *ideal* tuning when trying to access the *origins* of this ontological distinction.

§2 Socrates’ Response to Simmias

I will now turn to an account of Socrates’ response to Simmias’ image of the soul as a harmony.

2.1 Living Bodies and Lifeless Corpses

After buying time by hearing Cebes’ counterargument, and after the digression into misology, Socrates begins his response to the two interlocutors by recounting their λόγοι in case he hasn’t “remembered.” (91c) It is unlikely that this is the true purpose of Socrates’ re-telling of their arguments; it is more likely that he subtly changes the terms

of the argument in his reformulation. Indeed, with respect to Simmias' argument, he erases the aspect in which it was an attack on the *logic* of the Affinity Argument.

Socrates instead says that Simmias is “terrified” that *if* the soul is “in the form of a tuning (ἐν ἀρμονίας εἶδει οὐσα)” it will perish “*before*” the decomposition of the body, despite being more divine than the body, as will a tuning at the decomposition of the lyre.

(91d)²⁷³

In emphasizing the “before,” Socrates is pointing to the fact that Simmias, in his argument, seems unable to make the distinction between the body as a living entity bearing an animating ψυχή and the lifeless corpse. This is a distinction that Plato will *insist* we consider at 115d, where Socrates chides Crito for his lack of attention to this distinction; Simmias and Crito seem to make the mistake of treating the physical corpse as still “Socrates’ body,” not recognizing that *some sort of* ontological change takes place at death, at the departure of the ψυχή. They seem to believe – since the body will last longer than the soul – that the body remains what it was in life, minus the presence of the soul. Socrates insists we consider the fact that when the soul “leaves” the body, it does not leave the body intact; It is *not* Socrates’ body minus the ghostly presence of another thing. It is *not* as if we have removed the spirits from a bottle and have left the bottle itself unchanged. Full or empty, the bottle is what it is, and will change and suffer the same fate regardless of the presence of the spirits inside it. The body is *not* like this; as soon as the soul is “removed,” the body changes, and begins immediately to decay.

²⁷³ Socrates draws our attention to the fact that Simmias’ argument operates *based on* an *image* by referring directly to the image of a tuning while, when discussing Cebes’ attack, he does not mention the image of the cloak-maker. Socrates must consider Simmias’ image to be *central* to his argument, while considering Cebes’ image to be incidental to the attack he levies against the soul as immortal. (91d)

This clearly implies that soul and body are not two simply distinct entities cohabitating in the same space, each with an individual nature to be defined in separation from the other.²⁷⁴ Upon departing, the soul does not simply leave the body as it was, but “takes something away,” fundamentally changing the body in its very being – from living body to meat, to a corpse. The soul and body, then, are ontologically intertwined for all the distinction that we are tempted to – and at a certain level of thinking *must* – make between them. The body is not a corpse plus a soul, but is rather an *ensouled body*: A living thing, a ζῶον. Thus, *the converse must be considered as well*. Whether or not it need be taken as Plato’s “final teaching,” he wants us to consider that possibility that the soul is not “entombed” in a simply distinct body, but is rather an *embodied* soul. Again: It is a living thing. To understand the soul is *not* to understand something simply distinct from the active and living body of an animal, but rather to attend to the animate principle of a physical body. To understand the soul is *not* to attend to something otherworldly – as the “true-born philosophers” contend; rather, to understand the soul is always to attend to the active principle of a living thing.²⁷⁵

This ζῶον, this living thing, is something distinct from the sum of its parts – even in their proper “balance” and “beautiful measure.” This unity is the self – and it is always a particular self, a “this.” This unity is the *object* of self-knowledge, and, as we have seen, this unity is also the active *subject* of knowing. That is, the soul’s activity “itself

²⁷⁴ As Gans says in his comments in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: “The concept and its worldly being are two sides, separate but united like soul and body. The body is the same life as the soul, and yet both can be named as lying outside each other. A soul without a body would be nothing living, and vice versa. . . It is not only harmony, but complete interpenetration.” (2002, p 11)

²⁷⁵ Jaeger 1943, p 43: “The only way to understand the soul of which Socrates speaks is to take it together with the body as two different sides of *one* human nature. In his thought, there is no opposition between physical and psychical man; the old conception of *physis* which stems from natural philosophy now takes in the spirit too, and thereby is essentially changed.”

through itself” is the act of determining the being and beauty and harmony of the things that are sensed – discovered as not simple physical presence, but rather as “striving” toward their good, their τέλος. This unity granted by the vision of the good (as I will show in my discussion of the second sailing) is the object of knowledge, identified and named by the soul; it is this unity that we identify when we reveal the *being* of a thing. To know the being of a thing, we must not reduce our understanding of it to an analysis of its physical parts (as I will argue is the point of much of Socrates’ autobiography.) It is this unity that is identified – beyond the physical parts and any harmony that must exist between them in order for organic life to be possible – when we identify a ζῶον, an ensouled body, e.g. Socrates himself.

One of Socrates’ most striking examples in his autobiography is *his own self*. To *know* Socrates, to know the cause of him sitting in prison, is *not* to give an account of his bones and sinews – his physical parts. Rather, it is to know the good, the end, toward which he has looked when he made the decision to remain in the jail – even in the face of Crito’s offer of safe escape. The process by which Socrates came to determine the proper course of action *necessarily includes his own account of the situation he is in*. It is his account of the *being* of his situation that makes the ethical demand upon him that he obey the laws and remain. This decision reveals the unity and being of the situation he “senses.” It is, as we have seen, the activity of the soul “itself through itself” that makes the determination of the “being and benefit” of his situation. To know the cause of Socrates sitting in prison is to know the operation and activity of his *soul*. For Socrates to know himself, then, is for him to understand the basis on which – i.e. the account he can give, the λόγος in terms of which – he has gathered the situation into a unity and

determined its “being and benefit.” To know himself, he must know himself *as* the ζῶον λόγον – as that being which takes its own being and good to be an issue for it. He knows himself as an instance of the animal which takes part in determining its own τέλος through conscious reflection and rationality.

While these observations are getting ahead of themselves, hopefully it is beginning to become more clear to the reader how these comments arise out of a reading of Socrates’ responses to Simmias and Cebes; more importantly, I hope it is beginning to become clear how they speak *directly* to the questions that arose in a careful reading of the first parts of the dialogue – which, among many other things, ask us to consider the place of λόγος in *unity* and in *self-knowledge*. That is, after leading his friends into the heart of the labyrinth, and at the physical and “existential” center of the dialogue, revealing to them the Minotaur of misology, Socrates begins to lead them (us) back out; in so doing, he is weaving together the threads that have been laid out before us in the λόγοι into a coherent image of the soul *as* the elusive simultaneous subject and object of self-reflection, self-knowledge, and care of the self. Thus, we are beginning to fill out the conception of how the dialogues, through the figure of Socrates “grown young and beautiful,” present the “turn inward,” as Hegel has put it; it is this that Werner Jaeger determined to be the central historical import of the dialogues, which he calls the “spiritual” contribution of Greek culture to the creation of “the concept of a personality fully self-conscious and responsible to itself.”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ 1943, p 6.

2.2 Charlatans and Demonstrations

Socrates wastes no time in dismissing Simmias' argument. He immediately points out that, *on the assumption that the recollection argument actually proves the existence of the soul before birth*, Simmias cannot hold that the soul is a harmony and still maintain his belief in recollection. (92a) That is, since the soul could not arise from the harmony of the elements of the body if it pre-existed the body, Simmias has to decide between his belief in the argument from recollection – understood to prove this pre-existence – and his λόγος that the soul is a tuning.²⁷⁷ Socrates tells him that it is improper for his argument about *tuning* to fail to “sing in accord” with his other beliefs, and thus he must choose.²⁷⁸ In his explanation of *why* he chooses the recollection argument, Simmias says the soul as a tuning only has a certain “attractiveness” (εὐπροπεΐας) and likelihood (εἰκότος), and lacks a clear demonstration (ἄνευ ἀποδείξεως). He states that this is precisely why it has such a hold on so many people (as we saw it significantly had on Echeocrates).

²⁷⁷ Socrates – in addition to pressing Simmias to think of a way to understand how learning is recollection *without* endorsing the mythical pre-existence of the soul, as I will show – is apparently also trying to get him to re-think the nature of harmony; at 92b he says plainly, *without explanation*, that a harmony is not “the sort of thing [Simmias] compares (ἀπεικάζεις) it to.” Unfortunately, Simmias does not ask him what he means. With Burger, I lament that Simmias does not take the opportunity to “argue that perhaps harmony is not a composite pragma, or that the psyche is a harmony, but not of corporeal elements.” (1984, p 123)

²⁷⁸ Bedu-Addo misses the point of this argument. In the context of discussing the “method of hypothesis,” he says: “We are, in effect, to ensure the consequences of the hypothesis - whether they are purely logical consequences or the results of its applications to particular cases - are all consistently tenable; that is to say, we are to test the hypothesis by means of the Socratic elenchus in much the same manner as Simmias' logos, namely, that 'the soul is an attunement' is tested at 92a-94e. If the hypothesis leads to conflicting or absurd consequences, as in the case of Simmias' logos, we should naturally abandon it and start all over again with another hypothesis; for the first has been refuted.” (1969, p 120) However, it is clear that the results of Simmias' logos do not conflict with one another, but rather with *other* λόγοι that Simmias holds to.

Insofar as it is essential to understand how the *Phaedo* is giving us the advice that we should know ourselves, we must pay special attention to this passage for several reasons: To know ourselves is to know the soul; I have argued that the soul is to be known in terms of its *activity* in granting the intelligibility of the things we perceive; I have shown that this activity, in determining the “being and benefit” of things, occurs based in the *individual’s* particular “education” and “engagement” (πραγμάτων) with things; thus, the soul’s activity, itself through itself, which is the *object* of self-knowledge, *includes the concepts and categories with which we determine the being, meaning, and value of things*. To know the self is, at least in part, *to examine the presuppositions and categories by which we order our experience*. Simmias’ speech gives an account of how the philosophical man *should* regard which presuppositions to maintain and which to reject. I will show that, like Theaetetus, his “beautiful speech” is not carried out in his behavior.

Simmias states that:

I know that arguments that make their demonstrations (ἀποδείξεις) through likelihoods (εἰκότων) are imposters (εἰκόντων), and if one doesn’t have one’s guard up against them, they do quite a good job of deceiving us, both in geometry and in everything else. But the recollection and learning argument was established through a hypothesis worthy of being accepted. For it was established, I suppose, that our soul *is* even before arriving in the body, just as certainly as that Being she belongs with has the title ‘that which is.’ And this being, I persuade myself, I’ve accepted for adequate and right reasons. Then because of all this, it’s necessary for me, as it seems, to allow neither myself nor anyone else to say that soul is a tuning. (92 d-e)

There are many indications within his speech that he is not being true to the principle he endorses here, and that even he underestimates how good a job of deceiving us these attractive λόγοι can do. He says that he “supposes” that the “recollection and learning argument” established the pre-existence of the soul, and that he has “persuaded” himself

that he has accepted this for the right reasons. Socrates will later tell him, and us, to re-examine everything that has been said; Simmias here, with this “I suppose,” indicates that he has an inkling that the argument needs such a reexamination. He, unfortunately, does not engage in such an examination, but assumes that he has accepted the pre-existence of the soul on the basis of *demonstration*; in fact, I have shown that he has accepted based in a likeness – the likeness of the soul to the ‘beings.’ This is indicated in Simmias’ speech when he says that the soul “belongs with” Being – a clear reference to the Likeness Argument. This thesis – that learning is recollection *and thus* must be recollection of something learned *before birth* – is obviously *attractive* to Simmias, but he has accepted it without demonstration. He gives this away *simply by his own uncertainty*: If he had understood the issue via a clear proof or demonstration he would not have to “persuade” himself of the validity of the demonstration— it would be immediately clear to him that such was the case.

As Burger says: “Simmias has affirmed the recollection argument on the basis of an unexamined assumption concerning the existence and nature of “the beings” . . .”²⁷⁹ This shows that saying, *and even believing*, that one should only accept λόγοι on the basis of demonstrations and not how appealing or plausible they may *seem* to you, unfortunately, does *not* guarantee that the beliefs that are operative in your soul’s activity, ordering and informing your world, are based in such a demonstration. The image Simmias uses of the vagabond charlatan (ἀλαζών) is useful in this regard: One can know that such charlatans exist, warn others about them, and yet still fall prey to an especially charming and attractive one!

²⁷⁹ 1984, p 123.

One way to think about what is needed, in light of this situation, is for Simmias to engage in an inquiry into the *coherence* of the beliefs he holds – an inquiry that would have begun Simmias on a difficult and revealing path of self inquiry when he discovered the tension between his belief in the “beings” and the pre-existence of the soul and his belief in the soul as a tuning. This is one aspect of the method Socrates will describe as his second sailing. That is, instead of simply rejecting the theory that the soul is a harmony, Simmias *should* have begun to examine the nature and importance of the *coherence* of the beliefs with which he orders his world, and determines the “being and benefit” of things he encounters; it is precisely this process that Socrates inaugurates as his “second sailing.”

2.3 Physical and Non-Physical Harmonies

Socrates has thus, with one “argument,” gotten Simmias to reject the soul as a tuning, and to insist that he will let no one else affirm it either! However, if this were supposed to be satisfactory to readers – if we were supposed to take the matter as settled – it is odd that Socrates goes on to give additional arguments against Simmias *which lead us to develop a different conception of harmony*. We will see that the conception of harmony evident in Simmias’ λόγος – that the soul arises from a harmonious relation between ‘parts’ of the body – is *completely different* from the conception of harmony in this stage of Socrates’ refutation – that is, harmony as a virtuous condition of the soul.

Socrates’ arguments in this section are *not* intended to simply disprove Simmias’ argument and to argue for the immortality of the soul. Simmias is already completely

convinced that he was wrong; apparently Socrates does not share his confidence that the threat has been resolved; as Burger puts it: “Some implication of Simmias’ image was, after all, apparently devastating enough to stop Socrates in his tracks when he first heard it. . . .”²⁸⁰ We will see what the true intent of these arguments are, and why Plato considers it valuable to develop a more sophisticated understanding of harmony.

Socrates begins his new line of questioning by asking if a harmony “or any other form of composition is apt to be in some other condition than whatever the condition is of the things from which its composed?” (93a) Simmias does not ask for clarification of this rather vague statement, but affirms that there is “No way” this could be the case. Socrates next asks if the harmony can “do (ποιεῖν) or suffer (πάσχειν) anything else beyond what those things may do or suffer?” (ibid.) Simmias agrees to this – wrongly, as I will argue – and Socrates draws the conclusion that the harmony *follows* (ἔπεται) the parts, and does not lead (ἡγείσθαι) them.

From this, Socrates is able to conclude that a harmony cannot make movements or sounds contrary (ἐναντιωθῆναι) to the parts of which it is composed. (93a) Then, (after a digression into *virtue* as the true harmony of the soul, which I will turn to in a moment) Socrates gets Simmias to affirm that since the soul is able to resist thirst and hunger and the desires and drives of the body, that it must run contrary to the body, and thus to the parts of which it is composed: “And I suppose we see the soul running contrary (ἐναντιουμένην) to what belongs to the body (κατὰ τὸ σῶμα) in a thousand other ways, don’t we?” (94b) Reminding Simmias that they agreed that the harmony cannot “govern” (ἡγεμονεύειν) the parts of which it is made, Socrates concludes that the soul cannot be in

²⁸⁰ 1984, p 126.

the form of a tuning, since it governs and opposes – stands up against (ἐναντιουμένην) – the demands of the body.

However, this is a faulty analysis of the nature of a harmony. In fact, we will find that each of Simmias' answers are in fact incorrect, and do not understand the *unity* that arises out of the parts as a *whole* which is more than the sum of its parts – just as we saw in the argument about the nature of giving a λόγος in the *Theaetetus*.²⁸¹ Socrates asks Simmias to *harmonize* his thesis that the soul is a harmony with the argument from recollection – that is, with the argument which Socrates makes on the basis of his observations concerning our ability to see equality, which we analyzed as the activity of the soul 'itself through itself.' We will find, significantly, that thinking through what Simmias *should* have answered to each of Socrates' questions leads to the ability to *harmonize* the two arguments perfectly.

The image of the lyre immediately evokes the saying of Heraclitus: "They do not understand how differing with itself it agrees with itself: a backturning harmony like the bow or the lyre."²⁸² The *palintropos harmonia* is a *unity* that arises out of the parts of which it is composed. This unity is the source and location of the *being* of the thing, of the "this" that we call a lyre or a bow. The bow is not simply a string, nor is it a piece of wood. Rather, it is these elements placed in a specific relation of opposition to one

²⁸¹ Cf Russon: "The arguments about why a soul cannot be a harmony are quite bad. This is not Socrates' fault, of course. It is Simmias' poor answers that lead the discussion astray." (2000, p 73)

²⁸² When turning to the interlude in the argument we are addressing at 93b-94b, where Socrates argues that the harmony of the soul is virtue, is not present in all souls, and is thus not based in *material* elements, we will turn briefly to Eryximachus' speech in the *Symposium*. There, he gives an account of health as the *harmony* produced by the properly balanced elements which compose the body. Quoting Heraclitus, Eryximachus disagrees with Heraclitus and claims that opposing elements cannot be in harmony.

another *in order to* create a bow. The bow itself is the cause and the goal when the tension between the string and wood is created. On its own, the wood would be straight; on its own, the string would return to being slack. However, when tied together in the proper way – a way which must have the nature of a bow in sight – neither is able to do what it would naturally do. The wood is held in an unnatural curve and the string is held in an unnatural state of tension. As Russon puts it: “An opposition between the elements is built into their relation, *and this is the feature* that lets the bow be a bow.”²⁸³

It is the result of this opposition between the elements that the bow is able to fire an arrow, and it is in virtue of the same sort of tension that the lyre is able to play music. Only when the strings of the lyre are chosen for the proper length and width, and strung to exactly the correct tightness, does beautiful music become possible – a possibility that *does not exist* with the strings and body alone. That is, it is not the wood nor the strings, nor even their simple “combination,” but only a specific *form* of their opposition that makes music, or the firing of an arrow, possible. “The bow is not the wood plus the string, but is precisely the self-identity achieved through establishing their antagonism.”²⁸⁴ The identity of a lyre is not reducible to its parts; it has its own nature above and beyond the simple addition of wood and string into a conglomerate. *It is this unity that arises from the specific tension and opposition that we know when we recognize a thing as a “lyre.”*²⁸⁵

²⁸³ 2000, p 75.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ We recall that this structure – in which the whole is something more than the parts, ontologically prior to the parts, and thus provides the context for the meaning of the parts – is identical to what we discovered in Chapter 4 while discussing how knowledge attaches itself to intelligible unities in the *Theaetetus*. The “invisibly present” soul of the individual identifies this unity by gathering the phenomenon together into a “one,” a “this,” in accord with λόγος.

If we keep this unity in mind, it becomes clear that Simmias has not fully realized the importance of what he said was the “beautiful measure” that the parts of the body must have in relation to their opposites in order for life to be possible. If he had realized the nature of this unity arising from opposition which is present in his own image of the soul, he would have answered Socrates’ questions differently. Specifically, Socrates asks if the harmony is “apt to be in any condition other than the condition of its parts (προσῆκειν ἄλλως πως ἔχειν ἢ ὡς ἂν ἐκεῖνα ἔχη ἐξ ὧν ἂν συγκέηται;)” (93a) Socrates is asking if the harmony can “hold itself” (ἔχειν), or be in a state, other than the elements. From our analysis of the harmony of the bow or the lyre, we can see that the bow is in a state of natural rest, while the elements themselves are being stretched into an unnatural position. Socrates next asks if the harmony can do (ποιεῖν) or suffer (πάσχειν) anything other than its elements. Again, we find that Simmias did not attend to the nature of the harmony; we see immediately that the bow and the lyre certainly *can* do things that the parts in themselves cannot – specifically fire arrows and play music. From these observations, it seems clear that the harmony does not, in fact, “follow” the elements, but rather leads them. If the elements had their way, the string would be slack, as would the wood. It is the harmony which directs the elements and keeps them in unnatural conditions.

Socrates, of course, concludes that since the soul opposes the demands and desires of the parts of the body, it cannot be a harmony. However, as we have seen, it is *precisely* the nature of a harmony to oppose the “desires” (i.e. the natural inclinations) of the elements out of which it is composed. Thus, we cannot deduce from the fact that the soul resists the inclinations of the body that it is not a harmony. As soon as we are able to see

the unified nature of the harmony as a being in itself, above and beyond the sum of its parts, we are able to understand how the nature of a bow, a lyre, or a soul can be *ontologically* distinct from the body. *However*, despite this ontological distinction, the harmony is still *dependent* upon the elements out of which it is composed for its existence. *This aspect of Simmias' argument is never addressed or refuted by Socrates.* As we have seen, Socrates argues that the harmony argument is incompatible with the pre-existence of the soul, and he erroneously argues that the soul's opposition to the inclinations of the body do not allow for the soul to be conceived as a harmony.

Simmias' fails to understand the unitary nature of the harmony which arises out of the physical parts. This is not entirely Simmias' fault, however. In his speech at 85eff, Simmias refers to the harmony as arising out of the composition of the parts; as such, he seems to refer to the harmony as a unitary entity. However, in his response at 92b, Socrates changes the terms of the argument, stating that "the tuning is a composite thing (ἁρμονία συγκειμένη)." Simmias fails to notice this shift. As we have seen, while subtle, this change in language makes all the difference in understanding the nature of a harmony, and thus the possibility of the soul itself being a harmony.

In looking at the arguments concerning harmony, we have discovered that the self *might* yet be understood to be a unitary *this* arising as a harmony, but it is unclear what the components of this harmony are, if they are not the physical parts of the body. Whether or not this is Plato's final teaching is beside the point: He wants us to seriously consider the how the self might be conceived as a harmony which is *not* reducible to the

level of understanding of the nature of a ἁρμονία that Simmias displays.²⁸⁶ We must, then, follow the clues provided in order to better understand the nature of a harmony, and thus to develop the provisional conception of the self *as* a harmony that Plato demands.

In the argument concerning harmony, Socrates subtly presents the idea that a different conception of harmony – which could possibly help us understand the self *as* harmony – can be developed based in an account of how our λόγοι should harmonize with one another. *This harmonization, of course, mirrors precisely the method of investigation Socrates describes as his ‘second sailing.’* Having failed to discover the truth of beings in *materialistic* explanations, Socrates turns to the λόγος, and in describing the practical meaning of this turn, he says that one should seek that each of the λόγοι which they believe should harmonize with each other. One dimension of Simmias’ failing in his account of harmony is in treating the harmony as ontologically identical with the *physical* parts of the body. In response to this failing, Socrates calls for him to develop a conception of harmony which mirrors the harmony that should ideally exist among the λόγοι that we give credit to. Thus, we see that there is a deep resonance between the (possible) account of the *soul* that arises from a reading of the harmony argument, and the account of the possibility of *knowledge* presented in the second sailing – that is, of the *limited* knowledge proper to embodied beings without *direct* access to the truth of beings.

It is important to note this resonance between *self* and *knowledge*. I have argued that the *Phaedo* is, in part, a provocation for the reader to develop self-knowledge. This

²⁸⁶ Timaeus offers such an account at 35aff. There, he argues that the soul is a harmony of mathematical ratios, rather than of physical parts.

knowledge must be based both in a proper ontology of the self, and a proper epistemology; put simply, “self-knowledge” must be grounded in an understanding of “self” and “knowledge.” In analyzing the way knowledge grasps unities, we discovered a deep connection between the ontology of the soul and the nature of knowledge; in short, knowledge is the activity of the soul, ‘itself through itself,’ which determines the “being and benefit” of what we encounter, of what can be known. An understanding of knowledge, then, cannot be developed outside an understanding of the self, of the activity of the soul; an understanding of the self cannot be developed outside a developed epistemology. The import of the resonance between the harmony that should ideally exist between what we *know*, on the one hand, and the harmony which might present the virtuous unity of the *self*, on the other, will only become fully clear when we have analyzed the second sailing passage. However, for now, let it be noted that such a resonance exists. This resonance – and its importance for our own self-understanding – can only be revealed when we read these passages in light of the work of we have done on the earlier parts of the dialogue.

We have also seen that Simmias’ failing lies precisely in his inability to understand how the harmony is a unity which arises from the parts, *but which is not reducible to the parts*. This is precisely what we discovered in our reading of the *Theaetetus*. In that reading, we discovered that a unity arising out of the parts is, in fact, the object of knowledge – it is what can be known. When we give an account, a λόγος, of anything – for example, a bow or a lyre – we are giving an account of the ‘one,’ the ‘this,’ that arises from the proper, measured and beautiful arrangement of parts. As we

saw there, it is *this unity* that the soul grasps when, ‘itself through itself,’ it determines the “being and benefit” of the things it encounters. Here, in our discussion of the *Phaedo*, we are filling-out our understanding of how the *self* can be the object of such knowledge – i.e. how self-knowledge is possible.

From the beginning we have been attuned to the connection between self-knowledge and virtue; in the next section, I will show that the harmony of the self is explicitly said to be virtue. Thus, we can begin to see how the self gathers itself to itself *in the act of self-knowing*; that is, in knowing anything, we determine its being by gathering it together, naming it as the ‘one’ that it is, in accord with λόγος. This determination *names the unified, harmonious whole which arises from the parts*. The self is such a whole. To know the self is to give an account of one’s *life*, one’s *entire* life, gathering it together and naming it in accord with the λόγος we give of its *being and benefit* – i.e. of what it *is*, and what is *best* for it, of what is the *best life*. As I will show, to ignore the λόγοι through which we gather the life into a unified whole is to ignore the *good* of that life.

In the next chapter I will show how this stance toward one’s own life as a *whole* – which we understand to be essential for self-knowledge, and thus virtue – is fulfilled *not* in isolated act of knowing or apprehending the self. Rather, I will show that it is *achieved* in the activity of living a philosophical life. It is this life which seeks harmony and understanding on the basis of the harmonization of the λόγοι through which we understand our lives and our world, and what we are called to do. Further, I will demonstrate the importance of the fact that Socrates is facing *death* – as are we all – as he works through the importance of understanding the harmonious unity of a life well lived.

Thus, will we be able to understand how self-care, self-craft, and the achievement of an examined philosophical life is named “the practice of dying.”

Now, let us turn to a fuller explanation of how the harmony argument points to an “other” conception of harmony, and how this conception involves Plato’s understanding of ἀρετή.

2.3 A “New” Conception of Harmony?

As I suggested above, Socrates’ suggestion for an “other” conception of harmony can be deduced from his comments to Simmias. He tells Simmias that a “tuning is not the sort of thing you liken it to.” Instead, Socrates adds, “the lyre and the strings *and the sounds* (φθόγγου) come into being earlier, while they’re still untuned (ἀνάρμοστοι), and the tuning is the last of all to be composed and the first to perish.” (92b-c) Socrates adds the *sounds* to Simmias’ image. As Burger puts it, “He thereby separates from the instrument itself the noise produced by it and, at the same time, separates from that noise the harmonic order imposed upon it.”²⁸⁷ This separation establishes the possibility that while the ψυχή is dependent upon the body – as the sounds are upon the wood and strings – the harmonious nature of the ψυχή is something else. It would still be the case that a body would be a *necessary* condition for the harmonious soul, but it would in no way be a *sufficient* condition; not all souls are harmonies *in this sense*, as Socrates proceeds to argue.

²⁸⁷ 1984, p 124.

Simmiias' inability to distinguish these two senses – his failure to hear the alteration of his original thesis by Socrates' addition of the “sounds” – leads him to conclude, on the basis of the argument about harmony as *virtue* (93b-e), that the soul cannot be a tuning. In this distinction we are able to see that Socrates is calling for us to recognize the way in which the *eternal order* which the musician looks to in order to tune his instrument is distinct from the particular tuning of any particular instrument. This eternal tuning comes into being *before* the physicality of the lyre, *and is in fact the formal cause of the construction of any lyre*. That is, it is only by looking to this order, to these harmonies, that the maker of the lyre is able to construct the physical instrument. This formal tuning will continue to exist after the decomposition of any particular lyre. Further, any *particular* lyre can be *more or less* tuned, but the eternal tuning *does not admit of degrees* (this conclusion will be of great import to Socrates' argument at 93bff). Simmiias fails to see that while in one sense *all* souls are harmonies, and that this harmony that is the *personal* soul necessitates the existence of the body, there is another sense of harmony *as virtue*. This ‘eternal order’ is that to which the being with λόγος looks when ordering itself to be in accord with that image of its own possibilities. The being with λόγος seeks to “tune” itself to be in harmony with this order. This order does not require the medium of a physical body, and thus can survive death. This is, however, insufficient to prove *personal* immortality.

Two alternate senses of what a “harmony” could be arise in Socrates' response to Simmiias. The first, as we have mentioned, is the state of *harmony between λόγοι*. We will return to this sense when we discuss Socrates' injunction to develop a coherent

account of beings in the second sailing passage. The second sense that Socrates articulates is *harmony as virtue*, which we will now turn to.

Socrates interrupts his argument that the *soul* must lead the body – and thus cannot be a tuning, which always follow and do not lead the parts of which they are composed – with a *distinct* argument against Simmias’ λόγος. This argument works by playing upon *another* traditional λόγος about the soul which seemingly has a “wondrous hold” on Simmias – specifically, the *image* of virtue as a *harmonious condition of the soul*.²⁸⁸

Socrates begins this argument by asking, without preface, “Well then, isn’t each tuning by nature a tuning insofar as its been tuned?” (93a) Simmias is understandably confused by this apparent non-sequitor, and Socrates clarifies: “Wouldn’t it be more so and more fully a tuning, if – allowing that this could happen – it could be tuned more so and more fully, and less so and less fully a tuning if it were tuned less so and less fully?” (93a-b) Simmias agrees that this must be the case, and Socrates insists that the soul cannot then be a tuning, since no soul is “even in the slightest degree, more fully and more so [a soul] than another, or less fully and less so this very thing – a soul”. (ibid) In his initial presentation, Simmias stated that the soul arises from the bodies’ parts strung together in just the right proportion, implying that they can be “relaxed or strained” beyond the “beautiful measure” which would lead to “diseases and other evils.” (86b-c)

²⁸⁸ Cf Sophist 227dff. There, the stranger argues that there are two different kinds of badness in the soul (δύο μὲν εἶδη κακίας περὶ ψυχὴν ῥητέον) which are analogous to evils in the body (227d). Ignorance, which is akin to ugliness, and wickedness (πονηρία), which is akin to sickness. In describing wickedness, he says that it arises from a *discord* (στάσις) in the elements of the soul which are naturally akin (φύσει συγγενοῦς) (228a). Describing this condition, he says: “Well then; do we not see that in the souls of worthless men opinions are opposed to desires, anger to pleasures, reason to pain, and all such things to one another?” (ibid.) Thus, *just as harmony in the body gives rise to health and life*, harmony in the elements of the soul gives rise to virtue.

Nevertheless, he is unable to conceive of any way that one soul could be better tuned than any other, since, this factor – being more or less relaxed or strained – would make no soul any more a soul than any other.

Socrates capitalizes on this answer by referring to another traditional image or harmony in the soul – virtue. He asks: “Is one soul *said* (λέγεται) to have both mind (νοῦν) and virtue and to be good, while another has both mindlessness and wickedness (μοχθηρίαν) and is bad? And is what’s said true?” (ibid. emphasis added) Simmias agrees, and Socrates continues to argue that since this goodness and badness are some “other tuning and lack of tuning,” (93c) those who agree that some souls are good and others are bad will have to claim that since all souls are equally a tuning, “one soul couldn’t partake of vice or virtue any more fully than another, if in fact vice is to be lack of tuning and virtue tuning.” (93e) Socrates unfortunately leaves the conception of virtue as harmony undeveloped, since Simmias chooses not to press him on the issue.

Simmias has been, once again, trapped by his attachment to traditional accounts, and cannot ‘choose’ which of these theories he wants to believe. He has not yet undergone the process of *examining* his beliefs – he has not yet begun the quintessential philosophical work of examining his *life* – to ensure that they accord with one another. It is precisely this work that Socrates calls for implicitly here, and explicitly in the second sailing passage. That is, Plato has woven together the *image* of a harmony and an image of the *practice* of self-craft that would seek to develop the *virtue* of harmony within the self *specifically by harmonizing our λόγοι*. By placing the discussion of virtue, as a harmonious condition of the soul, into a discussion about the proper nature of ἁρμονία, and further by making the argumentative strength of these λόγοι rest on the necessity that

the λόγοι we ascribe to *harmonize* with one another, Plato has drawn our attention to the intersection of virtue, λόγος, and ἁρμονία in a way that sets the stage for the second sailing.

Thus, when we turn to the second sailing, we must keep in mind the way the discussion of harmony frames the issue of the harmonization of λόγοι. Specifically, as I will demonstrate, the *Phaedo* demands that we understand the work of harmonizing our λόγοι to be connected to the work of harmonizing our *souls*. Thus, Socrates concludes his argument stating that if we continue to affirm that “the soul is some sort of tuning,” we will be agreeing “neither with Homer, the Divine Poet, *nor with ourselves.*” (94d-95a, emphasis added) In unfolding the way the *Phaedo* presents this connection between the development of the proper stance toward λόγος and the development of harmony, and thus virtue, in the soul, we will come to understand how misogyny is the worst evil a person can experience. (89d)

§3 *The Republic*

The multiplicity and inner conflict of the self, marked by cognitive dissonance and a disharmonious mode of living, is addressed in many Platonic dialogues. Most notably, of course, in the *Republic* Socrates argues that the conflict within the self is ‘mirrored’ by the conflict between classes in society; we will see that, speaking more precisely, Socrates suggests that the conflict within the self is the *cause* of the conflicts in society. An examination of the different roles that need to be played within the just society then gives rise to the famous ‘tri-partite theory of the soul.’ We will now turn to

this account. I will argue that this ‘theory,’ like so many other tenets of what has come to be “Platonism,” was never intended to be taken over by the reader and assumed to be “Plato’s doctrine,” not even merely at the time of the writing of the *Republic*. Rather, we will see how Socrates, in calling for the “longer road” of inquiry into the nature of the conflict within the soul, chose to present the tri-partite soul as a provocation to a *specific* audience, at a *specific* time, in order to begin them questioning into the path toward developing a harmonious, philosophical mode of living. Again, I read the *Phaedo* as providing valuable clues as to what that “longer road” must look like.

In the *Phaedo*, at 94d, Socrates quotes the *Odyssey* to demonstrate that the body is in conflict with the soul. At 441b of the *Republic*, Socrates quotes the *same* line to show that *the soul is in conflict with itself*. At the opening of book XX, Odysseus has finally returned home, in disguise, and he lies awake at night considering how he is going to manage to kill all the suitors (as well as his own housemaids) and not himself be killed in battle, or in retaliation. He is *tempted* and driven by *anger* to immediately wade in and start killing the women who dally with the suitors. He knows, however, that this is not a good strategy, so, “He struck his breast and reproached his heart with this word (μῦθῳ): ‘Bear up, my heart, for at other times you’ve borne things even more fit for a dog.’”

(Quoted at *Phaedo* 94d)²⁸⁹ This is a situation which is especially characteristic of

²⁸⁹ In the *Republic*, the line is quoted twice; first, at 390d, it is used as an example of poetry that is acceptable for the youth. At 441b, the quote is simply rendered: “He smote his breast and reproached his heart with word. . .” The passage, in full (in Samuel Butler’s translation), reads: “. . . Ulysses lay wakefully brooding upon the way in which he should kill the suitors; and by and by, the women who had been in the habit of misconducting themselves with them, left the house giggling and laughing with one another. This made Ulysses very angry, and he doubted whether to get up and kill every single one of them then and there, or to let them sleep one more and last time with the suitors. His heart growled within him, and as a bitch with puppies growls and shows

Odysseus. Achilles would simply have come in and sung his rage at the end of his swinging sword. Odysseus – the inventor of the Trojan horse – waits, and plans his moves carefully. As we see in this passage, however, this is not something that *simply* ‘comes naturally’ to him; he must courageously resist the temptation of rash action and temperately endure his rising anger in order to win the day. Odysseus ‘tosses and turns’ and struggles within himself, and in this image we find what Socrates calls us to remember when we consider the nature of the soul.

Socrates uses this passage three times in the dialogues to demonstrate the possibility of *self-mastery*. As we know, Socrates proposes that self-mastery is possible because there are three different “parts” of the soul; these parts can come into conflict with one another, and one can dominate the others. When the rational part of the soul rules the spirited and appetitive parts, there is a proper ordering of the soul, and this state of the soul is called “justice.” We will now turn to an analysis of this account of the soul. I will argue that, rather than *solving* the problems of self-identity and harmony that have arisen in our discussion of the *Phaedo*, the discussion of the soul in the *Republic* demands a deeper analysis of the self, and in fact, demands that the reader themselves engage in self-inquiry in order to answer the call of the text, rather than simply accepting any of the λόγοι Socrates offers in either dialogue as a dogma to be memorized and repeated.

her teeth when she sees a stranger, so did his heart growl with anger at the evil deeds that were being done: but he beat his breast and said, ‘Heart, be still, you had worse than this to bear on the day when the terrible Cyclops ate your brave companions; yet you bore it in silence till your cunning got you safe out of the cave, though you made sure of being killed.’ Thus he chided with his heart, and checked it into endurance, but he tossed about as one who turns a paunch full of blood and fat in front of a hot fire, doing it first on one side and then on the other, that he may get it cooked as soon as possible, even so did he turn himself about from side to side, thinking all the time how, single handed as he was, he should contrive to kill so large a body of men as the wicked suitors." (*Odyssey*, XX)

3.1 Soul and State, and the “Longer Road”

In Book 4, Socrates has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Glaucon and Adeimantus, that the just state must be composed of three different classes (γένος) of citizen, each ‘minding his own business’ and doing only the work of his or her class. The three classes are the guardians – who rule the society, make decisions concerning war and education and manage the affairs of the state – the auxiliaries – who obey the guardians, fight the battles and enforce the laws of the polis – and the money-making class – the craftspeople and laborers who do the manual work necessary to keep everyone fed, clothed, housed, etc. “. . . the money-making, auxiliary, and guardian classes doing what’s appropriate, each of them minding its own business in the city – would be justice and would make the city just.” (434c)

Glaucon is convinced of this conclusion, but Socrates urges caution, reminding Glaucon that their goal was not to discover the proper structure of society, but rather to find the nature of justice *such that* it could be argued that being just is choiceworthy in itself for an individual, aside from any benefits that it might accrue to the just person.²⁹⁰ With this in mind, Socrates cautions Glaucon, in response to his claim that justice is this ‘minding one’s business’ and “no other” by saying: “Let’s not assert it so positively just yet. But, if this form is applied to human beings singly and also agreed by us to be justice

²⁹⁰ We are reminded here of our earlier discussion concerning *Phaedo* 69a, where Socrates insists that true virtue is not “exchanging pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains.” There, we saw that it is necessary to give an account of the value of virtue *other* than claiming that it gives rich rewards of pleasure, either in this life *or the next*.

there, then we'll concede it." Socrates then provocatively adds: "What else will there be for us to say?" (434d)

Socrates, answering to Glaucon and Adeimantus' desire to hear a defense of justice, claimed that it would be easier to examine justice in something "larger" than a human being. (368c-f). Using the analogy of looking at letters, which are easier to see when larger, he claims that there must be "more" justice in a city than in an individual, thus it will be easier to see. This is a problematic claim, to say the least. It does, however, have the effect of calling to the reader's mind the connection between "justice" as a characteristic of the soul and the "just" society. The *Republic* is centrally concerned with *personal* justice – *not* public justice, i.e. not justice as a quality of states or communities. The discussion of the just state is initially presented as a device to discover what justice is as a characteristic of an individual. In order to begin speaking about justice as a characteristic of a state, Socrates needs an excuse to turn to the examination of the polis. He accomplishes this by claiming that we can see justice better if we look to something larger – to the state. Whether or not it is easier to 'see' justice in a society, Socrates assumes, as Eva Brann puts it, that "a political community is the soul writ large. . ." ²⁹¹ We see this movement – the movement from soul to state – quite clearly in Socrates' presentation of the tri-partite theory of the soul. Socrates argues that the three structures in the city come from nowhere else than from the "same forms and dispositions" in "each of us." (435e) He says that it would be "ridiculous" to think that the spiritedness didn't come into the cities from those private men who are just the ones imputed with having this character. . ." (ibid.).

²⁹¹ 2004, p 250.

Whatever else the dialogue accomplishes, then, Plato wants us to consider the connection between the soul of the individual and the “soul” of the community. We are asked to consider to what extent our membership in a community defines us as individuals, and, concomitantly, to what extent the nature of the community is formed by the character of the citizens. The dialogue thus offers an account of a *reciprocal* relation between *soul* and *state*. Certainly the state must be concerned with how its *nomoi* form the souls of the citizens, but the dialogue also offers an account of how the character of the citizens reciprocally inform the νόμοι of the polis.

In our discussion of the *Phaedo*, we have been concerned with how the λόγοι which are dominant in a community can mediate the self’s conception of itself, and of the nature of virtue, courage, justice, and the best life. We have seen how these λόγοι can have a dangerous hold on us – a hold which is a threat to developing the self-awareness and harmony that comes from living a philosophical life.²⁹² We saw that this danger can come from the hold that a poet’s conception of Socrates’ activity can have over a community, as well as from the hold that a traditional λόγος concerning the nature of death can have over a discussion of the nature of the soul. In the image of the *Republic*, we find that such λόγοι can imprison us, and keep us turned away from the truth of our

²⁹² Bluck disagrees that virtue is a harmonious condition of soul *for philosophers*. He agrees that harmony between ‘parts of the soul’ constitutes virtue “for the majority of mankind,” but that for the philosopher, there is a “higher, supreme form of virtue, through direct apprehension of the Form of the Good itself.” (1955, p 3) However, he also argues that the “true-born philosophers” represent Plato’s own belief about this philosophical virtue; thus, since such a vision of the Good itself is precluded from embodied beings, perhaps we are all “ordinary worldly men,” and should be included in the “majority of mankind” seeking harmony in an embodied state. See also note 35 in Chapter 2. On the other hand, see Sallis 1996: “. . .the good of the city consists in being one instead of many and that correspondingly, the good for the individual man in the city is that he become one.” (p 410)

being, and toward the shadow-play created by those λόγοι. The censorship outlined in the description of the city in speech happens in full awareness of this danger.

After “completing” the analysis of justice in the state on the basis of the proper relation between the three classes of citizens, Socrates turns the discussion to the three parts within individuals. Socrates asks if two things which are called the same, whether larger or smaller, will differ with regard to that which they are called the same; Glaucon states that they will be called the same, and Socrates concludes that, despite the radical differences between an individual and a state, which Socrates has reduced to *size*: “the just man will not be any different from the just city with respect to the form of justice. . .” (435a-b) I showed, with regard to the argument from equality in the *Phaedo*, that one necessary aspect of thinking in terms of forms is the ability to think in terms of the *qua*. Here, we see that Socrates is asking Glaucon to engage in this form of thinking, and to take the state and the individual soul to be the same *qua* justice. However, the *explanation* Socrates gives of this sameness is highly suspect from the perspective of the *Phaedo*.

Socrates repeats that the state is just when each of the three classes of *natures* (ὅτε ἐν αὐτῇ τριτὰ γένη φύσεων) minds its own business. (435b) He then adds that the single individual has “these same forms in his soul (τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα εἶδη ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ ψυχῇ ἔχοντα)” since he has the “same affections” (τὰ αὐτὰ πάθη) as those in the city. (435c) The reason Socrates presents to show that justice is the same in the state and in the soul is that the “same” *pathe*, and the “same” *eἶδη* exist in the soul of each individual as in the state – i.e. the same *structural* analysis in the case of soul and state is

said to be the reason justice in the soul is the same as justice in the state. As I will show in my discussion of the second sailing, Socrates offers what he calls his “safe answer” to the cause of any thing; he says that he will only listen if someone says that the beautiful is beautiful by participation in beauty. He will not listen if they claim that this beauty is the result of any color or structure or form in the beautiful thing. Here, in the *Republic*, we find Socrates insisting that two things both participate equally in the form of justice; however, here, his explanation of that similarity is the *structural* similarity in the state and in the soul.²⁹³ It is the result of this specifically *structural* analysis that the *explicit* psychological account in the *Republic* treats the different *powers* of the soul as (structural) “parts.”²⁹⁴

Thus, the *Republic* refuses to let us rest content with the *cause* to which Socrates attributes the fact that we judge both states and individuals to be equal *qua* justice. In so doing, it *raises the question* of participation in a form without answering it. I have argued that it is essential to realize the way the λόγοι which have a hold on us go ahead of us and answer the questions we might pose before we begin the questioning process; it is necessary that we have a conception of “equality” before we can see the sticks as equal. Just so, it is necessary that we have some conception of “justice” before we can see a

²⁹³ Cf Rice 1998: "Socrates argues that if his analogy between the city and the soul of the individual is to be helpful, cities and individuals must be morphologically similar; that is, must have the same basic structure, or form." (p 58)

²⁹⁴ Laurence Cooper argues that the structural language of dividing the soul into ‘parts’ derives, *in part*, from how “physical language pervades our everyday speech, as when one speaks of “large” appetites or “explosive” anger or “powerful” and “penetrating” intellect. If we typically fail to appreciate that such language is borrowed from the physical realm, that only proves how automatic and, probably, how necessary is our recourse to physical metaphor when speaking of psychological phenomena.” (2001, p 344)

polis or an individual as just.²⁹⁵ In the *Republic*, Socrates and his friends have claimed to discover the nature of justice by finding it in an *image* they create of a just state. However, we find that they set out with a conception of justice already in hand, and it was this conception that guided Glaucon and Adeimantus' answers – a fact which Socrates notes explicitly at 433a. Specifically, at 370a, as they are just *beginning* the inquiry into the nature of the just state, Adeimantus agrees that each person in the state should do their own job only, “minding his own business for himself.” With this as a founding principle of the properly ordered state, presented without examination at the inauguration of their city in speech, is it any wonder that they discover the just order of that state to be found in their founding decision?²⁹⁶ Thus, rather than discovering justice as such, it would seem that they have uncovered the results of *their own conception of justice*, just as we uncovered the results of Simmias' conception of philosophy as a pure, disembodied search for pure truth in the *Phaedo*.

We will return to this point in our discussion of the second sailing, but for now let us note that we have (additional) reasons to be highly suspicious of Socrates' move from the state to the soul.²⁹⁷ However, guided in the discussion by Glaucon's agreement, Socrates proceeds with the analogy – *but not without reservation*.

²⁹⁵ Cf *Alcibiades I* 100b. There Socrates argues that Alcibiades has always operated with an unexamined conception of justice, even since he was a child crying foul upon catching a cheater when playing dice.

²⁹⁶ Cf Sallis 1975, p 364: “Thus, in a sense, the entire inquiry has been circular. They set out to construct the city in order to discover justice in it. But justice could only be discovered in it if it is a just city that is constructed, only if, in building it, they put justice in it. Yet, in order to do this, they must already, in some sense, know what justice is.”

²⁹⁷ For a good analysis of some of the problems with the analogy of soul and state, and an account which agrees that the tri-partite theory of the soul is not Plato's, or Socrates' belief, see Smith 1999. He argues “that Plato is not wholly committed to an analogy of soul and state that would require either a tripartite state or a tripartite soul for the analogy to hold. It follows that the heart of the analogy is not to be found in the comparison of the Kallipolis and its three parts to the soul

Glaucon – perhaps too quickly, I have suggested – agrees that the same three εἶδη exist in the soul as in the state, and that this similarity will account for the possibility of justice and injustice in both. Socrates then ironically interjects – seemingly disappointed that Glaucon has given so quick and thoughtless an answer: “Now it’s a slight question about the soul we’ve stumbled upon, you surprising man. Does it have these three forms in it or not?” (435c) Socrates’ *repeating* of the question makes us take pause, and consider carefully before affirming that there are, in fact, these “same three” forms in the soul, and certainly before claiming to have discovered that this is “Plato’s doctrine.” Glaucon agrees that it is not a slight question – despite having answered so quickly a moment before – and says that maybe it is true that “fine things are hard.” (ibid.) Socrates agrees tentatively, but adds: “But know well, Glaucon, that in my opinion we’ll never get a precise (ἀκριβῶς) grasp of it on the basis of procedures (μεθόδων) such as we are now using in the argument. *There is another longer and further (πλείων) road (ὁδὸς) leading to it.* But perhaps we can do it in a way worthy of what’s been said and considered before.” (435d-e) This is a difficult and troubling passage, and there is no way to do it justice in this dissertation.²⁹⁸ For one, it is not immediately clear what Socrates is referring to when he says “what’s been said and considered before.” While the explicit reference is to the earlier parts of their conversation, it could equally well refer to traditional accounts of soul in the religious tradition and in the philosophy of the so-called “Pre-Socratics.” In any case, in our analysis of self-mastery as being based in the relation between “parts” of the soul, we will keep in mind that Socrates says that this method is insufficient to achieve “precise” knowledge of the conflict within the soul.

conceived as tripartite, but rather must be supposed to reside in some other connection between the ways in which Justice characterizes states and souls. . .” (p 31)

²⁹⁸ Cf Cooper 2001, p 343ff.

Thus, we will attend to the warning in the text and be on the lookout for the “longer road” that will reveal to us why this account of conflict between “parts” of the soul is imprecise, and give us a sense of the “fuller” method that one should employ when contemplating this not “slight” question about the soul. We have already seen that there is ample reason to believe that Plato did not take himself to be “solving” the problems of internal dissent and the multiplicity of the self at the explicit level of the discussion in the *Republic*.²⁹⁹ Our task will be simply to attend to the *specific* ways in which the text indicates *how* the lack of precision is inherent in the method of inquiry they choose; our intent will be to gain insight into how the “longer road” of inquiry alluded to here might be partially carried out in the investigation into the ψυχή in the *Phaedo*.

3.2 The Ontological Grounds of Self-Mastery

Having gotten Glaucon’s agreement that the “same three” forms must be in each of us as exists in the ideal state – claiming they could come into the state from nowhere else than from within the character of its citizens – and warning that their method will not be precise enough to get to the truth of the soul, Socrates proceeds to argue for the existence of different *parts* of the soul in a way that is reminiscent of his argument for the opposition of soul and body in the *Phaedo*. Despite the approach of most commentators – who claim that Plato ‘changed his mind’ about internal conflict between the time he

²⁹⁹ Laurence D. Cooper argues: “For all its virtues, however, we are mistaken to believe that the tripartite model is sufficient to convey, or that it was meant to convey, all the elements of the dialogue’s psychological teaching. What is needed is an interpretation that takes fuller account of the soul’s forces, and not just its “parts” (which are metaphorical anyway).” (2001, p 341)

wrote the *Phaedo* and the time he wrote the *Republic* – the fact that two such accountings for the internal conflicts in the self exist is enough to cause us to pay special attention to the indications within each of these texts which seem to cast the explicit conclusions of Socrates’ arguments in a dubious light. Thus, we should be driven to go beyond the letter of the text and seek our *own* answers to these issues.

Socrates begins by claiming it is “not hard” to know that the classes come to be from different characters of individuals, and this is the reason different societies have different reputations; e.g. the Thracians are known as θυμοειδές, the Athenians known as lovers of learning (φιλομαθές) and Phoenicians being known as lovers of money (φιλοχρήματων) (435e-436a). We are immediately inclined to wonder if there aren’t people of all ‘types’ in each of these places, and thus to doubt if these attributions come from stereotypes rather than a knowledge that is “easy to know.”

In any case, Socrates continues to what he takes to be difficult to know:

But this now is hard (χαλεπόν). Do we act in each of these ways as a result of the same part of ourselves, or are there three parts and with a different one we act in each of the different ways? Do we learn with one, become spirited with another of the parts within us, and desire the pleasures of nourishment and generation and all their kin with a third; or do we act with the soul as a whole (ἢ ὅλη τῆ ψυχῆ) in each of them once we are started (ὅταν ὁρμήσωμεν)? This will be hard to determine (διορίσασθαι) in a way worthy of the argument (ἄξιως λόγου). (436a-b)

Socrates warns us twice in the same speech that these distinctions within the soul will not be easy to *determine* – to διορίζω, to divide and draw a boundary between parts. In our account of the *Phaedo*, of course, we have shown that these conflicts can exist *between two conceptions of the same thing – be it death or virtue – and thus the conflicts must be far more numerous and complicated that the argument in the Republic accounts for*. The more precise method of the “longer road” *might* then be thought to be one which takes

full account of the difficulty of the act of division and demarcation (διολύζω) which would draw precise boundaries within the soul. That is, when we see one of Socrates' interlocutors forced into self-contradiction on one of (what Socrates takes to be) the essential questions of life – such as the nature of justice or virtue – we find that the internal conflicts which give rise to cognitive dissonance and a disharmonious mode of living are far more numerous than those demarcated by the tri-partite theory of the soul. Socrates' second sailing is designed to reveal how philosophical inquiry – and thus the philosophical mode of life Socrates champions as his defense in the *Phaedo* – can address these more numerous and dangerous conflicts.

Another sense in which the account of three simply discrete, autonomous 'parts' of the soul might fall short of precision is implied in Socrates' strange phrasing when he asks if the whole soul (ἡ ὅλη τῆ ψυχῆ) might be active "one we get started (ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν)." The implication seems to be that once we are *set in motion* the whole soul might begin to be active. So, we might think of a person whose initial impetus for action comes from the appetitive part of his soul, but then he has to employ the 'other parts' of the soul in order to carry out his 'base' desire. So, out of hunger a person might 'decide' to steal food – but it might take courage and heart (θυμός) to go through with the plan, and intelligence to make the plan and get away with it. In any case, Socrates' implication makes us question the interrelation of these 'parts' from the outset, and makes us consider the possibility of acting with a unified soul. *That is, posing the question: "What does it mean for the soul to have 'parts?'" immediately raises the question of what it would mean for the soul to be, and/or to act as a unity.*

Socrates begins his argument that the soul has these “same” three parts by introducing the principle of non-contradiction, insisting that nothing can be do or suffer opposites with respect to the same part, in relation to the same thing, and at the same time. He says that if they “should ever find that happening in these things, [they’ll] know they weren’t the same but many (οὐ τὰὐτὸν ἦν ἀλλὰ πλείω).” (436b) This strict phrasing – that if a thing suffers or does opposites in this way, it is not αὐτὸν, itself – seems to imply that the soul will have *no* unity but be a simple plurality. However, the examples Socrates turns to in order to explicate his point – a human being and a top – while they certainly have parts, must surely be spoken of as having unity and as being “themselves.”

Socrates says that they will let no one fool them by saying that a man who stands still but moves his arms and his head is both moving and at rest, since it is with respect to different *parts* that he is still and moving (436c). Next, Socrates considers the spinning top. Someone might give the even more “charming” (χαριεντίζοιτο) example of a top spinning perfectly on its axis, he says, claiming it is both at rest and in motion; *unlike the example of the human being*, we cannot make sense of this by referring to *physical parts*. Instead, we have to conceive of ‘parts’ in an analogical or metaphorical sense. Socrates says that the top has within it “a straight as well as a circumference” and it is with respect to the circumference that they move, and with respect to the straight they stand still (436d-e).³⁰⁰ We will have to keep this in mind when we try and determine how the soul is thought to have parts, and how we are to think of the role of the one giving the λόγος in

³⁰⁰ Aristotle, in Book 6 Chapter 9 of the *Physics*, in the context of countering Zeno’s paradoxes, argues that a spinning sphere is not both in motion and at rest with respect to the circumference, just as “the educated human being and the human being” are not the same, except incidentally.

the difficult work of delimiting (διορίζω) these parts. We will find that the soul of the one giving the λόγος is as active in this division and delimitation as is the soul of the person determining that ‘this’ one and ‘this’ one “make two.” Further, we have been attuned to a non-materialistic conception of the being of the ψυχή by our earlier discussion of the *Phaedo* in general, and the argument concerning non-physical harmonies in particular; here in the *Republic*, in attending to the example of the spinning top, we are asked to consider a non-materialistic conception of *parts*.

With these reflections, Socrates reaffirms the law of non-contradiction, and says that in order that they not have to go through many such examples, they will affirm that nothing can, with respect to the same part, in relation to the same thing, and at the same time “be, do, or suffer opposites.” (437a) He then adds that *if* this should ever “appear otherwise, all our conclusions based on it will be undone.” (ibid.) With this strangely tentative conclusion to a seemingly unassailable logical principle, Socrates proceeds to establish the multiplicity of the soul.

Socrates begins by establishing that “acceptance and refusal, longing to take something to rejecting it, embracing to thrusting away” are opposites (437b). He then states that want for drink and food are a form of desire (after a long ‘digression’ contending that thirst “itself” is simply for drink “itself” and not any specific type of drink). Next he asks if something “draws [the soul] back when it is thirsting” that must “be something different in it from that which thirsts and leads it like a beast to drink?” (439b) Glaucon, of course, agrees to all of this. Thus, Socrates asks, “Isn’t there

something in their soul bidding them to drink and something forbidding them to do so, something different that masters that which bids?” Glaucon agrees, and Socrates continues, “Doesn’t that which forbids such things come into being – when it comes into being – from calculation (ἐκ λογισμοῦ), what leads and draws (ἄγοντα καὶ ἔλκοντα) is present due to affections and diseases (διὰ παθημάτων τε καὶ νοσημάτων)?” This claim sets up – without argument – the basic structure of desire that we saw in the “true-born philosophers.” That is, Socrates *asks* if it is correct to assume that in *all* desire the *self* is *passive* and suffers from a *disease*-like condition, and if it is also the case that it is only in *resisting* these diseased desires that the self is active, and this activity is best considered as *calculation*.

Why should we assume that all instances of the soul “leading and drawing” (ἄγοντα καὶ ἔλκοντα) come from a desire in which the self is passive, undergoing a πάθη, and/or is diseased? Even more significantly, why should we assume that the rational, calculating ‘part’ of the soul does not have a motive force which can ‘lead’ or ‘drag’ the whole soul toward action?³⁰¹ Glaucon tentatively agrees, and on this shaky foundation, they proceed with the argument.

I argue that they have already assumed the simple division between the ‘parts’ of the soul based on a faulty assumption about the *discrete* nature of the *powers* of the soul. To claim that each power of the soul maps onto a ‘part,’ and to assume that each ‘part’ is

³⁰¹ Bloom writes: “Primarily, what Socrates chooses to forget in his incomplete picture of spiritedness as merely reason’s trusty tool is the fact that in some sense reason in the soul is a desire. . . He was enabled to do this by asserting that reason in the soul is merely calculation, as it is in the city. A dry, calculating reason, concerned with directing the desires to a fulfillment consonant with the common good, is distinct from desire and need not conflict with spiritedness; but a reason erotically striving to know the first causes of all things, with a life of its own, indifferent to the needs of the here and now, is one of the most powerful desires and far removed from the city’s primary concerns.” (1968, p 376)

self-identical and never in conflict within itself, and to assume that no power – e.g. the power of calculating or desiring – can be present in more than one ‘part,’ simplifies the matter and allows Socrates to complete the analogy to the structure of the city in speech. This is, however, a troubling oversimplification, and in its un-argued inadequacies, it is an account which points to a longer road.³⁰²

In any case, they continue, and Socrates affirms on this scant evidence that there are (at least) two parts of the soul. He says they will “not be irrational (οὐ δὴ ἀλόγως)” in “naming the part of the soul with which it calculates, the calculating (τὸ μὲν ᾧ λογίζεται λογιστικὸν προσαγορεύοντες τῆς ψυχῆς), and the other part with which it loves, hungers, thirsts and is agitated by the other desires, the irrational and desiring, companion of certain replenishments and pleasures.” (439d) In the language Socrates uses it is clear that Socrates and his companions are *reifying* the powers of the soul into a ‘thing,’ a “part”: the act of calculation, λογίζεται, is referred to ‘that which’ calculates, the calculating, the λογιστικὸν. The explicit claim is that it is not ἀλόγως to “call” (προσαγορεύοντες) that which calculates the calculating (ibid.). On this basis, *they deny calculation to any other “part,” any other εἶδος within the soul.*³⁰³ Socrates concludes:

³⁰² Cf. Bobonich 1994, and Irwin 1995, p 217-222. They both argue that argue that “Plato's conception of the parts of the soul” mistakenly attributes to them a kind of agency which belongs properly only to the individual of which they are parts. I, of course, do not agree that this is a problem with “Plato’s theory,” but rather is precisely the insight Socrates is driving us to realize on our own. On the other hand, some take the parts to be actually ontologically distinct, and precisely three in number; e.g. see Hoffman 2003: “. . . such a theory pays a steep price insofar as it divides the self into parts that are capable of acting independently. But this is a price we know that Plato is willing to pay, once he divides the soul into reason, spirit, and appetite.” (p 174)

³⁰³ Cf Lesses 1987: “Why should we think that parts of the soul other than reason also have the capacity to form opinions and beliefs? Other commentators have reviewed some of the evidence. First of all Plato does not restrict the motivations of the non-rational parts to brute biological cravings. His examples involve desires that are more complex than this. Leontius' desire to see the corpses, for instance, is not a simple physiological urge even though its source is the appetitive part and its causal origin might be physiological. In addition, Plato sometimes

“Therefore, let these two forms (εἶδη) in the soul be distinguished (ὠρίσθω).” (439e)

Since I am suggesting that the text demands that we not so quickly agree with Glaucon’s answers, and specifically that we need to be suspicious of the claim that these “parts” of the soul are to be so easily distinguished and delimited (διορίζω) from one another, it would seem that the “longer road” calls for an examination of the possibility of the *blending* of the εἶδη (perhaps analogous to the discussion of blending carried out in the *Sophist*).

Socrates – immediately after claiming that these two εἶδη can be distinguished – then adds: “Now is the part that contains spirit and with which we are spirited a third, or would it have the same nature (ὁμοφύεξ) as one of these others?” (ibid.) In this movement – by *immediately* turning to distinguish this *particular* third form in the soul – Socrates gives away a logical flaw in his procedure. Obviously, he is being guided in his questions about the parts within the soul by their earlier analysis of the state; while there is nothing essentially logically wrong with this, it makes it quite clear that Socrates – based on the method he has established by which one distinguishes a “part” in the soul on the basis of distinguishing *anything* that the soul does or suffers – could have turned to *any* of the activities of the soul and declared that there were four, five, or any number of parts in the soul. Nothing dictates his turning to spiritedness at this time other than his desire to make a λόγος “worthy of what has come before;” specifically, to make a λόγος

describes the non-rational parts as sources of belief. In one text, he says that appetite and spirit can have beliefs (*doxazein*) which conflict with those of reason (602e-603a). And Plato also takes the appetitive part to be able, in principle, to hold the same opinion (*homodoxasi*) as the rational part that the latter should rule (442d2). It is at least plausible to think Plato endorses the view that some beliefs ought to be ascribed to the non-rational parts. On occasion, Plato does call the non-rational parts of the soul “irrational” (*alogiston*, 439d, 604d). But should we take Plato to mean that neither appetite spirit can hold beliefs at all? It is better, I shall argue below, to render Plato's description here as something along the lines of “foolish”. . .” (p 149)

worthy of the account of the three classes in Glaucon's ideal polis (a point which is highlighted by Socrates reminding Glaucon of those three classes at 440e-441a).

The problematic nature of their method is further underscored by the example that Socrates uses to convince Glaucon that the spirited and desiring parts of the soul are to be distinguished, and that the spirited part is to be understood as the "loyal dog" of the calculating part. Socrates reminds us of the story of Leonitus, who when passing by a huge pile of corpses, "desired to look, but at the same time he was disgusted and made himself turn away; and for a while he struggled and covered his face. But finally, overpowered by the desire, he opened his eyes wide, ran toward the corpses and said: 'Look, you damned wretches, take your fill of the fair sight.'" (439e-440a) Socrates says that this speech "certainly indicates that anger sometimes makes war against the desires as one thing against something else." (440a) This is a troubling and provocative example. Might we not say the same thing about "the desires" warring against one another? Might a person experience struggle between fatigue and a desire for food or sex?³⁰⁴ It would seem that even a cursory examination of this example leads to a far more complicated picture of the interrelation of emotion, desire, calculation, reason, and a thousand other powers of the soul than the tri-partite theory can account for. This is hardly a surprising discovery, however, since Socrates began this account by saying that it would be insufficiently precise to discover the truths of the ψυχή.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Several commentators have noted this fact. See, e.g. the discussion in Smith 1999, esp. p 36-37. See also Penner 1971, Tiles 1977, et al.

³⁰⁵ Jacob Howland (1993) argues that one possible reason for this simplification lies in the nature of the τέχνη of politics that Socrates is trying to inaugurate Glaucon and Adeimantus into: "A difficulty is raised by the soul's unfinished, erotic nature and capacity to take on many different looks: if politics is to be a *techne*, must its object not be knowable as a certain kind of being with a fixed and intelligible structure? . . . Socrates' technical metaphors do not ultimately provide a

In fact, at 441c, when Socrates refers to Odysseus beating his breast for the second time – the same passage referred to in the *Phaedo* – Socrates implies that Homer had thought the spirited part was divided against itself, and thus itself a multiplicity; he says that this passage has Odysseus “rebuking that which is irrationally spirited as though it were a different part.” (441c) If we are able to accept this division – which Socrates does not explicitly refute – then where does this process of identifying ‘parts’ of the soul find an end? At 443d, Socrates implies that there might be more than three parts of the soul. He says that *if* “there are some other parts in between” the three, that the philosopher “binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and *harmonized*.” (443d)³⁰⁶

What we take away from this short discussion of the tri-partite theory of the soul is, first and foremost, that it is *not to be taken at face value as Plato’s doctrine about the nature of the ψυχή*. The specific inadequacies of the theory – which are partially explained with reference to the context of the discussion of the ideal city in speech, and partly by Glaucon’s faulty answers – point to a “longer road” of inquiry into the nature of

coherent picture of the soul. As we shall see, however, even the inconsistency of these metaphors serves indirectly to illuminate that paradoxical complexity of the human psyche.” (p 93)

³⁰⁶ Cf Cooper 2001: “. . .whereas the problem of intrapsychic faction seems in book 4 to be limited to faction between the various parts, which limits the possibilities of faction to only three, in book 9 the possibility arises of faction within the parts, which opens an infinity of factional possibilities. (Only the desiring part is flatly said to be subject to internal conflict, but there are indications that the spirited part, too, is subject to its own internal factionalism; as for the reasoning part, although I am not aware of any explicit reference to conflict within it, the dialogue nevertheless offers numerous examples of contradictory thinking.” (p 343) He notes that one example of the way book 9 presents this possibility is in Socrates’ presentation of the image of the spirited part of the soul as “the lion-like *and* snake-like part.” For more on the possible conflict within the spirited part, see Craig 1994. David Roochnik describes Book 9’s more sophisticated account of internal multiplicity within the soul as like a Hegelian *Aufhebung* of the account in Book 4 (1997).

the soul; this “longer road” *would be specifically concerned with internal dissent and conflict within the soul, and would have to take account of far greater complexity than referring to three “parts” can possibly explain.* Given that Socrates uses the same reference to demonstrate the existence of this conflict in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* – Odysseus reproaching his heart in the *Odyssey* – we have reason to look to the *Phaedo* as a text concerned (at least in part) with offering a more complex explanation of this conflict than that in the ‘shorter road’ of the *Republic*’s tri-partite theory. Further, by looking to the *Republic*, we have seen that the context for dealing with this internal conflict is explicitly *ethical*, just as it is in the *Phaedo*. Thus, we have confirmation that Plato’s concern with the ontology of the soul *is deeply concerned with the ethical goal of developing a harmonious soul.* As such, we will now turn to a discussion of the second sailing, in which Socrates calls for the *far more complex* work of harmonization of our λόγοι in a context which seems to imply that this is the definitive work of the philosophical life, thus of the *best* life, and thus is the primary *ethical* work of the philosopher.

Chapter 7

The Turn to the Λόγος

§1 Socrates' Response to Cebes

Socrates has convinced Simmias that he can't hold the belief that the soul is a harmony and simultaneously affirm his attachment to the λόγος that says that all learning is recollection, *nor* to the traditional λόγος that claims that virtue is a harmonious condition of the soul. If they continue to claim that the soul is "some sort of tuning," he says they will not be "in agreement with themselves." (95a)³⁰⁷ Socrates then turns to what he calls the "husband" of this argument (95a). Cebes expresses his complete trust that Socrates will be able to vanquish this opponent, since it had seemed so "absurd," so ἄτοπος, "out of place," that Socrates was able to defeat Simmias' argument with his "first assault." (95a-b) These lines clearly indicate that we should be attentive to connections between Socrates' response to Simmias and that offered to Cebes, which culminates in the second sailing and the call for the harmony of "being in agreement with ourselves."

I will now turn to Socrates' response to Cebes, and finally, to the second sailing passage itself.

³⁰⁷ This formulation – not being in agreement with ourselves – is a clear statement of the central theme of this dissertation – specifically, cognitive dissonance and internal disharmony. The use of this phrase immediately preceding Socrates' turn to the λόγος must be kept in mind.

1.1 Absolute Certainty and Fear of Death

Socrates begins by recounting what he takes to be Cebes' objection. At 87a Cebes claims that it has been “elegantly” (χαριέντως) argued and even “completely adequately demonstrated” (πάνυ ικανῶς ἀποδεδείχθαι) that the soul existed *before* we were born – if, he notes, he is not putting it too strongly (εἰ μὴ ἐπαχθές ἐστὶν εἰπεῖν). However, “that she will still *be* somewhere after we've died – this does not seem to me to have been so demonstrated.” (87a) He agrees that the soul is “stronger and more long-lasting” (ἰσχυρότερον καὶ πολυχρονιώτερον) than the body, but that *his* soul should continue to exist “somewhere” after *he* dies, that is yet to be proven. Though he is convinced of the superiority of the soul, and convinced that it can in fact exist without a body, he is *still* not convinced to the point of absolute certainty that any individual soul will continue to exist *after* its next death.³⁰⁸

Even if the soul is stronger and more enduring than the body, it still might be worn out over time, and eventually meet its end. Socrates has shown (most recently with the argument likening the soul to the forms) that the soul is superior to, and more enduring than, the body; with his own introduction of the recollection argument, Cebes has shown that he also agrees that the soul *pre*-existed the body. However, this superiority and pre-existence does not logically grant *indestructibility*. As I noted in Chapter 2, even if he dismisses (without verbal objection) Socrates' first argument from

³⁰⁸ We note that – as was made clear in Chapter 2 – this is precisely the point Socrates attempted to prove with his argument concerning the cycle of opposites, which should have greater argumentative weight with a “Pythagorean.”

opposites, it is odd that Cebes could be convinced of the pre-existence of the soul *and* of its superiority to the body and yet *still* not have the confidence to face death without fear. In fact, in his speech, Cebes gives voice to the λόγος, personifying it: “‘Why then,’ the argument might say, ‘are you still distrustful, since you see that after the human being has died his weaker part still *is*?’” (87a-b) However, Cebes’ reply to the λόγος makes it clear that it is absolute *proof*, unerring logical demonstration of the soul’s indestructibility that he is seeking.³⁰⁹

To make his argument, he uses the famous image of the cloak-maker: Just because the weaver of a cloak is “stronger and more long-lasting” than a cloak does *not* mean that the weaver is certain to last longer than the last cloak he weaves before he dies. (87bff) The interlocutors agreed that, since the weaker body exists for some time after death (an argument which revealed an error in their conception of the body), the stronger soul must continue to exist also; Cebes counters that the same could be said for the weaver and his cloak. Since the weaker cloak still exists, the stronger weaver must be safe and sound somewhere, since a man surely must last longer than a cloak (ibid.). He completes the analogy by saying that it might be the case that the body is constantly wearing away (κατατριβόμενον) – even during life (87e) – and the soul is forced to constantly “reweave” (ἀνυφάινει) the body to keep it alive. It is possible, then, that the soul could “have on her last weave” when she perishes, thus expiring before the body.

³⁰⁹ See Bedu-Addo 1979 for a conflicting reading which takes absolute certainty to be Socrates’ own goal: “Since Socrates obviously does not consider himself a simpleton, and is indeed portrayed throughout the dialogue as being quite unperturbed by the prospect of his own impending death, we may safely assume that he thinks he knows that the soul is immortal, and can give an account of this.” (p 11)

It might be argued that this is a far more “laughable” image than that of the soul as a harmony, which Simmias presented.³¹⁰ Further, it does not seem that Cebes has any *reason* to believe that the soul is worn away by reweaving the body. However, the logic it presents is clear – Socrates has failed to show that every single individual soul will continue to exist after its next death – *even if* it is granted that it survived death in the past. Cebes has taken fear to new level; while his argument is logically sound, the fact that he demands such a level of certainty exposes a deep fear of death. Cebes demands that a level of certainty be present in the argument which cannot possibly be granted by anything less than divine discourse. Once again, given the agreement that Socrates lacks this absolute certainty, we are called to wonder why Socrates faces death so calmly.³¹¹

When, after the digression into misology and his response to Simmias, Socrates reformulates Cebes’ objection, he calls explicit attention to the *fear* that is revealed in Cebes’ desire for absolute, logically unassailable certainty of his own continued existence after death. Socrates begins by saying that for Cebes, life is “like a disease (νόσος)” (95d): “She lives this life wearing herself out in misery.” (ibid) Just as the soul arose from the work and interactions of the body in Simmias’ λόγος, here, the *body* only exists as a result of the work of the *soul*, “weaving” it together into life. Again, we see a tendency to prioritize one or “the other” constituent of the self, which reveals the lack of awareness of the nature of the whole. An account of the *unity* of the whole, not reducible to ‘parts,’ is necessary to understand the priority of the living being, the ζῶον, and to

³¹⁰ Cf Burger 1984, p 109.

³¹¹ “. . . in the absence of that [certain] demonstration, Cebes concludes, anyone who feels confident about death displays his utter foolishness. But Cebes thus betrays his lack of understanding of Socrates’ confidence in the face of death, which has nothing to do with an illusory belief about the character of the psyche as natural phenomenon.” (Burger, 1984, p 111)

reveal the true nature of the ψυχή. Further, on Cebes' account, of course, there is no explanation for *why* the soul would undergo this work of weaving and re-weaving the body, leading inevitably to its own death.

Clearly identifying the theme of fear, Socrates continues: “Now you say it makes no difference at all, as far as each of us being terrified goes, whether she enters once into a body or many times; being terrified befits anyone who doesn't know that she is something deathless and who can't give an account – unless he is mindless (άνόητος).” (95d) Socrates is here keying on the fact that, *for Cebes*, the proper response to awareness of death is terror – φοβέω, to be “put to flight,” to *run away*, just as Crito has asked Socrates to flee his sentence. Why does Socrates not flee? Is it because he has certainty of going “There,” and thus *experiences no fear*? Or is it, rather, that he feels the fear, but has the *courage* to face death in the knowledge that he has lived well, and *thus prepared himself for death* by living the life of the philosopher?

Socrates often uses *fighting* and *standing his ground* as analogies to describe his work as a philosopher.³¹² At *Apology* 28dff Socrates says that his work has been to remain at his post as stationed by the god – who, he claims, “ordered me, as I thought and believed, to live the life of a philosopher, to examine myself and others.” (28e) In the *Phaedo*, at 89a, Phaedo describes how, after they have undergone the experience of being “thrown down” by the objections of Simmias and Cebes, Socrates “as if we were men who had fled and been laid low, rallied us and turned us about to follow him and consider the argument with him.” Socrates goes on, at 89c, to use the image of Heracles calling on

³¹² He says he is “fighting for the just” at *Apology* 32a; Socrates says he “would surely battle, in word and deed,” that we will be “better” and “braver” if we believe we can find the truth, and continue to seek it” at *Meno* 86 b-c; Cf *Republic* 335e, 427e, 453a, 534c, et al. For a good account of Socrates' philosophy as agonistic and militaristic, see Weiss 2006, p 1-27, (esp. p 2-3).

Iaolus to describe how they must fight against the dual arguments. These are images of situations in which there is surely *not* absolute certainty of victory; rather, these images call for us to be courageous and enter battle *despite experiencing fear*. This requires keeping the fear in mind; that is, to be courageous in this way – which Plato indicates is central to the *life of the philosopher* – is to *face* the fear of death, and not to deny it with supposed access to a certainty that would erase that fear, and render courage unnecessary. To live the life of the philosopher is to *prepare* for death by living in light of our own finitude. Μελέτη θάνατος.³¹³

1.2 Silence and Death

Cebes agrees to Socrates' reformulation; before continuing, however, Socrates spends a "long time" quietly considering how to respond (95e). It is, of course, impossible to know what Socrates is considering, nor what Plato intended by having Socrates take this pause; whatever the intent, the pause calls to mind the *inner life* of Socrates. In the *Symposium*, Socrates is said to have a habit of standing and considering something quietly within himself. Here Socrates takes a moment for quiet reflection, and the reader, too, is asked to turn from the text for a moment and consider what is at stake

³¹³ We note here that the first definition for μελετάω in the Lidell Scott is: "take thought or care for" and thus "to attend to, to study." The many are wrong when they think they know why the philosopher is ripe, ready, and worthy of death. She is ready because she has given it thought, has studied it, and has lived knowing it is coming, never forgetting herself; she knows herself to be mortal.

in the arguments *as well as in the situation described in the narrative, and what significance these issues have for our own lives.*³¹⁴

The companions have perhaps, for a moment, been so caught up in the conversation, and so enthralled by Socrates' "wondrous" (88e, 95a) response to Simmias, that they have forgotten what is to take place in a very short while. In this silence, foreshadowing the final silence to come, we can hear the return of their ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπὸν πάθος (59a) – their mix of pleasure and *pain*. We are reminded that we will soon be losing our guide and the singer of charms who will chase away our fear; we are reminded that we will soon be left on our own. In addition to the inner life of Socrates, then, we are reminded to attend to our own private thinking, to the activity of our own soul, especially in matters of courage and fear, choice of life, and readiness for death: How ready do we readers stand to face death?

Phaedo might not be able to fully recall everything that took place (103a), thus his retelling is not complete, but due to his *youth*, we can be sure he has recalled the advice to one *beginning* his philosophical journey. At the same time, we are reminded of Socrates' imminent death and presented with his intellectual autobiography; it seems we must consider how the λόγοι (and deeds) which follow this brief silence, and which precede the final silence, will form, in some sense, Socrates' final defense of his *choice of life*, and thus of the life of philosophy. Thus, as well as advice to someone *beginning* his philosophical education, we also expect to hear something of a defense of the *purpose*

³¹⁴ Sallis 1996: "It is as though, confronted by his own death, Socrates looks into himself, back into his own past. . ." (p 39) Sallis here notes that the speech that is to come arises from the silence engendered by awareness of our own death.

of such an undertaking. We expect to learn how living the life of philosophy, the examined life, prepares us to face death with courage.

1.3 Αιτία

Finally, Socrates prefaces his response, saying: “What you’re searching for is no trivial business, Cebes. For we must busy ourselves with the cause concerning generation and destruction as a whole (ὅλως γὰρ δεῖ περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν διαπραγματεύσασθαι.)” (95e) Whatever else the discussion yields, then, we will be attentive to the implications of the arguments not merely to the immortality of the soul – which is the explicit goal of the argument – but to the much-larger issue of coming-to-be (γενέσεως) and passing away (φθορᾶς) *as a whole*.

That is, the possible passing away of the soul will not be our only concern; the reader must be attuned to *becoming* and its relation to *being*. Socrates, of course, proceeds to tell the story of his own philosophical *development* in this context of a discussion of becoming as a whole. We are reminded that his own soul has undergone a *process* of development, and we are asked to consider the stable *being* that underlies these changes in his experience and life; we are reminded here, of course, of the questions raised by the opening word of the dialogue, αὐτός, and of our discussion of this opening in Chapter 1. There, we wondered at how Phaedo is the “same” at the time of telling the story recorded in the dialogue bearing his name as he was at the time of the events he recalls. We noticed that this question parallels the issue of the *unity* and *identity* of Theseus’ ship. It is implied that the unity lies in the Athenian λόγος which *claims* that

the ship returning to Athens the day before Socrates' death is the "same" as the ship on which Theseus sailed to save the 14 from the Minotaur. We have raised many questions since that discussion about unity, λόγος, and the nature of the soul as that which underlies the flux of generation and destruction that attends our lives. We have found that it is the activity of the soul, in accord with the λόγοι which structure our understanding of the "being and benefit" of the things we encounter, which grants unity to phenomena, and significantly, to our own *selves*. Our reading of these final passages will focus upon how they shed light on the issues we have raised.

Socrates says that he will go through his own *experiences* (πάθη) concerning generation and corruption, and if anything that he says "appears useful" to his listeners, he instructs them to "use it for purposes of persuasion (πειθῶ) in the very matters you're talking (λέγεις) about." (96a) Following upon Socrates' silence, and our consideration of his private, inner life, this phrase asks us to wonder if the issues his interlocutors have gathered – λέγειν – fully equate to Socrates' own private concerns. Specifically, we wonder if Cebes' concerns with absolute unassailable certainty in the immortality of the soul is truly what is on Socrates' mind when he presents his final λόγοι. We are also reminded of the importance of *persuasion* (πείθω) and *trust* (πίστις) in λόγοι that has appeared in the dialogue, in the discussion of the nature of the self, and in the work Socrates called for of finding harmony in the λόγοι through which we understand our lives – we have also seen that these issues are highlighted by his response to Simmias, which immediately precedes this section of the dialogue.

Socrates begins the tale of philosophical development in his youth, when, he says, he was “wondrously (θαυμαστῶς) desirous (ἐπεθύμησα) of that wisdom they *call* (καλοῦσι) ‘inquiry into nature’ (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν).” (96a, emphasis added) The use of καλοῦσι *could* indicate that Socrates has doubts about whether or not what is called ‘inquiry into nature’ in fact addresses itself to φύσις; we will find that he indicates some such suspicion in describing his turn to the λόγοι.

Socrates says that this wisdom seemed ὑπερήφανος. (96a) This is a wonderful word, which *can* mean ‘magnificent,’ as it is usually translated, but centrally means “overweening,” “arrogant,” and carries the sense of being excessive, even brutal and insolent, hubristic. This wisdom, in its claim to record the truth about φύσις, is ὑπερήφανος, excessively *bright*.³¹⁵ I argue that it is *this* excess, an excess in the stories told *about* nature, not nature itself, that threatens to blind Socrates, as he famously says at 99d-e; thus, this turn to the λόγος is not a turn away from the nature of things, but rather from a certain (materialistic) understanding of φύσις. Let us look at how he describes the *process* by which he came to (almost) be soul-blinded.

One of the first things we notice is that Socrates is *not* immediately concerned with matters “in the heavens and beneath the earth.” His concerns are directly related to *human* life. As Michael Davis puts it in a paper titled, “Socrates’ Pre-Socratism”:

Socrates does not begin with questions about the heavens and the earth. His first two questions, when stripped of their pre-Socratic trappings, become these: "What is life?" and "What is thinking?" He does not put the two together, but if we do we discover a third question: "What is the cause or nature of that kind of life that thinks?" or "What is man?" Hidden behind the questions which motivate the young Socrates is the same question which motivates Socrates on the day of his death, the nature and power of the human soul.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Sallis notes that it is *these* early investigations which “blinded” Socrates. (1996, p 39)

³¹⁶ 1980, p 560.

Even in his “Pre-Socratic” phase, if you will, Socrates describes his own concerns as directed toward matters of human *life* and thinking. Specifically, he is concerned with how the *power* of thought is rooted in the soul, and he is interested in the *process* by which knowledge becomes possible. I have argued that one of the central dimensions of this epistemological investigation into the nature of the soul is the project of ontologically grounding *self*-knowledge: “The young Socrates attempts to acquire knowledge of himself by means of knowledge of the whole.” (ibid.)

At 96a-b he describes looking into *several* physical causes for thinking: Is it by the blood, air, fire, or the brain that we think? He moves from one *λόγος* to the next, and finds nothing certain. This is *precisely* the process which Socrates warns leads to misology. (80dff) People who spend time with *λόγοι* that at one time seem true, and at another false, begin to think that there is no certainty to be found in *λόγος*. Socrates, though, does what he recommends, and does not blame the *λόγος*, but rather *himself*. He decides that he is *ἀφύης* – *naturally* unfit for this sort of investigation.³¹⁷ Socrates

³¹⁷ *Αφύης* is also a wonderful word. It seems to mean that one is “without nature,” but is rather precisely a claim to knowledge of the nature of an individual. At *Republic* 455b, Socrates uses the word to describe people’s naturally taking to learning or not, being able to discover a great deal with “slight” instruction vs. being slow to learn, even with a lot of education. Thus, in addition to the *Theaetetus*, another account from the corpus reminds us to pay special attention to *learning* when speaking of the human φύσις. In the *Parmenides*, this word is used to describe someone who, if they were *ἀφύης*, would think that *if* the forms are in fact truly separate from the world, truly unchanging and transcendent, set completely off from this world where we live, they could never be known. To be *ἀφύης*, in this context, is, again, to insist on our total separation, as humans, from the truth of things; however, in the *Parmenides* we are not set off from the flow of physical things, but rather, from the unchanging, unflowing truth, which, as totally transcendent, would appear inaccessible to the *ἀφύης* person. Again, then, the logic of things, their *ἀρχή*, their *αἰτία*, would be a mystery to us, were we without nature, *ἀφύης*. At *Symposium* 218a, the *ἀφύης* is said to be the only one who is not “snake-bitten” by philosophical *λόγοι*. In this instance, the person who is ‘without nature’ is immune to the occurrence of the snake-bite; he is in the presence of the wondrous, but he fails to wonder; he is in the presence of the enlightening, but is not enlightened. This image of the snake-bite reminds us of the sting of the torpedo fish or

phrases his claim to lack insight into φύσις in terms of his access to his *own* φύσις. We are thus able, on this basis, to see a connection between the proper τέχνη of λόγος and self-knowledge, the ontological grounding of which we have been working toward. This will allow us to reveal a further dimension of the connection between λόγος and ψυχή.

His proof that he is ἀφύης is that he *thought* he had “sure knowledge” of the αἰτία of human growth – we gain flesh by eating flesh, and gain bone when we eat bone.³¹⁸ This theory is ridiculous, and attending to the growth of a baby only drinking mother’s milk, or the growth of a goat eating only grass shows this clearly.³¹⁹ He asks Cebes if he was being “measured” (μετρούως) in believing and repeating this theory (96d). He asks Cebes if this opinion seems measured, if there is anything *excessive* in claiming to know the αἰτία of growth; Cebes thinks this seems reasonable – he is not yet aware of his own ignorance in these matters. It is Socrates’ search into these λόγοι which *freed him from the ignorance of his ignorance*.

Thus, Socrates’ initial example of the ‘blinding’ caused by investigating *what is called* φύσις is not of a fully negative experience; rather, it allowed Socrates to discover

the bite of the gadfly – the gadfly spurs us into action, spurs our curiosity and our seeking, but the person who experiences this as merely a torpedo fish is, rather, numbed, and moved into inaction. In any case, in the Symposium, human φύσις is once again connected to *learning*.

³¹⁸ He also says that others agreed with him, and would apparently, then, have praised him for memorizing and repeating such theories.

³¹⁹ Cf Davis 1984: “. . . the first result of Socrates’ initial inquiries is that his common sense knowledge of the nature of growth is destroyed. That knowledge tells us that we grow by eating and drinking. This common sense view is involved in that famous parental utterance “Eat your dinner.” And, of course, it is true as far as it goes. But it does not account for some very important things, among them maturity and death. At a certain point eating no longer leads to growth, or at least to growth understood as healthy or natural. After that point there begins a gradual decline of life leading ultimately to death. If the common-sense understanding of growth were true we would continue to grow indefinitely.” (p 563) What this account seems to be lacking, then, is how human growth is underwritten by the human *form*, which is the ἀρχή originating, guiding, and limiting the process. This form would then appear to be the true αἰτία of growth.

his own ignorance.³²⁰ His experience with ἐπιθυμία for ὑπερήφανος wisdom – which had earned him the praise of others – revealed to him the limits of what can be achieved in λόγος, and thus allowed him to develop the τέχνη of λόγος that he says will save people from becoming misologists. That is, at 90b, Socrates tells us that without the proper τέχνη of λόγος, people often trust in the wrong *kind* of λόγος, which at first seem true and then later false, and so come to doubt *all* λόγοι. Socrates avoids this fate by turning to an inquiry of λόγοι themselves, and developing, in the second sailing, the proper τέχνη of λόγος.

We will turn to this τέχνη in a moment; in preface, I note that Socrates famously says that those who claim to go “straight to the beings” by investigating what they *call* φύσις are investigating in likenesses just as much as those who turn to the λόγοι in which beings are presented (100a). The difference is that the “scientist” who claims to go straight to the matter *is unaware of the mediation of the λόγοι in accord with which their soul determines the “being and benefit” of the things they investigate.* What Socrates’ turn to the λόγος indicates is that he is *aware* of this mediation, aware of the natural *activity* of the ψυχή in determining the being of the things we encounter.³²¹ Socrates

³²⁰ Sallis notes that the issue of philosophical “growth,” which reveals philosophy to be a process, a *life*, is raised in this passage: “Socrates’ own growth consisted in his coming to see that the common opinions regarding growth are questionable.” (1996, p 39)

³²¹ Cf Sallis 1996: “Both kinds of seeing [Anaxagorean teleology and the attempt to grasp things by the senses] end in failure and blindness – *unless*, as is the case with Socrates, the pursuit of such seeing somehow issues in that awareness of the danger. In other words, the pursuit of such seeing can open the possibility of another alternative only if it leads into a more acute awareness of ignorance. . . More precisely, what is required is an awakening to an ignorance intrinsic to oneself – an ignorance which is not an ignorance with regard to this or that but which, rather, is a constituent in man’s comportment to everything, an ignorance which, as a result, *holds man at a distance from total and immediate revelation of beings*, a distance which he can ignore only at great peril.” (p 42, emphasis added) Sallis later makes it clear that “On this way it is λόγος which

turns to the soul in an attempt to develop his *natural* capacity for learning; this development, this παιδεία, is *only* possible if we are able to become aware of the dangerous hold that traditional λόγοι have on us, and then begin to *attempt* to return to the matter at hand without the mediation of *traditional* accounts of the nature of things we investigate. Socrates says he turned away from what is revealed to the senses (99e); from our reading of the *Theaetetus*, we can conjecture this means he turned to the activity of the soul, working through λόγος, to discover the αἰτίαι of beings.

We have observed many examples of this in the dialogue. At 64b, Socrates says the οἱ πολλοί are unaware of their ignorance regarding the true nature of death. Also, several disharmonious λόγοι about the nature of the soul have a “wondrous hold” on the interlocutors – notably, as we have seen, the λόγοι that presents soul as a harmony and as a reified “thing” that travels to another topos at death; we will see that these views are tied-up with the danger of the stance which gathers the “real” to be that which has physical presence and which comes-to-be and passes-away according to *physical* mechanisms. Socrates warns that such λόγοι pose the danger of making us un-philosophical, and not attending “to the way it is with the things (πράγματα) the argument is about.” (91a) Socrates’ techne of λόγος is *not* simply a turn away from φύσις, but rather an attempt to uncover the inconsistencies and problems in the traditional λόγοι which are *called* φύσεως ιστορίαν. These λόγοι only produce the semblance of wisdom; however, they are ὑπερήφανος, and so blind us to that fact.

serves as the medium in which the images of beings can be safely studied.” (ibid.) It seems that understanding this distance, and mediating force of the activity of the ψυχή in accord with λόγος, is central to understanding human being, and the way the self is active in organizing the manifest intelligibility of our world.

The turn of the second sailing occurs in recognition of the *nature* of human learning, the way we grow into learning in our παιδεία. We determine the “being and benefit” of the things we encounter through the λόγοι we inherit. If we are *unaware* of the activity of our soul, gathering the bundles of perception into the beings of our world, we are then unable to recognize when it is not the “matter the argument is about,” but rather the λόγοι that we have come to believe which guide us. We become brutal and arrogant, ὑπερφυῶς in our “wisdom,” and refuse to accept the evidence of what is before us – e.g. that humans grow without eating bone. Ironically, it is this attempt to record the truths of φύσις that blinds us to the unfolding logic of natural beings. The turn to λόγοι is, then, the only possibility for a *human* to grow into her possibility of discovering the flow of φύσις.

1.4 Unity, Form, and the Activity of the Soul

Cebes responds that Socrates’ belief that humans grow bone by eating bone and grew flesh by eating flesh seemed “measured,” and Socrates adds a list of other things he “used to” believe: One man is bigger than another “by a head,” and horses are bigger than others for the same reason; he says he “thought ten things were more than eight because two had been added to the eight; and I thought a two-foot length was longer than a one-foot length because it exceeded it by half of itself.” (96e)³²² Cebes, reasonably, wonders

³²² Michael Davis makes a series of very important observations on this passage: “This is a peculiar list, and worth dawdling over. Is there anything which ties these examples together? All three cases concern questions of comparative magnitudes. To compare the size of two things obviously requires that one be able to tell the two apart. The first example is somewhat more complicated because it involves the growth of one man. When a man grows he obviously undergoes a change, and yet to say that he grows is to say that he remains one man despite the

what has changed, and asks how these matters appear to Socrates now. Socrates utters an oath, “By Zeus . . . I seem to be far from thinking, I suppose (οἶεσθαί), that I know the cause (αἰτίαν) concerning any of these things. . .” (ibid.) He explains his confusion in these matters as *stemming* from a *deeper* confusion regarding “adding a one to a one.”³²³ That is, Socrates says that he does not *suppose* (οἶεσθαί) that he knows the αἰτία concerning any of these ‘more complicated’ matters *since* he is unable to answer what he takes to be a more *basic* question – how one and one come together to form two – i.e.

change. To compare the size of men or horses on the basis of the heads of men or of horses seems to involve making a unit of a head (much in the way we have made a unit out of a foot), but clearly that requires that we be able to identify the unity of the head, and that unity is dependent upon its being a part of a larger whole, a man or a horse. Again the question of relative size involves the ability to see things as ones. The final example involves the relative size of numbers. In the first instance two is taken to be the source of the greatness often relative to eight. It replaces head, and is so to speak taken as a unit, as a one. In the second instance the relative greatness of two cubits and one cubit is seen in terms of the former exceeding the latter by half. In this case it is only because the two is not a unit, i.e., because it can be halved, that the comparison can be made in this way. Just as a head could be a unit only by being understood as a part of something which itself had to be understood as one, here two is allowed to serve as both the measure and the measured, as both a one and as a many.” (1980, p 561) Here, we see Davis identifying the presence of many of the central issues we have drawn from the *Phaedo*, from our discussion of what is required to recognize equality, and from our digression into the *Theaetetus*. Davis notes that Klein’s “math book” (1968), especially Chapter 6, “The Concept of *Arithmos*,” was an influence on his analysis here. See Vlastos, 1971b, for someone who does not see the unifying theme behind the problems Socrates describes here.

³²³ Vlastos, failing to see the deeper implications of these perplexities – failing to be at all perplexed by them himself – helpfully tells his readers how even “beginners” are able to solve these problems today: “In this discussion I have deliberately gone beyond what we get in the text, in order to bring out the further implications of Plato’s basic insight. If he had had at his disposal techniques of analysis such as are available nowadays to beginners, he could have offered a general formula to cover all four of the puzzles in 96D8-E4, laying down the contextual definition, “where A, B, C are (positive) magnitudes or cardinals, A is greater than B if, and only if, there exists a C such that $A = B + C$,” and then showing that this definition is satisfied in all four cases: In puzzles 1 and 2, A = the height of the first (man or horse); B = the height of the second; C = the length of a head. In puzzle 3 (the one discussed in the text above), A = 10 units; B = 8 units; C = 2 units. In puzzle 4, A = 2 yards; B = 1 yard; C = A/2 yards (= 1 yard). Had Plato been able to clean up the problem in this way, he would have spared his readers two blemishes in his present account which help explain why his sound insight may be so easily missed.” (1969, p 315)

how a 'two' is generated – and how two is split into two ones – i.e. how two passes-away, is 'destroyed.'³²⁴

He is far from thinking he knows the cause of such matters: “I who don’t even allow myself to assert that whenever anyone adds a one to a one, the one added to or the one that was added has become two, or that the one that was added and the one two which it was added became two by the addition of the one to the other.” (ibid.) At this point in his explanation, we can already hear echoes of our discussion in Chapter 3 (§2.3) concerning the body and soul as “ones” which are, somehow, ‘added together’ to form the two-in-one that is the body. In that discussion, we wondered at the ὑποκείμενον that would underlie the transition from death to rebirth. If this stable ὑποκείμενον is, in fact, the soul, then we are asked to wonder: “Is the body the ‘one’ that is added to make the ‘one’ of the soul into the ‘two’ that is the self, or, is the soul the ‘one’ that is added to the body, making the body into the ‘two’ that is the self?”³²⁵ We are also reminded, of course, of the divine attempt to join pleasure and pain. (60bff) Thus, the question is raised again here: *What is the source of the unity of the self which is a whole – whether it be a ‘two’ made of the body and soul, or a ‘three’ made of the appetitive, spirited, and*

³²⁴ It is thus not helpful to say, with Taylor, that this is simply a “conceptual” question: “besides his scientific examples Socrates cites such questions as 'Why is ten greater than eight?' and 'When one unit is added to another, is it one of the units which becomes two, and, if so, which one, or do both units become two?' The latter question, at least, is clearly a conceptual question, in that it has to be answered by considering the meanings of terms used in talking about numbers, and by considering the logical relations of propositions formed from those terms.” (1969, p 45) Taylor misses the deeper significance of asking about unity, and thus how unity is determined in the phenomenal world.

³²⁵ Burger 1984: “In presenting the strategy of the argument, Socrates anticipates its systematic confusion of two alternatives: either the psyche is an enduring subject that undergoes a genesis from one place to another, from Hades to the body and back again, or there is a genesis of one thing, the living, into another, the dead, and back again but with no enduring subject that persists through change. (p 55)

rational ‘parts’ of the soul, or some more complicated harmony? What is the source of the unity of the object of self-knowledge? Whence the unity of the αὐτός?

Socrates is not interested in a μῦθος in answer to these questions – e.g. a myth concerning the joining of the soul to the body by some god or gods (e.g. *Timaeus* 42dff)³²⁶ – any more than he is *satisfied* with the μῦθος concerning pleasure and pain. Socrates’ answers come in his turn to the λόγος. I am reminded here of Socrates’ comment to Phaedrus concerning the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia, responding to Phaedrus asking if Socrates took the myth to be “true” (ἀληθές). (229dff) Socrates replies that he has no interest in being one of the “wise” who would claim to know what “really happened” with regard to these traditional μυθολόγημα. Socrates says “[I would rather] examine (σκοπῶ) not them but myself, whether I happen to be some wild animal more multiply twisted (πολυπλοκώτερον) and filled with desire (ἐπιτεθυμμένον) than Typhon, or a gentler and simpler animal, having by nature a share in a certain lot that is divine and without arrogance (ἀτύφου).” (230a) Typhon was a mythical beast with a body composed from various parts of snakes and birds and beasts of many kinds. Socrates is here asking if he is himself a harmonious whole, or if his own multiplicity is that of the beast, filled with ἐπιθυμία and excessive pride. The dialogue closes with Socrates praying for a kind of harmony within himself, and with respect to the world around him. (279b-c) Socrates’ concern for the unity of his self does not seem to be

³²⁶ Thus, I am disagreeing with the views of scholars such as James V. Robinson, who claim that the *Timaeus* is an unironic account of Plato’s beliefs about the soul. Robinson agrees that “whether the soul in its true nature is simple or composite” is an essential question (Robinson 1990, p 103); however, he makes the mistake of treating the main speaker of any given dialogue as Plato’s ‘mouthpiece’ and so reads the account of the soul in the *Timaeus* as revealing Plato’s ontology of the soul.

answerable either by a materialistic account, nor by a cosmological or mythological account; rather, the unity he is seeking seems to be rooted in *ethical* concerns.

Socrates continues his account of what he does not claim to understand: “Here’s what I wonder about: When each of the two was separate from the other, then each was one and the pair were not two, but when they came close to each other, this then became the cause of their becoming two – the concourse that comes from their being placed close to each other.” (97a) It is not immediately clear why Socrates feels he has to be able to understand how one and one make two in order to understand human growth, or relations of size between people or horses. There *is* an order to these examples – from the growing taller of one person, to the discrepancy in how tall two people are, to the difference in the number of a group of things, to difference in length, and finally to simple arithmetic. Thus, there is a sense in which one needs to understand arithmetic in order to understand measurements of length, and thus to understand the height of people. In fact, the abstract relation between the addition of a two to an eight to make a ten gives us the tools to understand how a person can eat something other than bone to make bone; that is, in understanding how the eight “take” the two and “use” it to make more of itself, to make itself into ten, helps us understand how the human takes in something foreign and turns it into more human. However, this does not seem to be the (sole) point of the examples. In fact, it seems as if Socrates is trying to break the *ὑπερήφανος* wisdom of *φύσεως ιστορίαν* down to its most basic (mis)understanding, and show how the examination of the unexamined ontological principles of simple addition, which ground any talk of length, and thus of growth, would lead its inquiry in another direction. This new direction

will be outlined by Socrates as turning to the λόγοι; he will show that it is necessary to take into account the “invisibly present soul” in order to understand the αἰτία of the *unity* of things. As Michael Davis puts it, “What unifies this list of perplexities growing out of Socrates’ first sailing is the concern for whatever it is which makes things one.”³²⁷ Davis also identifies *comparison* as essential to the examples Socrates chooses; just as in our analysis of what it takes to see equality – specifically how it entails to hold two things together while also holding them apart *qua* some quality, and in light of the good – we will find that the soul of the one doing the comparison is critical.

In our analysis of the *Theaetetus* (Chapter 4, especially §2.2), we discovered the importance of accounting for the place of the *soul* in understanding how we can understand the speech “one, two, three, four, five, six” as meaning the “same thing” as “twice three or thrice two, or four and two, or three and two and one.” (*Theaetetus* 204b-c) In that discussion, we saw that the question of *unity*, which Plato raises in many important places in the dialogues, requires the understanding of the activity of the soul in determining unity. Understanding how the soul is active in one and one coming together to form two is equally necessary, and is essential to combating the materialistic understanding of causation present in Socrates’ questioning if the cause lies in the ones coming “close to each other.” (97a) Consider the following diagram³²⁸:



³²⁷ 1980, p 562. Davis says that this idea was first suggested to him by Ronald Polansky’s lecture notes on the *Phaedo*.

³²⁸ This example is drawn from John Russon’s analysis of the “rhythms” of experience in *Bearing Witness to Epiphany*, 2009, p 12-14.

It is easy to immediately see the pairing of the two dots that are close together as forming a unit, a pair, which is a two made up of two ones. However, it is *also* possible to see a unit formed by the more distant dots, and to *see* these two dots as pairs, as the following diagram will help illustrate:



What this experiment indicates is the *power* and *presence* of the intentions and expectations of the viewer in determining *when* and *if* two ones which “come close to each other” form two.³²⁹ We saw earlier (Chapter 5, §2.4) that this ability to hold a unity together as a one, while simultaneously holding-in-view the internal *multiplicity* of the unitary whole, is essential to Socrates’ description of the ability of the soul to *compare* things in the world – for example, two sticks. *The unity in-view is formed by the “invisibly present” soul of the viewer determining the “being and benefit” of the unit. It is the whole, as more than the sum of its parts, that knowledge attaches itself to. It is the whole that the soul identifies as the being in question in accord with the λόγοι present to*

³²⁹ Vlastos recognizes the absurdity of proximity as cause of two being two; however, he simply states that the two are two “by hypothesis,” but he fails to inquire into the importance of the *power* behind hypothesizing: “For obviously, the things being talked about are two by hypothesis, and they would still be two regardless of whether they were jammed up together in a cupboard or situated in different galaxies a million light-years apart. How absurd then to offer their propinquity as the reason why they are two!” (1969, p 312). He footnotes J Moreau, who recognized the importance of the soul in this passage: “*La cause de la production du 2, c'est a dire d'un objet de representation double, ce n'est donc pas le rapprochement ou la separation dans l'espace, mais dans l'esprit.... Toutes les difficulte's de cette sorte sont donc levees par l'idialisme mathematique, qui fait de l'unite' un act intellectual indivisible et du nombre une pure relation.*” (1939, p. 382) Vlastos criticizes Moreau for “having to” turn Plato into a “neo-Kantian idealist” in order to “bring off” his identification of the importance of the *soul* (l'esprit) in this passage, and in the *Phaedo* as a whole. (Vlastos 1969, p 313, note 60): “Plato is not proposing that a psychological cause be substituted for the physical one.” (ibid) Vlastos thus reveals his fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and power of soul. The main problem of his reading is that it *completely* ignores the rest of the dialogue. In his entire paper on 95e-105c, he barely mentions anything that occurs in the rest of the dialogue, does not mention the names or the character traits of any of the interlocutors, and simply treats Socrates as unironically “the Socrates who Plato makes his mouthpiece.” (p 297, note 14)

the soul – the λόγοι which are salient and cogent in determining the being and benefit of what it encounters.³³⁰ The power of the *soul* in perception and understanding should at this point be quite evident; it is toward a more careful analysis of the place of λόγος in this system that the dialogue now pushes us. This analysis will allow us to see the place of λόγος in the way the self gathers itself to itself in self-knowledge, and thus we will understand how working in λόγοι is the proper locus of self-care.

Socrates then says there is the same perplexity in how two can come to be by the “opposite” operation – the splitting (σχίστις) of a unit into two. (97a-b) He says that in this case, instead of bringing two ones close together to form a two, we “split a one apart,” and it is this splitting that causes the two to come to be. (97a-b) Thus, if the splitting were the “cause” of one becoming two, then there could be opposite causes for the same effect, possibly violating the law of non-contradiction. In this example, we find that Socrates is *not* asking for an answer that responds to the simple rational order of arithmetic. He seems to be claiming that the ontological grounding of a unity that can be split to form a two is *prior* to simple arithmetic. That is, it is clear that Socrates is not referring to abstract numbers; specifically, he is not referring to the number “1” when he speaks of τὸ ἓν in this passage – if he were, then the splitting of ‘one’ would result in two fractions, two halves. However, in the case he describes, the whole that is *any* unit

³³⁰ On the connection between the soul, knowledge, and generation and destruction, Michael Davis writes: “Socrates’ insufficient understanding of the whole is traceable to his insufficient understanding of the soul. The old Socrates looks into himself at the beginning of this section and announces that they will have to extend their inquiry to include the causes of all coming to be and perishing. That is not simply because the soul is one kind of being which comes to be and perishes. *It is rather because only in a cosmos containing soul does it make sense to speak of coming to be and perishing.*” (1980, p 564 emphasis added) It is in understanding how soul, and specifically ψυχή as νοῦς, are central to any *Socratic* account of the nature of the whole that we see why the Anaxagorean claim the mind orders the cosmos was so appealing to young Socrates.

(including any given number, which is itself a whole unit) can be split, and the two (the two wholes, whether they be integers or fractions) which remain are in fact themselves ones, and thus there are now two ones where there was only one. This puzzles Socrates, and he concludes, rightly, that it cannot be the ‘physical’ mechanism of splitting a unit that makes two ones, any more than it can be the physical act of bringing two ones closer together that makes them become two.

As an example, consider slicing a loaf of bread into slices. Imagine we have cut the slices quite thick, and then someone comes along and cuts one of our thick slices into two thinner slices. Is each slice now a half a slice? In a sense, yes. However, this is only because there is an ambiguity in the term ‘slice’ that does not obtain to arithmetic numbers. That is, the *judgment* made by the *soul* of the individual, operating on the cultural standards of what thickness is proper to a “slice” of bread, is necessary to determine the nature of unity, one, and two in this situation. To one person, we might have created two slices of bread – to another, those are *way too thin* to be slices, and all we have are two half-slices. By not speaking of arithmetical units, Socrates once again calls our attention to the *activity of the soul*, to the internal life of the individual, as determinative of the coming-to-be of the one and the two. We will find that this account of the activity of the soul is exactly what is missing from the materialist story of the cause of Socrates’ sitting in prison.

Socrates compounds these problems by saying he does not claim to know how a “one” comes to be. (97b) With this question, Socrates is *explicitly* calling us to wonder at the *nature* of unity, and the place of unity in our understanding of epistemology. As I

argued above, knowledge attaches itself to these unities, and the “being and benefit” of these unities are determined by the characteristic activity of the soul. (Chapter 4, §2)

Thus, in his “second sailing” in search of the *cause* of generation and destruction, Socrates is asking us to consider how the *soul* determines the *unity* of what it encounters.

On the relation between these perplexities and the theme of the body and ψυχή,

Burger writes:

The juxtaposition of two accounts of how two comes to be, through the division of an original unit or through the addition of originally separate units, was just the perplexity Socrates introduced in his opening description of pleasure and pain, which seemed to him wondrously related to one another. (60b-c) And that description furnished in turn the model for a double account of the relation between body and psyche. Does body become alive, then, by having psyche brought near to it, or does psyche become thereby embodied? And if both together become two by mere juxtaposition, how can they also become two by the separation of one from the other? In fact, as Socrates realizes in conclusion, he cannot yet persuade himself that he knows how one comes to be. For not only do there seem to be opposite causes that both produce two, but the same causes, and the same opposition, could also produce one: if body and psyche are really united, they make a single living animal, but if they are really separated, each is a single entity – the corpse, at least, is a unit, whether or not the psyche proceeds by itself on its journey to Hades.³³¹

By drawing our attention to the relation between the cause of unity and the possible unity of body and soul, Burger has allowed us to see how the *activity* of the soul can be implicated in *naming* the relation of body to soul, just as it is in the hypothetical division of the soul into three parts – a division which we revealed to be a *product of a specific λόγος* in the *Republic*. *It is through λόγοι that we gather ourselves to ourselves as body and soul in tension with one another, or as a soul in tension with other ‘parts’ of itself, or as a unified animal understood as embodied soul.*

³³¹ 1984, p 138.

As I argued in the early chapters, how we view ourselves has effects on the ethical demands which we see ourselves answering to; i.e. if we see ourselves as a pure soul inclined toward the good struggling with a shameful, impure body and ‘its’ desires – and if we see this as the “*only* cause of all war and strife (στράσεις) and battles” in the world (66c) – then we are inclined to view the ethical life as *essentially* a *struggle* with a foreign, intractable ‘enemy’ which *always is* and *always will be* inclined toward injustice. If, on the other hand, we view ourselves as composed of a tri-partite soul, we have the opportunity to see the ‘lower’ parts of the soul as susceptible to wise rule by the ‘higher’ parts; thus, a view of human *harmony* is possible, and ethics can be self-mastery and self-habitation, rather than constant strife. *These different ethical views arise from differing ontologies of the soul.*³³²

I have argued that a sophisticated ontology of the soul would require answering to far more internal multiplicity than the tri-partite theory can account for; thus, while this theory is a marked advance over viewing the self as body and soul in tension and opposition, it calls for a “longer” method of investigation. The *outcome* of this longer investigation of the self is a view in which our own internal tensions and oppositions are *called into the light*. That is, these passages call for a self-examination in terms of internal multiplicity, tension, and cognitive dissonance. They ask us to recognize that it is our *ownmost activity* to determine the nature of the soul, and of our own selves, through the process of self-examination – the process by which we come to grips with the nature of the multiplicity of the soul, as demanded by this dialogue, and others. *It is by the*

³³² I will argue below that the account of the soul which I am arguing for here – one rooted in the *powers* and *activity* of the soul – helps us understand the ethics of the “Socratic paradoxes” which claim that virtue is knowledge, all virtue is one, and no one does wrong willingly.

activity of the soul, itself through itself, in accord with the λόγοι we have come to hold, and which have come to have a hold on us, that we determine the being of our own souls.

In this process of self-examination we do *not* simply discover a body and soul in tension, nor do we discover a tri-partite soul. Rather, with the guide of the texts, we discover that the λόγοι through which we govern our lives are in tensions that are multifarious. This discovery is *central* and *internal* to the work of asking the questions the *Phaedo* poses; one cannot be an active reader of the *Phaedo* and not come to face their own fears of death, their attachment to traditional λόγοι, and the diversity and multiplicity of their own salient ontologies of the self. We can only hope to face these facts about ourselves with courage and dedication to the truth.

We find ourselves playing different roles, and enacting different aspects of ourselves in different contexts and communities. We find that these communities and contexts have different salient λόγοι through which they demand that we gather ourselves to ourselves; we thus behave and respond to the world differently in these different contexts. In reading this text, we come to see that our self-understanding is not, yet, a unity. It is for this reason that the interlocutors unironically lament the loss of Socrates: *It is with Socrates that they are their best selves*. Plato laments with them, and his lamentation takes the form of chronicling the life of a Socrates grown “young and beautiful” so that we all may spend our time as our best selves, in concert with Socrates – in place of Theseus, Achilles, or Odysseus.³³³ It is in harmony with the myth and image of Socrates that Plato wants us to strive to become our best selves.

³³³ Cf Davis 1980: “Throughout the *Phaedo* Socrates' apparent praise of death is, beneath it all, a praise of a certain kind of life. *In that sense he is competing with the poets.*” (p 567, emphasis added)

1.5 Anaxagoras, the Power of Νοῦς, and the Best Order

After chronicling these problems, Socrates claims that he does not know “why a one comes to be nor why, in a word (ἐνὶ λόγῳ),³³⁴ anything else comes to be or perishes or *is* by this way (μεθόδου) of proceeding.” (97b) Socrates says that it is this *method* that has perplexed him, and thus he will turn to an account of how he has developed his *own* method for understanding, according to his list: unity, coming to be and passing away, and being; this is method which he says he has “randomly smushed (εἰκῆ φύρω) together.” (ibid.) The use of the term φυράω reminds us of the blending of pleasure and pain, and the will to purity of the pure soul itself by itself that we saw in the “true-born philosophers.” (Cf Chapter 3, §2) There, the hope for purity appeared misguided, and we seemed to be left with a “second best” life, mixed and blended with the body. The use of this term calls us to wonder if the “second best” way of Socrates’ method in the second sailing will be connected to the issue of the soul being blended with the body; that is, I will argue that the second sailing is called for since we are embodied, finite human beings, and not pure souls with direct access to the truth of beings. *It is as a result of this finitude and embodiment that we must access beings through the mediation of λόγος.*

However, before turning to the account of this method, Socrates tells the tale of a hope for a ‘first sailing’ that was aroused in him when he heard of the speculations of

³³⁴ As I noted in Chapter 3, §1.3, by adding “ἐνὶ λόγῳ,” Socrates seems to be reminding us of the place of λόγος in understanding unity, as well as coming to be and passing away.

Anaxagoras.³³⁵ He says that he felt he had found a teacher that was “after his own mind” (κατὰ νοῦν ἐμαυτῷ - 97d) since Anaxagoras claimed *mind* was the cause of all things in his book: “Mind” (Νοῦς). According to Socrates’ retelling of this text, “it is in fact Mind that puts the world in order (διακοσμῶν) and is responsible for all things (πάντων αἴτιος).” (97c) Socrates found this “pleasing” (ἥσθη); this pleasure experienced by a youthful Socrates makes sense, for he says that he expected the book to say why everything in the cosmos was ordered “for the best (βέλτιστα).” (ibid.) On this account, having access to what is *best* would give anyone the ability to access what *is*.³³⁶ (97c-d) That is, in order to discover the αἰτία of anything a “man” (ἄνθρωπῳ) can “look to nothing but what’s most excellent and best (ἄριστον καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον).” (97d) Everything in the universe would be explainable, intelligible, and would answer to *human* conceptions of the best order. This would be pleasing indeed.³³⁷

³³⁵ It is interesting to note that Anaxagoras was also said to have been tried by the Athenians – specifically, by Cleon – for impiety. Diogenes Laertius says that he was accused for claiming “that the sun was a red hot mass of metal.” (DK51A1) It was in some sense for *atheism* that he was tried (see Plutarch’s *Pericles*). Rather than being executed, as a result of Pericles (Anaxagoras’ student) giving a speech on his behalf, he was simply exiled. In the *Apology* and *Crito*, Socrates refuses exile, choosing to stay in Mother Athens and face execution instead.

³³⁶ Commenting on the pun Socrates uses to say that Anaxagoras is a teacher “after his own mind (νοῦς),” Burger argues: “The pun Socrates constructs out of a colloquial expression discloses why the claim of teleology should be suspect: a universe constructed “in accordance with mind” is so pleasing to us, just because it projects onto the whole the operation of the human mind, without necessarily acknowledging that projection.” (1984, p 140)

³³⁷ Cf Davis 1980: “[Socrates] says that he found Anaxagoras a teacher “to [his] mind” (kata noun emautoi). Socrates finds it good and to his mind that mind should rule all. What is the significance of this meeting of minds? What is accomplished by making mind the ruler of all? To really make mind order everything for the best would have two effects. It would immediately make a place for something like soul in a pre-Socratic cosmos, something not reducible to prepsychic elements and itself fundamental. Secondly, it would introduce what reductionist science can never give us, purposes, and thus open the way for an understanding of things as wholes. In a pre-Socratic world I would be hard pressed to determine where a table stopped and a coffee cup began. I would be hard pressed to explain what made this single being a one. With the introduction of purposes the integrity of beings is assured. *Beings are distinguishable from each other on the basis of that good or purpose which they serve.*” (p 564, emphasis added) We will soon be turning to how materialistic explanations obscure the *good* of beings, and to how

Socrates hoped to find what was lacking in the materialistic explanations of the physical philosophers; that is, he hoped to find a conception of the universe in which the *human mind* was given a central place in the causal structure of what is. The second sailing is, in some sense, a reaction to this failing, and a second method for reaching the same end – i.e., of locating and explaining the centrality of the human soul to the being of the world. Instead of having a direct causal relation to the structure of the world – e.g. the position of the earth in relation to the sun – the centrality of the ψυχή will be found to be *mediated* by the λόγος.

Unfortunately, the book did not live up to Socrates' expectations. He thought the text would teach “the cause of the things that are (τῆς αἰτίας περὶ τῶν ὄντων)” *in terms of what is best*, since that is, Socrates presumes, how Νοῦς would order the world. (97d) Unfortunately, what he finds in the book is a series of *materialistic* explanations for phenomena. He says he was “swept away” (ῥχόμεν φερόμενος) from this “wonderful hope (θαυμαστῆς ἐλπίδος).” (98b)³³⁸ He says the text did not “make use” (χρώμενον) of νοῦς as αἰτία that “put things in order” (διακοσμεῖν τὰ πράγματα), but rather “put the blame on (ἐπαιτιώμενον) air and ether and water and other things many and absurd (ἄτοπος).” (98c) It is in response to this that Socrates gives his famous account of his “bones and sinews.” In framing his denial of materialism, we will find Socrates' final refutation of the idea of the soul as a ghostly presence – one which can even be *seen*

understanding the determination of that good requires understanding the *soul*. Thus, I disagree with Ross, and others, who take the ‘second best’ character of the second sailing to be ironic: “. . . it is clear that to the degree to which the *deuteros plous* passage suggests that the later method is inferior to the earlier ones, it must be ironical.” (Ross 1982, p 23)

³³⁸ The translators note that there is a nautical imagery to the term φερόμενος, which “echoes Odysseus, who was swept back out to sea within sight of home by the folly of his companions (*Odyssey* X 48).” (note 18 to pg 78). If they are right to detect this image of the sea, then we have more reason to expect the second *sailing* to be a reaction to specifically this disappointment.

haunting graveyards! (81d) – and as continuing to exist as a physical presence, visible to the gods, in another τόπος after death. In his second sailing, then, we will find the true Platonic conception of the ‘higher,’ non-physical level of reality toward which the philosopher must turn, stripped of the mythological quasi-physicality of a “realm” of forms in which the soul “dwells” before birth and after death.

1.6 The “True Cause,” Mind, Bones, and Sinews

Socrates articulates what he finds lacking in the materialistic explanations he found in Anaxagoras’ book by referring to his own situation in prison. He describes the stance that Anaxagoras (who *chose* exile over execution) – and by extension, any “natural philosopher” – takes toward phenomena as a sort of πάθος:

. . .to me his condition (πεπονθέναι) seemed most similar to that of somebody who – after saying that Socrates does everything he does by mind (πάντα ὅσα πράττει νῶν πράττει) and then venturing to assign the causes of each of the things I do – should first say that I’m now sitting here because my body’s composed (σύγκειται) of bones and sinews, and because bones are solid and have joints keeping them separate from one another, while sinews are such as to tense and relax with the flesh and the skin which holds them together. Then since the bones swing in their sockets, the sinews, by relaxing and contracting, make me able to bend my limbs now, and that is the cause of my sitting here with my legs bent. And again, as regards my conversing with you, he might assign other causes of this sort, such as voice and air and hearing and a thousand other things of the sort as causes, and not taking care to assign the true causes (ἀληθῶς αἰτίας). . . (98c-d)

Socrates’ account of the physical causes which Anaxagoras might find responsible for his sitting in prison focuses on the disposition of his *body*. It is easy, then, to think of whatever account he is about to give of the “true causes” as rooted in the *soul*, and thus this passage would play into the simple dichotomy of body and soul set up by Simmias’

answers early in the conversation. However, this explanation is insufficient. A few lines later Socrates refers to his bones and sinews as having desires based in *their* “opinion” as to what is best (δόξης . . . τοῦ βελτίστου – 99a). However, in this first account, the body is not held responsible as *cause* in virtue of tendencies toward action, but rather in terms of the simple physicality of having a body. Thus, a few lines after this initial account, Socrates complicates the picture of the body as “tomb” or vehicle for the active, motivating soul by pointing to the diversity, multiplicity, and conflict within the self – *here explicitly said to be based in differences of opinion* (δόξα) – which we have identified as a central problematic in the dialogue. That is, in identifying the way the desires “of the body” respond to *opinions* of what is best, Socrates again complicates the simple picture of a body with “its” (irrational) desires, struggling with the soul.

Socrates then lists what he takes to be the “true causes” (ἀληθῶς αἰτίας) of the phenomena of his sitting in prison:

. . . that since the Athenians judged (ἔδοξε) it better (βέλτιον) to condemn me (καταψηφίσασθαι)³³⁹, so I for my part have judged (δέδοκται) it better to sit here and more just (δικαιότερον) to stay put and endure whatever penalty (δίκην) they order (κελεύσωσιν). Since – by the Dog! – these sinews and bones of mine would, I think, long ago have been in Megara or Boetia, swept off by an opinion about what is best (ὑπὸ δόξης φερόμενα τοῦ βελτίστου), if I didn’t think it more just and beautiful (εἰ μὴ δικαιότερον ὄμην καὶ κάλλιον εἶναι), rather than fleeing and playing the runaway, to endure whatever penalty the city should order. (98e-99a)

This is one of the most important passages in Plato’s corpus, and it has received scant attention. Vlastos, for example, passes over it as simply a bridge to the “important” passages where Plato uses Socrates as his mouthpiece to express his own theory of

³³⁹ Καταψηφίσασθαι means literally, “to vote against,” and thus implies *choice* based in having been *persuaded* of Socrates’ impiety and danger to the polis.

causes, “the Theory of Forms or Ideas.”³⁴⁰ Vlastos *immediately* notes that Plato “makes no effort to conceal from the reader that he has yet to reach a clear-cut conception of what "participation" involves. . .”³⁴¹ However, despite recognizing that the presentation of this “Theory” does not give an explanation of the one of its central tenets – the nature of μέθεξις – Vlastos does not take this as an opportunity to think *beyond* what Socrates explicitly states in the text. Thus, he misses the fact that the account that Socrates gives of the “true causes” (ἀληθῶς αἰτίας) of his situation in the dialogue *makes no reference to forms as causal forces*. Rather, it is the *judgments* of the Athenians, and of Socrates – their opinions, based in the state of their *souls* – which are named as the true αἰτίαι. That is, it is not The Good itself which puts Socrates in prison; rather, it is the λόγοι that the Athenians, and Socrates, *believe to be true* of the good that are the cause.³⁴² Their λόγοι *mediate* their access to the forms. Vlastos, and many others, miss this point, and thus miss the importance that the rest of the dialogue bears on how we are to understand Socrates’ presentation of the forms as causes in this specific situation, and to these specific interlocutors.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ 1969, p 298.

³⁴¹ 1969, p 301.

³⁴² Cf Burger 1984: “Nor does either of these causes express the operation of mind based on knowledge of the good, for each is simply an opinion of what is better; such opinions were apparently of no interest to Anaxagoras, but they are decisive for Socrates.” (p 143)

³⁴³ “Our passage falls into two divisions. Division One (95E-99C) recounts the youthful infatuation of the Platonic Socrates with the physical philosophers and the disappointment in which it ended when he found that all they could offer was material aitiai and mechanical causes, while he had become convinced that only teleology provides the "true" (98E) or "real" (99B) aitiai of natural phenomena. There is no talk of the Forms as aitiai-no mention of them at all-throughout the whole of this division, though the way is prepared for them by the laying out of a series of perplexities whose solution would elude Socrates until he had hit upon the Theory of Forms. This part of Division One I shall discuss at some length in due course. *The rest of it I shall ignore*. Though its historical importance is incalculable-this is one of the great turning points in European natural philosophy, the conscious abandonment of the line of thought which had led, in the systems of Leucippus and Democritus, to the first rigorously mechanistic conception of the order of nature-its message is familiar and, superficially at least, quite clear. I shall, therefore,

Thus, Socrates makes it clear that the “true cause” is a judgment about what is *best*. He admits to the internal multiplicity that we seen arise at several places in the dialogue by admitting that he has the drive to flee – a motivation which he ironically imparts to his bones and sinews – but the “part” of him that wants to flee is ruled by his judgment that flight would be unjust.

Further, we see that Socrates identifies a *political* dimension to his situation. The cause of his sitting in prison is not the result of physical conditions – which are necessary conditions, but not *causal* conditions.³⁴⁴ Nor is the cause said to be the relation of some particular to some form (the form of sitting? the form of being in prison?).³⁴⁵ Rather, the

bypass it in this paper to concentrate on the far more hazardous task of figuring out what is going on in Division Two (99C-105C), where Socrates, frustrated in his search for teleology, falls back on a second-best method of inquiry of his own.” (1969, p 297, emphasis added) In focusing on the *education* of the soul, I hope to have shown how Socrates’ account of his philosophical *development* – whether or not this account “prepares the way” for Plato’s (cursory, limited, and incomplete, as Vlastos admits) presentation of his “Theory of the Forms” – is central to understanding the philosophical life, which even a brief look at the dialogue presents as a central concern. Further, treating the importance of these passages as of only “historical” significance is to miss the subtlety of Plato’s writing. In addition, his claim that the perplexities in the ‘first’ division simply ‘prepare the way’ for the Theory of the Forms is odd considering that his *own* analysis of these later sections of the *Phaedo* argues that this Theory *cannot* deal with these perplexities, especially without a developed conception of participation.

³⁴⁴ Socrates goes on to articulate the difference between a *necessary condition* for sitting in prison – having a body – which is that without which he “wouldn’t be able to do what seemed best,” on the one hand, and the cause “*through*” which he is doing what he is doing. (99a) If someone were to say that he *couldn’t* sit in prison without a body, “he would be speaking the truth.” (ibid.) “If however, he should say it was *through* these things that I’m doing what I’m doing, engaging in these acts by mind but not by the choice of what’s best, why the slackness of his speech would be abundant and tedious.” (ibid.)

³⁴⁵ Taylor argues that reference to a form *might* be the *ultimate* explanation of this phenomenon: “It may, however, be that Plato thought that even the explanation of human action depends ultimately on the Forms, in that every action gives rise not to a single explanatory proposition stating that the agent acted because he thought it best to act in that way, but to a chain of explanations terminating in a reference to Forms. An example of such a chain might be ‘Why is Socrates sitting in prison instead of escaping to Megara?’ ‘Because he judged it best to stay in prison.’ ‘Why did he judge it best to stay in prison?’ ‘Because he is a good man.’ ‘Why is he a good man?’ ‘Because he participates in the Form of the Good.’” (1969, p 46-47) However, we will see that the unhelpful generality of this form of answer is not actually presented by Socrates as a sufficient answer to the cause of phenomena; further, Taylor’s reading ignores the specifics of the passage by ignoring the contrast to the opinions of the Athenian “judges,” and thus to the

“true cause” is identified to be *complex* and *fully involved in a human, political context*.³⁴⁶

Thus, any interpretation which claims that the second sailing simply and unequivocally explains the cause of phenomena as “participation in a form” is simply missing this aspect of the text. We live in a *human* and *political* world; it is precisely because of the failure to account for this fact about our experience that Socrates abandoned the natural philosophers, and for this reason that he found such hope in the rumors about Anaxagoras placing Mind at the center of being.³⁴⁷ To account for the αἰτία of anything, one must attend to the λόγοι through which the situation is gathered, and thus through which the *judgment* about what course of action is *best* gets made; further, one must understand the *political* dimensions of the situation, and attend to how the πόλις, and how *tradition*, mediates the λόγοι that have a “wondrous hold” on us. Socrates is in prison for challenging the λόγοι of Athens. While in prison, he identifies the power of the λόγοι, and the place of λόγοι in the way the soul determines the “being and benefit” of phenomena. Socrates claims that the best life, the *examined* life, is one which does not take the λόγοι of the polis as fixed or obviously true, but which undergoes a process of inquiry into the truth of these λόγοι.

Thus, Socrates poses a threat to the πόλις because he challenges the very

place of judgment and the soul. Perhaps Taylor assumes that μέθεξις is solved by Plato, or that its mystery is not a problem for explaining phenomena. That is, if it is not clear what it means to say that Socrates is in prison because he “participates” in the form of the good, it is not clear how this sufficiently explains the phenomenon, any more than saying this sunset is beautiful because it “participates” in beauty. In his defense, Taylor expresses some uncertainty about Plato’s adherence to this form of explanation, saying that his comments are “admittedly speculative,” and that this kind of explanation is “safe,” but “the safety of the answer seems to lie just in its total lack of information” (ibid.)

³⁴⁶ The importance of the political is indicated by the reference to the judgment of the Athenians, Socrates’ mention of the “Athenian Eleven” at 85b, and by the situation of the dialogue as a whole. Thus, I cannot understand Hackforth’s claim that “the *Phaedo* is notably silent regarding political institutions and government; its ethics are wholly individualistic. . .” (1955, p 7)

³⁴⁷ Cf Davis 1980.

conception of reality, as well as the conception of the ‘best life,’ which is central to maintaining order in Athens, and in any political regime. As we learn from the *Republic*: Controlling the λόγοι of a people is central to controlling the people themselves. It is *through* these λόγοι that we gather the world together into an intelligible order; it is only on the basis of the intelligibility of the world that we are called to *act*. Our ethical demands appear against the horizon of the world that is gathered by the λόγοι which we hold to, and which have a hold on us.³⁴⁸

As we know, attacking the narrative unity of the culture can have a *traumatic* effect by *fragmenting* the people subject to Socratic elenchos – the sting of the torpedo fish can “leave its stinger behind.” (91c) By turning to the λόγος, and to the place of the λόγος in *gathering* together the *unity* of the self, Socrates is grounding the possibility of virtue as *harmonizing* the self – a harmony that makes possible *actions* such as Socrates’ resistance to the fear of death. That is, in the face of the trauma of self-fragmentation and cognitive dissonance, the *Phaedo* calls for the healing power of *narrative* to gather the self to itself.³⁴⁹ Only in the light of this unity and harmony can we understand how

³⁴⁸ Consider an ethical situation: e.g. what is our ethical reaction to criminals from the inner city? Do we A. treat them as people who chose their life of crime and thus should be punished? Or do we B. treat them as victims of terrible societal conditions, as products of their environment? The answer to this ethical (and political and juridical) question depends absolutely on our conception of the *being* of a human being. If we take the human to be a self-transparent, unified, self-coherent being endowed with conscience and thus an innate sense of right and wrong who only does wrong out of weakness, and thus these criminals make the ‘free’ choice to take the ‘easy’ way and hurt others instead of working hard for themselves, then we take path A. If, on the other hand, we understand that human is an inherently interpersonal and political animal that is in large part the product of its environment, then we will choose to educate and reform the individual and attack the social conditions which created the behavior. It is our *ontological* conceptions that guide what is taken to be the best course of action (as I will make clearer in the next chapter).

³⁴⁹ Consider a modern approach to this issue: “The narrative psychological approach can be classified as broadly social constructionist insofar as it attempts to examine the cultural structuration of individual experience. However, building on recent criticism of certain social constructionist approaches (such as discourse analysis), it is argued that these approaches tend to lose touch with the phenomenological and experiential realities of everyday, practical life.

Socrates is able to face death with such calm and poise.

§2 The Second Sailing in Search of the Cause

2.1 The Failure of the First Sailing

Socrates says that those who seek physical causes are not “able to distinguish that it’s one thing to be genuinely the cause, and another to be that without which the cause

Accordingly, they overplay the disorderly, chaotic, variable and flux-like nature of self-experience. Drawing on recent research on traumatizing experiences such as living with serious illness, this paper argues that the disruption and fragmentation manifest in such experiences serves as a useful means of highlighting the sense of unity, meaning and coherence (the ‘narrative configuration’) more commonly experienced on an everyday level. Moreover, when disorder and incoherence prevail, as in the case of trauma, narratives are used to rebuild the individual’s shattered sense of identity and meaning.” (Michele L. Crossley 2000, from: “Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity”) The use of narrative in dealing with the self-fragmenting effects of trauma is widely recognized. See also Barvosa 2008, Berkowitz 2010. See also Stolorow 2011. Stolorow tries to understand trauma from within a Heideggerian-Existentialist framework. Drawing upon the significance of being-toward-death in *Being and Time*, he shows that in traumatic experiences, “the system of everyday significance we take for granted suddenly falls apart, and we are faced with the unprotectedness of our existence brutally.” This shattering of the unity of the self can be seen as a traumatic result of facing our *finitude*, that is, in facing *death*. As he says in a blog entitled “Trauma and the Hourglass of Time”: “. . . because trauma so profoundly modifies our ordinary experience of time, the traumatized person quite literally lives in another kind of reality, completely different from the one that others inhabit. This felt differentness, in turn, contributes to the sense of alienation and estrangement from other human beings that typically haunts the traumatized person. . . Emotional trauma brings us face to face with our existential vulnerability and with death and loss as possibilities that define our existence and that loom as constant threats.” (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-d-stolorow/coping-with-trauma_b_826995.html) It is on the day he faces his *death* that Socrates reveals the depths of the threat of human multiplicity, and gives us the tools we need to understand that diversity, and to begin to forge a harmonious, unified life.

wouldn't be a cause." (99b)³⁵⁰ In this, he affirms that *without a body* there would be no cause for anything we might seek. Is this true of the act of thinking? Thinking was Socrates' second example (at 96a-b), after human growth, which certainly requires a body. The answer is unclear, but Plato *obviously* wants to consider the possibility that thinking is impossible without the body. That is, Socrates implies that the body is that without which 'the cause would not be a cause' – the body is a necessary condition, while not the cause of the phenomena to be explained. Since one of his initial examples was *thinking*, this would imply that there is no thinking without a body.³⁵¹

In any case, people unable to make this distinction are "groping around as if in the dark" when they call the body, or any necessary physical condition, the "cause." (99b) They fail, then, to look for (οὔτε ζητοῦσιν) the power (δύναμιν) which would place everything in the *best* way possible, just as it is "now." (99c) They "don't at all suppose that it's the Good-and-Binding (ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον) that truly binds and holds things together." (ibid.) Socrates says that to discover such a cause "it'd be a pleasure to become anybody's student." (ibid.) We saw above how this would place the cause of all things easily within the grasp of the human mind – including thought, growth, the position of the earth and stars; the cause of everything in the heavens and beneath the earth would be knowable. Unfortunately, Socrates says, "But since I was robbed of this and never

³⁵⁰ Cf Gonzalez 1998: "These kinds of causes, in Socrates' view, are only *necessary conditions*, that is, *that without which* real cause could not function. Thus we have another way of characterizing a thing's elements or parts: they are only conditions of a thing being what it is, not the real cause." (p 192) Here, again, we can see the primacy of the *form* – as we saw in our analysis of the harmonious whole that is the cause of the bow or lyre in the last Chapter.

However, here, Socrates subtly emphasizes the *necessity* of the physical parts – e.g. the body.
³⁵¹ Burger says: "Socrates brings to light the inseparability of body and psyche; for his opinion of the best, which should represent the intention of psyche in contrast to the mechanical operation of the body, would have been carried not only through the bones and sinews but in their service." (1984, p 143)

became capable of discovering it myself or learning it from another. . .” he had to create his own method. It is important to understand what Socrates is saying here: the *claim* is that discovering what is *best*, according to our own standards of good, will tell us the nature and cause of all things in the Universe. Socrates finds himself *unable* to discover this cause. This is proof enough that *things are not arranged according to what we would think is best*. If everything that is was structured according to human conceptions of the good, surely discovering the truth of things would not be difficult! However, as we will see, *human finitude* places limits on what can be discovered – it is sadly, and for the worse, *not* the case that we can discover the true cause of all things. The second sailing becomes necessary in light of an *awareness* of our inability to discover the cause of all things – an inability occasioned by the fact that the world is not structured according to our conception of the good. We find ourselves at a *distance* from things; there is no “short cut,” as the “true-born philosophers” would have it, and we cannot bridge this distance with hope and expectation.³⁵² All we can do is rub our limited, human λόγοι together like fire-sticks, and hope to catch some partial vision of the truth. It is to the τέχνη of this “rubbing” that Socrates now turns.

2.2 Turning to the Λόγος

Socrates continues, “since he was robbed” of this full teleology, he asks: “. . . do you want me to make a display (ἐπίδειξιν), Cebes, of the way by which I’ve busied myself (πεπραγμάτευμαι) with the second sailing in search of the cause (τὸν δεύτερον

³⁵² Davis 1980: “Socrates abandons his first sailing because he finds it unnatural.” (p 561)

πλοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν)?" (99d) The term "second sailing" (δεύτερος πλόυς) refers to a situation in which the wind has failed, and so the sailor has to turn to the use of oars.³⁵³ If the image is to be taken seriously, then, the *goal* of the journey remains the same – the sailor is still trying to reach the same destination.³⁵⁴ It is also clear that the image denotes a situation in which the natural elements have proven uncooperative – the wind did not carry us directly and smoothly to our desired goal. As a result, a *slower* and far more *difficult* and *straining* method is called for.

There is a great deal of debate about what the 'first sailing' is, the failure of which causes Socrates to develop his 'second sailing.'³⁵⁵ The passage seems to claim that the 'first sailing' is the failure of the ability to give an account of the cause of all things based

³⁵³ Gallop 1999, p 176, Hackforth 1955, p 127, Rowe 1993, p 238, Sallis 2004, p 154, et al.

³⁵⁴ Goodrich says that the second sailing is a change of "*method* not of *goal*." (1903, p 382)

³⁵⁵ Davis takes the 'first sailing' to be to be *all* physical speculation, what he calls "Socrates' 'natural science'." (1980, cf p 562 et al.) Cf Sallis 1996: The second sailing is second "in contrast to the other two taken together." (p 42) Burger agrees. (1984, p 144) Murphy, on the other hand, argues: "In reaction from such [*teleological*] attempts he had hoped for a completely rational account of *gignomena* but had failed; so he now takes refuge in a method which will give a semi-rational account. . . If he had used the phrase *deuteros plous* in this respect and relatively to the physicist's method, it would certainly have been ironical. But his own method is not *deuteros* except in relation to the teleological *protos plous*, and though it may be said that its indirectness (discussed later) does, as such and so far as it goes, constitute a certain inferiority in comparison with the physicist's method, yet Socrates does not want us to take this too seriously. (1936, p 42) Goodrich agrees, arguing that the second sailing must be second to Anaxagorean teleology "and nothing but." (1903, p 382) Ross says that this second interpretation is the most common: "The most common interpretation of the *deuteros plous* passage, however, is that the *deuteros plous* is really second-best to a teleological account of things, involving the form of the Good, which Socrates failed to find in Anaxagoras' philosophy." (1982, p 23) Cf Spitzer 1976, p 117, Frede 1978, p 28, Vlastos 1969, p 297ff., Rose 1966, p 464ff., Hackforth 1955, p 127&137, et al. Ross disagrees with this common interpretation (thus agreeing with Davis, *broadly speaking*) that the *protos plous* is searching for "all physical *aitiai*." (1982, p 24) I will discuss this in Section 2.2.1 below. Tait writes: "The whole of 96a up to the introduction of the second method at 99e is concerned with explanation or, perhaps better, kinds of explanation of natural phenomena. If Socrates "destination" were not a kind of explanation of natural phenomena, therefore, then he would be radically changing the subject. Moreover, at 99e he says that his method consists in studying the truth of things in theories (λόγοι) and he contrasts this with studying them directly by means of the senses. This would not be coherent if the "things" being studied were not sensible things. Thus, it seems clear that the second best method is a method for obtaining explanations of some kind of the phenomena." (1986, p 457)

in what is *best*, including an account of how the Good and Binding truly holds all things together (ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον συνδεῖν καὶ συνέχειν), and the failure to discover of this cause “how it works” (ὅπῃ ποτὲ ἔχει). (99c) This ability would, of course, be super-human; the more serious problem is that the world is not, in fact, structured in such a way. If it were, again, we *would* be able to access the cause of all things, and the first sailing would not have failed Socrates. On the other hand, it also seems to be the case that the ‘second sailing’ is second to Socrates’ youthful inquiries into physical αἰτίαι. If this were the case, however, it is difficult to see how the second sailing would be second best, since that method created such confusion.³⁵⁶ I think that the ambiguity in the text is *intentional*, and that it is intended to make *us* consider the *commonality* between the different methods that Socrates had tried *before* turning to the λόγος.³⁵⁷ Specifically, by considering this ambiguity we find that all such inquiries did not fully understand the *human* role in determining causation. While Anaxagoras *seems* to place the human at the center of discourse – and it is for this reason that Socrates was so excited to read his book – he resorts to physical explanations; further, while a full teleology based in νοῦς would *seem* to recognize the place and power of the soul, by forgetting the *mortal* and *embodied* nature of knowing, it fails in this regard as well; as such, this knowledge of the cause of all things is found to be beyond the realities of

³⁵⁶ Cf Rose 1966, Murphy 1936.

³⁵⁷ This is thus another instance of commentators trying to disambiguate the text, assuming that Plato must have a single “meaning” – a view which stems from their treating the text as intending to convey Plato’s own opinion. If Plato had intended for us to take only one of the interpretations offered by commentators as “fact,” he possessed the skill to make his meaning clear. On the issue of the *commonality* of the two ‘first sailing’ methods, Burger writes: “Since this [second sailing] would seem to represent a third mode of inquiry, only the *common ground* of mechanism and teleology as “investigation of the beings” can explain why Socrates’ replacement of that enterprise constitutes what is presumably a second-best alternative. But Socrates’ second sailing would be a compromising alternative only if the first way were both desirable and possible and that is precisely what he proceeds to deny. . .” (1984, p 144, emphasis added)

human knowing.³⁵⁸ Considering the connection between these two failings – one which does not consider the place of mind in nature, and the other which, by making mind the ultimate cause of everything that happens, exaggerates and misunderstands that place – gives us occasion to consider the true place of the human ψυχή in the world. If we understand these passages to be simply a pre-cursor to a Platonic epistemology – as Vlastos does – then we miss the true import of the text; that is, we miss the fact that Socrates is still trying to work through his “original question,” as Davis puts it: “What is the nature of man [sic]?”³⁵⁹

In any case, it is *not* clear what aspect of the first sailing is the *goal* that is still desired by the rowing Socrates. That is, is he still trying to find a *teleological* account of things? Is he still trying to discover how the *mind* is at the center of all things? Is he, rather, trying to figure out how the world is arranged for the *best*? Or, is he simply still trying to discover the αἰτίαι of phenomena, without any of the more specific strategies of the ‘first sailing,’ whatever that might be?

Upon Cebes’ understandably emphatic expression of desire to hear this ἐπίδειξις,

Socrates continues:

Well then after these [experiences], since I had had it with this looking into beings (τὰ ὄντα σκοπῶν), it seemed to me I had to be on my guard so as not to suffer the very thing those people do who behold and look at (θεωροῦντες καὶ σκοπούμενοι) the sun during an eclipse. For surely some of them have their eyes destroyed if they don’t look at (σκοπῶνται) the sun’s likeness (εἰκόνα) in water or some other such thing. I thought this sort of thing over and feared I might be totally soul-blinded (ψυχὴν τυφλωθείην) if I looked at things (βλέπων πρὸς τὰ πράγματα) with my eyes and attempted (ἐπιχειρῶν) to grasp (ἄπτεσθαι) them

³⁵⁸ In this regard, my own interpretation is closest to that of Davis 1980.

³⁵⁹ Davis 1980, p 565. Cf Burger 1984: “[Socrates] implicitly criticized Anaxagoras for constructing a cosmological theory of mind without reflecting on his own human perspective in doing so.” (p 142)

by each of the senses. So it seemed to me I should take refuge in accounts (λόγους καταφυγόντα) and look in them for the truth of beings (ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν). Now perhaps in a certain way it isn't quite like what I'm likening it to (ἴσως μὲν οὖν ᾧ εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν). For I don't at all concede (συγχωρῶ) that somebody who looks into beings in accounts (ἐν [τοῖς] λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα) looks at them in likenesses to a greater extent than one who does so in actions (ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν [τοῖς] ἔργοις). (99d-100a, translation altered)

Many commentators have puzzled over this passage. With the preparation we have had in reading the rest of the dialogue with care, and with attention to the issues that we have seen arise again and again in the conversation, we will be able to unravel this passage.

2.2.1 Λόγος vs Materialism and Anaxagorean Teleology

The first thing I want to note about this passage is that, in context, it constitutes a refutation of materialism and of concern with the speculations of “natural philosophers,” and thus a turn to the *human*; at the same time, the second sailing seeks to remain free of the fantasy of the “full teleology” of the Anaxagorean position, which places the human mind in total control of everything.

The turn to the *λόγος* is a turn to the human, in that it is a recognition of that force which *mediates* our relation to a reality which is itself shot through with the *necessity* of physicality. The second sailing does not attempt to go straight to “things” (τὰ ὄντα, τὰ πράγματα), because it recognizes that the being of *human* being stands at remove, and considers the truth of beings from across a *χωρισμός*. This mediation must be central to all discussion of the second sailing, but for now, I want to note how it demonstrates Socrates' concern for the place of the human in the world, and thus a

concern for the nature of the *soul*, its place in the whole, and the connection of ψυχή and λόγος.

Earlier in this dissertation (cf Chapter 3, §2.3, et al.), I noted the *Pythagorean* context of the discussion. Simmias and Cebes are said to be “Pythagoreans,” but with their ignorance of the prohibition against suicide, they reveal themselves to be Pythagoreans who are unconcerned with ethical questions of the “best life,” and are focused on cosmological concerns. On this point, Gadamer says:

(Simmias and Cebes) stand for that particular sort of mathematical investigation, theory of music, and cosmological knowledge which has, as not the least of its sources, Pythagorean teachings. And beyond this, as we shall see, they are quite at home in the natural science, biology, and medicine of their day. Now one should keep in mind that in the *Apology* Plato represents Socrates, not as an expert in modern science at all but, on the contrary, as one who himself repeatedly asserts his own ignorance of science and who restricts himself to the moral problems of mankind and to self-knowledge.³⁶⁰

Gadamer goes on to say that Plato’s choice of Pythagoreans for the discussion with Socrates on the day of his death “is *obviously* meant to show that Plato saw it as his own task to unite the moral introspection for which Socrates stood with the scientific knowledge represented by Pythagoreanism.”³⁶¹ This conclusion is far from obvious, however; the second sailing shows that such “scientific knowledge,” *understood in the wrong way*, poses the threat of misology and blindness to the questions of “moral introspection.”

Rather than “uniting” these concerns, Plato seems to be strategically employing the language of “scientific knowledge” to allow Socrates to appeal to the *characters* of Simmias and Cebes; Socrates is trying to turn them *away* from such investigation, to a

³⁶⁰ 1980, p 23.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, emphasis added

concern with their own souls and lives. The narrative structure of Socrates' comments points in this direction; that is, he frames his turn from metaphysical and cosmological materialism to the human as a *development* of his philosophical concerns: When he was *young*, a youth in arguments, he was concerned with such investigations. When he became nearly soul-blinded, he turned to the λόγος – to the place of the human in the cosmos. As such, it makes sense that in his response to Cebes – whose question revealed his desire for abstracted philosophical certainty – Socrates would be trying to guide him along the path of this development, and thus away from such speculation.

The danger that such concerns pose can be seen clearly in the way Simmias and Cebes understand the fate of the soul after death as a quasi-physical substance that 'travels' from this τόπος to another. In Chapter 3, §2, I showed that this conception of the soul's non-physical reality is wedded to a conception of being as presence. With this materialistic understanding of being, Simmias and Cebes are destined to think of the separability of the soul as physical, spatial, and thus to think of the soul as an independent substance "entombed" in a body, which can haunt graveyards or make the journey to Hades.

I have further argued that there are subtle indications within the text which reveal an essential *unity* between body and soul (cf Chapter 6, §2.1, and just above in §2.1), marked by the being of a ζῶον as ensouled body.³⁶² *However*, the fact that a division between body and soul is made in almost every human culture, and is referenced in many Platonic dialogues, cannot be ignored. Further, the division between body and soul – originally established by *Simmias and Cebes'* traditionally-based answers to Socrates'

³⁶² Cf Burger 1984, p 143, as noted above.

questions (at 64c and 79b) – is used to guide much of the discussion of the dialogue. As such, we have to ask *how* this separation is to be thought of, if not as a materialistic division between two reified entities, one entombed in the other.

By looking to the second sailing, we see that a one – e.g. the self – can be said to be divided into two (ones) – e.g. the body and soul – by the *activity of the soul*. Thus, we can argue: *The soul is separable in λόγος*. It is by an *activity of mind* that the soul can be separated and considered separately from the body, just as the soul can be spoken of as divisible into parts *in accordance with the λόγος in which the interlocutors are engaged* (cf. Republic 435d-e, as discussed in Chapter 6, §3.1).

Further, we see that this λόγος, which claims that the soul is a separable entity, attaches itself to the *whole* which arises out of the material parts. *In understanding the person ‘Socrates’ we engage in the same activity as understanding the bow or the lyre;* an account of the material constituents does not explain the being of Socrates any more than it measures the understanding of a bow. Our knowledge attaches itself to a whole which arises out of the physical parts; to fail to make this distinction is to be “groping in the dark,” according to Socrates, and to be unable to distinguish the cause (of a being being what it is – e.g. a bow or a person) from the conditions without which it could not be (a cause). This truth, to which knowledge adheres, is the *form*, the ‘formal cause’ of the being in question (as will become clear when we turn to Socrates’ account of the causal power of the forms). In the case of the bow, as we saw, the form precedes the existence of the physical wood and string (just as equality precedes the individual equals). In the case of a human being, on the other hand, the formal cause – the good, the telos – is *also* subject to the *opinions* and *activity* of the individual him or herself. In

order to understand *Socrates'* being, we cannot simply refer to the form of human being, we have to attend to his specific *conception* of what is best (which we saw, in our reading of the *Meno*, all people have – Chapter 5, §1.2.1), and to his *political situation*.

Thus, we can see that it is a product of how we humans are engaged in a *project* – how we are “striving” – that the soul can be spoken of separable from the body. All human beings seek what they see as good. In order to understand human beings one cannot simply resort to a sensory, materialistic analysis of the physical presence of the person; to understand a person, we have to see how their *conceptions* of what is best *guide* their actions. In order to understand a person, then, we have to speak of that which is not present to the senses – just as to speak of a bow is not to speak of strings and wood. In recognizing the individuality of the person as distinct from their physical being, we separate Socrates from his body in *λόγος*, *just as he does when he speaks of himself sitting in prison*. This is the separability of the soul from the body – it is separability in *λόγος* only. This being does not, sadly, survive the death of the body – the condition without which it could not be a cause.³⁶³

At the same time, just as a human is not reducible the pure physicality of the body, the second sailing – *as equally a rejection of Anaxagorean teleology* – recognizes the central importance of the physical condition of life – the *healthy* body. We are not a being structured *purely* by our projected intentions, as “pleasing” as that would be to us, and to young Socrates. When considering ourselves, we are also faced with a being immersed in a *political situation* in which our behavior is constrained, and a *material*

³⁶³ Thus, this account parallels that of Aristotle in the *De Anima*. The psyche is best understood as the “first actuality” of a living body – that is, the soul is the *δύναμις* of the body such that it can be alive (which is indistinguishable from *actual* living, but which answers to a *conceptual* distinction between first actuality and full activity). Thus, the soul is distinguishable from the body only in *λόγος*.

condition, which can, at times, severely interfere with our purely projected desires – including our desire for immortality. Our body is a site of extreme vulnerability and necessity. The specter of Socrates’ cold, silent corpse will not let us forget this fact. As much as we might wish, with the “true-born philosophers,” to be rid of it, Socrates says quite clearly that the body is a condition without which we could not said to be a cause – that is, without which we could not form opinions about what is best, or about anything else, for *without the body we could not be alive*.

This recognition of the constraints of necessity in the second sailing also allows us to see that Socrates understood the significance of cultural indoctrination in the process by which we become who we are – a fact that is made quite clear by even a cursory glance at the cave allegory in the *Republic*. While not fully determinative of who we are, the influence of the πόλις, and its stories – about what it means to be a man, to be Athenian, etc. – are the ground out of which we begin our philosophical development; we must begin where we are because we are who we are (cf Chapter 2, §1.2).³⁶⁴ Like the body, this cultural education does not stand as the *cause* of our actions, but is rather the condition without which we could not be a cause – without which, we would not be

³⁶⁴ When we realize the power of λόγοι to influence our understanding of the world, our ethical responsibilities in it, and our conception of the “best life,” we begin to understand Socrates’ concerns about the power of the poets, as expressed in the *Republic*, the *Laws*, and elsewhere. See also the *Ion*, where Socrates argues that the poets have the power to lead people’s souls along like a magnet, turning them wherever they wish. On the power of speech and the *Ion* in particular, see Russon 1995. Russon argues that Plato’s method of writing in general, and Socrates’ description of the work of the rhapsode in particular, argue for a hermeneutical stance toward all λόγοι which, when developed, can ‘protect’ us from the power of λόγοι to lead our souls without knowledge. He states that this work of interpretation – when applied to a Platonic dialogue specifically – is centrally to try and find a *unitary* meaning to the text which arises out of the parts. This is, put simply, to *make sense* of a text, or of any λόγος. See Russon 2000, p 80-82, for an account of how this method of *reading* a text, as seeking the *formal unity* which arises out of the parts, is connected to the formal analysis of πράγματα in the *Phaedo*, and thus provides the *possibility* for a unitary and coherent account of the nature of the forms.

human. However, until we own the decisions which guide our life, and examine the conceptions which draw together our world into an intelligible structure in which we are called to act and respond ethically to human, political situations, we are like slaves³⁶⁵; we remain chained in the cave, and our actions are as answerable to necessity as physical, mechanistic reactions.

This account, which seeks to draw together many of the threads running through the labyrinth of the *Phaedo*, helps us understand *why* Socrates (and Plato) spend so much time arguing for a separable immortal soul, if that is not, in fact, their “doctrine.” Gadamer says: “. . . it seems appropriate to me to first examine Plato’s mode of demonstration to see if it indicates whether Plato was fully aware of the insufficiency of these proofs and, if we find that he was, *to ask then what the actual intent of his*

³⁶⁵ As I noted in my discussion of the *Meno*, Sallis argues: “. . .the *Meno* especially brings to light the appropriate comportment of man as one of mediating between part and whole; it exhibits such mediating as that which enables man to be what he properly is. Since that which allows man to be what he properly is constitutes nothing less than human virtue itself . . .” (1996, p 64) Insofar as it is the activity of the soul to gather parts into intelligible wholes, consciously examining the λόγους through which we engage in this “mediating” activity – which Sallis identifies as central to the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* – is to engage ourselves with the virtuous condition of our souls. While the relation of parts and wholes initially appears as an ontological or epistemological issue only, Sallis is here correctly identifying the *ethical* aspect of any such inquiry by identifying how the development of the *excellence* of the *essential* and defining *work* of being human is at issue in these texts. On the excellence of the soul being rooted in the defining work of the human being, see Vlastos 1969b; of Socrates’ claim that justice is to do what is “one’s own” (τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττων, at 441e and elsewhere), Vlastos writes: “If [Plato] had wanted to be more explicit he would have filled out 'its own' with ergon ("work" or "function"), a term introduced in Book I, and explained as follows: the ergon of anything (of a tool, like a pruning knife, or of a bodily organ, like an eye or an ear) is that activity which can be "performed either exclusively by that thing or else more excellently by it than by anything else" (353A)- i.e., the activity in which that thing gets its best chance to realize the excellence (ἀρετή) proper to its own specific nature' and to contribute to the excellence of other things associated with it. The things the definition has in view are the components of the soul. . .” (p 506) If the defining work of the soul is gathering parts into wholes and naming them, then to do this well is (one aspect of) the virtue of the soul.

demonstration is.”³⁶⁶ To what end does Socrates spend such effort to convince his listeners of the immortal separability of the soul? This account helps us understand that there *is*, in fact, a sense in which the body and soul are separable; in fact, one cannot face the being of a human being – or anything else – by only considering the physical presence of that being: “We sense that they strive.” In the second sailing, we see that to attend to the being of *anything* is to attend to the *good* of that being (as we saw in our discussion of Equality in Chapter 5, especially §2.4 and §2.5). In that sense, all things are beyond what they are; beings point beyond themselves to a *form*, to a *telos* – which in the case of human beings is, or *should be*, (partly) self-created.

It is *only* by considering this aspect of the separability of the soul that we can understand the *true unity* of body and soul; only so can we face up to the responsibility of being a being which determines the good for itself; only so can we know ourselves as a being faced with acting in the context of a fully-developed social environment in which we exist as limited by the physical vulnerability of a body – we live as a being which can challenge the social order only at risk of being seized, locked away, tortured, and put to death. That is, it is only by *considering the possibility* of a pure, disembodied soul, and the kind of knowing proper to its pure, direct access to the pure beings themselves, that the reality of an embodied form of knowing begins to make sense. Further, it is only by considering (the failing of) the account which names blood, fire, or the brain, as the αἰτία of our thinking that we begin to understand how we are not simply what we are, but are essentially a *striving*.

³⁶⁶ 1980, p 22.

That is, the considerations that have been taken to be Plato's true teaching – knowledge as direct contact with the forms, and the soul as properly a unity separable and distinct from the body – turn out to be provocations designed to place the reader (as well as Simmias and Cebes) in a position to understand the embodied situation of human being. They are a provocation to develop the conception of the soul necessary to find harmony and unity in a philosophical *life* – that is, to understand how knowledge occurs for limited, finite beings.³⁶⁷ A recognition of how we are a unity – a whole which arises out of the parts, above and beyond the physical being, just as a bow is something more than wood and string – recognizes how that whole, named and gathered according to the λόγοι we tell ourselves about ourselves, *is the object of self-knowledge*. This recognition is only possible on the basis of an understanding of how we – and every other being – are not understandable on the basis of bare physicality, nor on the basis of pure teleology. Plato did not write the dialogues in order for us to repeat what he teaches; he wrote them to provide an opportunity to face the task of self-examination.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Sallis draws the conclusion that the dialogues, and the *Phaedo* in particular, point to the essential *finitude* of human knowing. Cf Sallis 1996, p 42, as quoted above.

³⁶⁸ While it is unfortunately well beyond the scope of this dissertation, this “new” conception of the separation (χωρισμός) between the body and soul – seen as a unity which can be divided *in λόγος* into a variety of organizations of “parts” – could provide the basis on which to re-interpret the transcendence of the forms. Cf Burger: “The attempt to reinterpret the meaning of “separation,” . . . is, one might say, the fundamental intention of the *Phaedo*. The clue to this intention is provided by the very first word of the dialogue – αὐτός. The very expression that will be used to designate the “idea,” that which is “itself by itself,” refers at the outset to the individual and identifies the self with the living being, without implying any separation of ψυχή from body.” (1984, p. 7). Thus, an understanding of the transcendence of the forms – and the problem of μέθεξις, of which Socrates has no adequate solution (100d-e) – would have to be based in an analysis of the unity of the *individual*. On the importance of the “individual” for ontological understanding of form, cf Long 2004, esp. 157ff. It is *possible* that Plato's emphasis on individual characters in his dialogues, in addition to what we have discovered here in the word “αὐτός,” in our understanding of Socrates' situation in prison, and in our discussion of the individual in the *Meno*, shows that his teacher was the root of Aristotle's recognition “that the term *tode ti* indicates that which is neither singular nor particular, rather, it names, quite precisely, the inherently ambiguous, precariously situated individual.” (p 157)

2.2.2 Τὰ Πράγματα and the Mediation of Λόγος

The second thing that I want to note is the provocative switch from the term “τὰ ὄντα” to the use of “τὰ πράγματα” at 99d-e. In beginning his account of the turn, Socrates says he “had had it” with looking into *beings* (τὰ ὄντα), and so decided he had better be careful not to suffer soul-blindness. A few lines later, he says that he fears this soul-blindness if he looks at “things” (τὰ πράγματα) with his eyes, or other senses. In the next line, he adds the significant point, saying that he has taken refuge in λόγοι, “looking in them for the *truth* of *beings*” (ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν – emphasis added). Thus, he has returned to speaking about τὰ ὄντα, *but* this time he has added τὴν ἀλήθειαν – the *truth* of beings. *His turn to the λόγος has introduced the issue of truth.* Truth is now a mediating factor *with* λόγος.³⁶⁹ Why the shift to τὰ πράγματα, and then back to τὰ ὄντα with this important addition?³⁷⁰

Τὰ πράγματα *can* mean “things,” in the sense of physical beings, but that is not in any way its usual sense. It’s primary sense is an undertaking, business, an occurrence, an affair to be dealt with, a matter for concern. The issues in the Middle East are a πρᾶγμα to be concerned about, to be dealt with. An excellent example of a πρᾶγμα is Socrates sitting in prison. When he introduces the substitution, and begins speaking of τὰ πράγματα, Socrates says that it is the πράγματα that cannot be investigated by the

³⁶⁹ Cf Burger 1984: “To pursue the Socratic second sailing is to replace investigation of the beings themselves with investigation of their truth. Like the light, in Socrates’ image, that serves as a bond between the eye and the visible object, the truth must be the bond between the mind and the noetic object. . . investigation of the truth of the beings is investigation of what makes knowledge possible.” (p 147)

³⁷⁰ I will thus be taking this shift to be more significant than Hackforth, who claims that both terms “are as vague and metaphysically non-committal as the word ‘things.’” (1955, p 137)

senses. When we attend to the central meaning of τὰ πράγματα, this makes perfect sense: How can one understand the situation of Socrates sitting in prison, or the tensions in the Middle East, by using our senses? However, having said that for Socrates the truth of πράγματα are not discoverable by the senses clearly does *not* equate to the denial of the value of *this* world in favor of some mythical other τόπος. The *truth* of the things we encounter is revealed when we attend to the sort of thing Socrates says are the causes of his sitting in prison: His opinions about the good and justice, and the political situation in which he has been condemned. That is, we must understand how λόγοι mediate our access to beings in order to understand *how* the truth of beings becomes manifest; this becomes clear only when we understand the place of λόγος as mediating force. It is through λόγος that we gather the situation into an intelligible unity, in which a course of action appears as most choiceworthy.

Socrates turns to the λόγος to reveal the truth of *beings*; these beings are not the atomic entities discovered by scientific investigation. As we saw in our discussion of Equality (Chapter 5, 2.4ff.), *attending to things we encounter discovers beings which are shot through with relations, and are thus intelligible only on the basis of understanding their context* – the context in which they can be held together (by an act of the soul, of mind) for comparison, and thus determined as what they are by *difference* (delimitation, ὀρίζω), in the context of better and worse (the good). This is especially clear when attending to the shift to the language of τὰ πράγματα. That is, when we think of the *situations* in which ethical action is called for, and when we think of the incredible complexity of political situations, and of the ‘matters’ and ‘concerns’ of any individual human life, we find that the principle of unity cannot be taken to be received through the

senses. On what principle are we able to say “this situation?” On what basis do we unify “a” life? How are we able to take the stance by which we treat our own life as a unity, and as a *περὶ ἄγμα*, or matter for our concern? Does not any such determination and delimitation *leave out* countless details and relations? On what basis, and through what power, is this delimitation made? How do the principles which effect this delimitation affect our understanding of our ethical responsibilities in that situation?

Self-care is only possible on the basis of a stance toward the self which takes our life *as a whole*, as a unity, into its view as a matter of concern. *The second sailing emphasizes that it is through our λόγοι that we gather our lives into a unity as an object for concern*; we gather ourselves to ourselves through the *stories* we tell to ourselves and others, through our spoken and unspoken narratives about human life, our own past, and our place in the whole. It is only in light of this interrelated, political human life – the human *situation* – that beings can become manifest in their proper being. These narratives form the horizon against which beings can have *meaning*. That is, it is only by understanding how every situation is a part of the whole that we come to understand how our ethical responsibilities arise against the horizon of our understanding of our life as a *whole*.³⁷¹ To defend any given action is defend our life *as a whole*.³⁷² The philosophical

³⁷¹ Cf Sparshott on Aristotle’s take on this idea: “That shows, incidentally, why the distinction between the overall end of action and particular goods cannot be maintained: young people experience one thing at a time, just as older people do, but they don’t understand their experiences, don’t relate them to other events and to the whole fabric of life. *To grasp life as a whole is to grasp each event as related to other events*. (1996, pg 229, emphasis added) Socrates’ explanation of the recognition of two sticks as equal involves understanding how everything we encounter is rendered intelligible by how it relates to, and differs from, the things around it – its situation; just so does an event, such as Socrates’ being condemned to die, only gain its meaning insofar as it is held together with (yet held apart from) other events. This context, gathered in accordance with *λόγος* by an activity of the soul, gives the event the specific meaning that it acquires – a meaning which is vastly different for one of the Athenians who voted to condemn Socrates than it is for Socrates himself, or for his followers.

life is a choice which does not simply affect a specific set of decisions that we might make; rather, if we choose the life which rationally examines the λόγοι through which we present to ourselves the intelligibility, as well as the ethical structure, of our world, we make a decision which affects everything we do and everything we experience. To turn to the λόγος, and to find in them the truth of beings, is to fundamentally shift what we take to be “real.”

To attend to the truth of beings through λόγος is to understand that beings are essentially determined in their being against the horizon of a situation; in this situation; they become manifest as *striving*; this striving is revealed by attending to their relation to (and differing from) other beings. This striving character makes no sense in the context of atomic, isolated entities which simply “are what they are” – the bow is not wood and string, Socrates is not bones and sinews. Attending to the striving character of things, which is revealed only once we have abandoned physical investigation, is attending to the being of what we encounter; thus, the *good* of the beings we encounter is revealed when we attend to the way we gather together the situation in which beings become intelligible *through* λόγος. This observation helps articulate the connection between the good and

³⁷² When we stand before another person, it is a fundamental human desire to be recognized as valuable. For the most part, we do not recognize this as a desire for self-esteem, as a desire to have our life as a whole validated. Instead, this desire gets hijacked by a number of different mechanisms which conceal from the individual the source of their desire – it is seen as a desire for fame, money, sex, to be seen as beautiful etc. As a result of this lack of understanding, people go to great extremes to achieve self-esteem in ways that are not conducive to fulfilling the desire on its proper grounds. People seek money and cars, sexual attention, going to the point of body alteration and wild acts of desperation in order to be seen as valuable. For the most part, this desire gets turned by social context into seeking to be honored in terms of what the society deems valuable, and is largely *not* understood in terms of what is most our *own*. We are not our beauty, nor our possessions, nor our fame; we are what is most dominant in us, and this is always the conception of being, thus of excellence, that guides our life, whether we are aware of this guidance or not, willing to defend this conception or not.

being. The truth of beings is discovered when we realize we do not have direct access to these beings themselves with the mediating force of λόγος. To attend to the mediating power of λόγος is to attend to the “light” in which beings become manifest to us.

Further, understanding how *situations* are determined not through a passive reception by the senses, but rather by the *activity of the soul*, we better understand the place of the soul in determining the intelligibility of the world. *To care for the soul, then, is to make the way the soul gathers the world into its intelligibility a matter for concern; to care for the soul is to care for the way we hold ourselves with respect to the λόγοι in which this gathering takes place. To turn away from λόγος (misology) is to turn away from the essential activity of the soul.*

This account also begins to make it clear why Socrates insists that the person who turns to the λόγος is not simply looking at “reflections,” while the advocate of the first sailing is (attempting to) look directly at the beings themselves. Socrates says that he does not “at all concede (συγχωρῶ) that somebody who looks into beings in accounts (ἐν [τοῖς] λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα) looks at them in likenesses to a greater extent than one who does so in actions (ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν [τοῖς] ἔργοις).” (100a) Often, people *claim* to be bypassing λόγοι, and going straight to the beings themselves; such people prioritize *action* (ἔργον), and ‘direct engagement.’ They criticize the ‘intellectual distance’ from the ‘matters themselves’ created by theorizing rather than acting. However, the second sailing insists that they, too, are only engaging with likenesses (εἰκόσι).³⁷³ The difference is: *The philosopher recognizes the mediating*

³⁷³ I do not agree with readings like that of Crombie (1963) who argues that this passage indicates

force of the λόγοι, and thus is better positioned to engage with this mediation.

Philosophers are thus better positioned to understand themselves, and their active role in determining the ‘being and benefit’ of what they encounter. The philosopher is also better able to understand the role played by *others’* conceptions in the way they react to the world.³⁷⁴ Thus, any *deed* – like that of Socrates remaining in prison – has to be

nothing more than the standard account which says that physical things *themselves* are images, specifically, images of the forms: “physical things are just as much images as are λόγοι, from which it follows that he was really turning not from realities to their images, but from one kind of image to another.” (p 157) See also Bedu-Addo 1969, p 112. All such accounts seem to miss the importance of the *soul* and the limited, finite perspective of the individual in this passage, assuming that the answer lies in a pre-established Platonic metaphysics; that is, nowhere in the *Phaedo* is it argued or even implied that the things of this world are unreal, or are merely images. If they were right, and all physical things are images just as much as λόγοι, then it is not clear why one would turn to the λόγοι any more than to the physical things. We have seen that it is necessary to understand that the *intelligibility* of any physical thing is not discovered by sensory investigation, but this does *not* mean that particulars are unreal, nor that they lack intelligibility. Socrates in prison is a *particular* situation, and it calls to be investigated and made intelligible, not treated as unreal and of no importance to “Platonic epistemology.”

³⁷⁴ This observation can help us understand why Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, calls for a τέχνη of the soul before we seek to teach people. *Opposing his own idea of the proper method to that of Anaxagoras* (270aff), Socrates says that proper speech about the soul should aim toward *health* of the soul, just as the medical art does in relation to the body; this speech should operate by τέχνη, rather than “experience” (ἐμπειρία): “Must one therefore think in the following way about the nature of anything? First, to consider whether that thing is simple or of multiple form about which we wish to be artful (τεχνικοί) ourselves and to be able to make someone else artful? And next, if it is simple, to consider its power (δυνατοῖ): what power does it naturally have for acting in relation to what, or what power for suffering from what? And if has many forms, having enumerated these, to see this very same thing regarding each that one saw regarding one: by what does it naturally do what or by what does it naturally suffer what from what?” (270d) Socrates goes on to say that the approach which fails to do this is groping blindly, as he says of the first sailing in the *Phaedo*. Thus, at 271a, he says that any rhetorician must “first with all precision write, *and make us see*, the soul – whether it is naturally one and homogeneous or of multiple form, in the manner of the body’s shape.” (emphasis added) However, we have seen that it is a difficult and “long road” to make this description, and even so, such a treatise is no guarantee that the reader will be made to see this truth. Thus, a form of writing is necessary by which the reader is called to realize the truth *of their own soul*. This is one sense in which the “writing in the soul” Socrates speaks of can be distinguished from bad rhetoric (276a). Thus, in some sense, the λόγοι of the soul in the *Phaedo* can be expected to aim at an analysis of the soul in terms of its *powers*, to be dedicated toward developing a *healthy condition of the soul*, and to speak of any multiplicity within the soul as like the multiplicity of the parts of the body – that is, as a multiplicity of parts separate *only in λόγος*, divided along the lines of δύναμις, which operate within an organic unity. Cf *Phaedrus* 264c on the organic unity of λόγοι, and *Protagoras* 329eff on the organic unity of the body (specifically, of the parts of a face).

understood as presenting itself to us only on the basis of *likenesses*, images, λόγοι.³⁷⁵ To ignore the λόγοι is to ignore the basis of their appearance.

This process of determining the unity and intelligibility of things through λόγος equally well describes *self*-knowledge. To know the self is to understand the λόγοι through which we gather ourselves to ourselves, and this knowledge displays the same basic structures. We understand ourselves *qua* some quality – I am a good man *qua* husband, bad *qua* money-maker, good *qua* soldier, bad *qua* athlete. We understand ourselves as striving toward a set of more-or-less clearly defined goals; these goals determine the relative value of the ways in which we find ourselves to be good or bad – being bad *qua* athlete might be devastating for one person’s ego, and make absolutely no difference to another – it is an issue of what *matters* to us; that is, the issue is how the soul determines the *benefit* of being athletic.

The being of the self, and the unity of life, is determined in accord with a striving toward a projected τέλος – a τέλος gathered in the λόγοι we adhere to, and which have a wondrous hold on us; this is one aspect of the significance of Plato’s presentation of Socrates “grown young and beautiful”: Plato intends to present us with a model toward which to strive. To live in ignorance of the way λόγοι are active in determining our self-understanding is to live in ignorance of the self.

³⁷⁵ Cf Burger 1984: “Socrates does not, therefore, present his turn to investigation through λόγοι as a complete replacement for investigation in deeds but suggests, rather, their complementary relation. . . . To look directly at things, without turning to speeches, would be to look directly at the corpse of Socrates and expect to understand everything at stake in this last conversation. But if, on the other hand, investigation of λόγοι were sufficient in itself, the *Phaedo* would have consisted in treatises outlining several possible arguments for the immortality of the psyche, without illuminating their context, the efforts they produce, and the interests from which they arise, nor, consequently, the slues for determining the intention behind and unsoundness in the arguments.” (p 146)

We cannot have access to the πράγμα except *through* λόγοι; to understand a situation we have to understand how it is through λόγος that the πράγμα is gathered and made intelligible. Thus, to fundamentally change the λόγοι through which we organize the intelligibility of the πράγματα in which we are engaged – our families, our political situations, and indeed, our own *selves*, our own lives – is to fundamentally alter the way we are called to respond to the world. The ‘being and benefit’ of every *being* we encounter is determined, on the basis of παιδεία, by an activity of the soul. Here, in the second sailing, we see that each of these beings only appears against a horizon determined by λόγος; it is in virtue of λόγος that the *meaning* of anything we encounter becomes manifest. The manifestness of beings occurs against the background of a *situation* and a set of values (the ‘benefit’) which determine the way we understand the beings we encounter. For the most part, the horizon, the background upon which the beings are “projected,” as well as the beings themselves, are determined by the *traditional* λόγοι which “have a wondrous hold on us” – just as shadows are projected upon the wall of the cave. The philosophical life takes as its central value a recognition of the *finitude* of human being which throws us into this situation, and recognizes that we will never be able to fully wrest ourselves from these traditions. But, to paraphrase Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, we have to begin where we are, for we are who we are.

Unfortunately, as we have already seen, the λόγοι through which we gather ourselves to ourselves are *multiple*, and can often be odds with each other. This creates a disharmonious condition of the soul – a condition in which self-mastery becomes necessary, since we discover ourselves to be Typhonic in nature, and are pulled in

multiple directions; our life is, for the most part, not experienced as directed toward a single, unified goal. We organize our lives and gather the intelligibility of our world through λόγοι that are *socially constructed*; thus, our lives have multiple salient complexes of λόγοι through which we present to ourselves the desirability of different courses of action.³⁷⁶

As we saw in Chapter 5 (§1.3), the way we identify the meaning of a situation is determined by our erotic attachments, our personal history, as well as by our παιδεία and the λόγοι which we have come to believe. Of recollecting our lover upon seeing a lyre, Socrates says: ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος (73d): into our thought we *receive* the εἶδος, the form, of the person evoked by the experience. This seems to indicate that we are largely *passive* in how we receive the meaning and intelligibility of the situations we encounter (based, of course, in an “active condition,” a ἔξις, informed by παιδεία, etc). The meaning and intelligibility of *most* situations simply *appears*, and I am initially and for the most part *unaware* of the active role my own past and conceptions of the truth play in forming any intelligible experience.

In self-examination, we discover that this unconscious gathering can happen on the basis of *multiple* salient “frames” that are operative in us. Thus, by examining the λόγοι through which we often unconsciously gather the meaning of the world, we become *active* and *engaged* in the process of determining which εἶδει we receive into our souls when attending to the world. When these λόγοι are not harmonized – when we discover ourselves to be truly Typhonic – we can become confused by, for example, our

³⁷⁶ At 77e, the interlocutors lament Socrates’ death, for they need someone to sing charms to allay their fears. Socrates replies that *they themselves* might be the best suited to accomplishing this task. Socrates thus implies that the *community* of discourse and dedication to philosophy that he has left behind is critical to developing the proper, philosophical mode of life, and stance toward fear and other emotions.

inability to follow-through on decisions that we were *certain* we would stick to. For example, I might decide “once and for all” to quit smoking while in my home, surrounded by influences which make concern for my health the salient “frame” through which the choiceworthiness of smoking appears slight; thus, the λόγος that tells me that health is the most important thing, and that I must not smoke, will win the day; however, once I go out to a bar, and another “frame” is operative, the λόγος that says “life is short, have fun, we all die sometime” might take precedence. It is to the *techne* of *harmonizing* such λόγοι that Socrates now turns.

2.2.3 The Second Sailing and The Good

It is important to my interpretation that Socrates’ second sailing continues to reveal the being of beings in light of the *good* (of those beings). However, there are strong reasons to doubt this; that is, there are indications within the text that in turning away from Anaxagoras’ teleology, Socrates has turned away from the connection between the good and being. That is, some commentators argue that there is no sense in which the *good* can be said to be determinative of the *cause* that Socrates is seeking with his second sailing.³⁷⁷ I will argue that while turning to the second sailing *is* turning away from one way of *revealing* the good of beings – specifically, by conceiving of that good as answering directly to human conceptions of the good – Socrates is still ‘sailing’ in the same direction; that is, Socrates is still uncovering the truth of beings by revealing how they strive. I will show that this striving (as I argued in Chapter 5) necessitates an

³⁷⁷ Cf Gonzalez 1998, p 192, Tait 1986, p 457, Rowe 1993, p 238-239, Vlastos 1969, et al.

understanding of the *good* of that being; that is, to turn to the λόγοι to uncover the truth of beings is to reveal them as striving toward their *own* good. This good does not always answer to what *we* think is best.

Francisco Gonzalez takes any such claim that Socrates maintains a focus on the good to indicate that Socrates is still seeking specifically *Anaxagorean* teleology as an explanation for the cause of anything. He cites Dave Wiggins as an example of someone who claims that, as Gonzalez phrases it, Socrates seeks the “same teleological explanation he found lacking in Anaxagoras.”³⁷⁸ Gonzalez says that he finds this “extremely implausible,” *since*: “After this point in the text Socrates does not refer to teleological explanations again.”³⁷⁹

Thus, in order to counter Gonzalez, I will have to show 2 things: 1. It is not the case that connecting the good with determining the truth of beings is the same as returning to the “same teleology” he found lacking in Anaxagoras, and 2. In his explanation of the forms as causes, Socrates is, in fact, showing how he is still committed to revealing the truth of beings *in light of the good*.

The first task is easy, and has already been accomplished: beings become manifest in light of *striving* toward the good. To understand a *human* being is, as we have seen, to see that we are faced with a being operating on, and defined by, a conception of what is *best*. In our reading of the *Meno*, we encountered the familiar Socratic claim: All people seek the good.³⁸⁰ All people, insofar as they act, are acting toward a goal which is, in their opinion, the best possible course – just as Socrates is in sitting in prison, and just

³⁷⁸ Gonzalez 1998, p 351, note 3, citing Wiggins 1986.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. See the criticism of Wiggins in Rowe 1993b.

³⁸⁰ This insight is usually connected to the “Socratic Paradox” that no one does evil willingly; this “denial of *akrasia*,” as it is usually understood, is commonly connected to the claims that virtue is knowledge, and all virtues are one. I will turn to these in the next Chapter.

as the Athenians were when they voted to convict him. Thus, to reveal the being of a human being is to understand that being in light of the good for which they strive. Thus, to know the *self* is to examine the conceptions of the good which guide our actions (and, in finding them to be initially multiple and in conflict with themselves, to seek *harmony*, as I will argue in the next Chapter).

In Chapter 5 (§2.4 and §2.5) I showed that to understand *any* being is to “sense that it strives.” Beings are not self-enclosed atomic entities, but are rather discovered to be shot through with interrelation, and understandable only on the basis of an act of soul which identifies the *unity* of the being in question; that unity is determined in an *act* of *naming* which, in determining the “being and benefit” (that is, the being and *good*), identifies the bundle of perceptions as participating in a *form*. To identify a bow is not to see the wood and the string, but to see the bow as a harmonious unified whole which arises out of the physical parts; that harmonious unity is the *cause* of that being. Thus, we see that to identify the being and benefit of a harmonious whole is to identify the *form* of what we encounter, and this activity necessarily determines the form (the bow) in terms of the *good* of that being, that is, in terms of that which it strives toward (the ability to fire arrows). *To identify the good of a being is to give a formal account of the cause of the being.*

Thus, we see that we have also answered the second point we needed to resist Gonzalez’s claim that Socrates turns away from the good: To give an account of the cause of a phenomena in terms of form *is* to identify the unity of a being (or situation) in light of the *good* of that being. As Russon argues: “. . . in putting form in the proper position in the recollection account, we also found that we were operating in the space of

the good; that is, we found comparison – the recognition of equality – to be the invoking of the good as the highest cause.”³⁸¹ We add that the act of the soul which draws *anything* into an intelligible unity in terms of a form does so by invoking the good – that for which the being strives – as highest cause. Thus, *whether we are right or wrong in our assessment*, when we perceive a being and claim to understand it, we invoke a *value* relative to the thing we perceive, through which we understand the “being and benefit” of the being. That is, we do not invoke “the good *as such*, but some good relative to the things compared” or, a value relative to our comparison of the thing to that for which it strives (and necessarily falls short).³⁸² This good *of the being in question*, is not the good as such, and our determination of the value can be in error; nevertheless, the *necessity* of identifying the good for which a particular being strives shows that this activity of the soul happens in terms of *our conception* of the good of that being. “But to be able to recognize any good. . . depends on being able to operate with the very notion of goodness. Differing is thus possible only in light of the good. The good, we might say, is the ultimate defining form for all differences, for it is the ground of the possibility of differences as such.”³⁸³ It is only in light of the good, of revealing beings as striving, that the soul is able to determine the unity, and thus delimit ‘this’ being from all other beings.³⁸⁴ To turn to the *λόγοι* through which we present to ourselves the being and

³⁸¹ Russon 2000, p 78.

³⁸² Russon 2000, p 79.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ As I argued in Chapter 5, it would be necessary to turn to the *Theaetetus* to delve deeper into how *delimiting* beings, and thus *difference*, is essential to determining their “being and benefit.” At *Theaetetus* 208cff, Socrates tests the hypothesis that to give a *λόγος* is “to have some sign to say by means of which that which is asked about *differs* from all things.” As Russon argues: “The determinateness of determinateness is precisely how, as a specific *not*, this one differing makes out that from which it differs – both its finite others and the values it invokes with which it is not identical. Any determinateness can thus only exist in a double harmonious tension. It is at odds

benefit of the beings we encounter is to turn to the activity of the soul in light of the good – that is, in the light both of 1. the good which we conceive as the best state (arete) of this particular being (including human being, and our own selves) and 2. the good itself. The manifestness of beings, as described in the second sailing as occurring through the power of λόγος, *could not happen except in the light of the good.*

Thus, we see that Gonzalez was wrong on both points: 1. Socrates does abandon *Anaxagorean* teleology, but does not turn away from the good, and 2. Socrates' insistence on the form as cause is *precisely* an insistence that we understand any phenomena as *striving*, and thus as accessible only in light of the good. Socrates turns to the λόγοι in order to discover the good of beings; it was not looking to the good of beings, to how they strive, that failed Socrates. The danger of blinding, and the failing wind, was the failure of the attempt to determine the good of beings *without the explicit recognition of the mediation of λόγος*. Socrates seeks to understand the formal cause of phenomena *through* the λόγοι, and as such maintains an insistence on the connection between the good and being – indeed it is *precisely* for this reason that Anaxagoras' claim that “Mind is cause” was so enticing to young Socrates.

Obviously, the connection between the good and being is an enormous and complicated issue. It is my opinion that a full explication of the relation in Plato must go beyond a study of the *Phaedo* – specifically, to the *Republic*. Gonzalez hints at this position as well; even as he claims that Socrates turns away from the good as cause, he

with others from which it cannot separate its identity. It is at odds with a value it itself projects. To be a determinateness is to be a striving – a striving to be *this* and not *that*, and this striving to be *not that* is thus a pursuit of itself, which means that it projects a good in terms of which it is to be measured – what Aristotle would call its *telos*.” (2000, p 79)

says: “An understanding of how the good might be the cause of mathematical truth must wait until the discussion of the *Republic*. . .”³⁸⁵ One path deeper into this issue would be to follow Sallis’ interpretation of the image of the eclipsed sun in the *Phaedo* as drawing attention to the “light” in which beings become manifest.³⁸⁶ He connects this to his analysis of the sun image in the *Republic*, which is, of course, an image for the *good*.³⁸⁷ Specifically, we would be able to draw out more on the connection between unity – i.e. the whole that is the object of knowledge made manifest in light of the good – and the good by attending to Sallis’ claim that “there is reason to call the good also the one.”³⁸⁸ Sallis says: “. . .once we recognize that the good is the one, then, we can begin to understand how it is related to being and truth; that is, *what it has to do with the mode of showing in which something can show itself as one*. . .the coming forth of such an image

³⁸⁵ 1998, p 192. Gonzalez argues against any claim that “teleology” is at work in the second sailing, and thus claims clearly that “Though the good is introduced as a form at 100b6 and is therefore one of Socrates’ new *aitiai*, it is given no prominence over the other forms.” (1996, p 351, note 3) However, he *also* seems to understand the validity of my point that revealing the good of the being is central to revealing the being of the being. He states: “Perception of a thing reveals only its physical parts; in this way, however, perception *blinds us to the good that defines the thing and gives it its unity*.” (1996, p 195) While I do not know how to reconcile these two claims in his work, it seems that *perhaps I have stated his position too strongly*, and he should be credited with recognizing the importance of the good to revealing the truth of beings in the second sailing. He continues: “By now taking refuge in propositions, Socrates will avoid being blinded by the senses and thus will be better able to see the good that is eclipsed in physical objects.” (ibid.) Gonzalez’ excellent analysis thus reveals the central connection between the *good* and *unity*, as evidenced in the second quote above. However, his stance toward *perception* is still caught within the traditions of Platonism. I hope to have shown that the *Phaedo* (in light of the *Theaetetus*) argues for a richer conception of perception in which the *unity* of any being, or any situation (such as a situation of comparison, in which we might judge two things a ‘equal’) also involves an active conception of the *good* of the beings/πράγματα. Thus, Socrates is not in danger of being “blinded by the senses,” as Gonzalez claims, nor is the good “eclipsed in physical objects.” Rather, it is certain *mode of discourse* which turns to materialistic understanding of beings, and which takes sensory experience to be pure passive reception of truth, rather than recognizing the activity of the soul in constituting the unity of “physical objects,” and thus unaware of the mediation of λόγος, which threatens blindness.

³⁸⁶ 1996, p 40ff.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 402ff.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., p 410-411.

(of the good, of the one) is identical with something showing itself as one, which, in turn, amounts to its standing in truth, i.e., being knowable, i.e., having being conferred on it. Thus the good confers being and truth, i.e., confers a showing in which things can show themselves as one. . . ³⁸⁹ Of course, I take Sallis' excellent analysis of these images to lack a sufficient account of the place of the *soul* in this constellation – a lack which I hope to have, in part, filled in this dissertation by noting the way the activity of the soul is implicated in the space in which this making-manifest occurs. Again, we can see why “mind as cause” fascinated young Socrates. As Russon says:

Our argument shows that what *is* is a field of differences striving after their own goods, where this striving takes the form of a struggle for place within this field – a mutual opposing which is inseparable from a striving after mutual recognition – and this field is the field *of the human psyche itself*: For us, to be is to be recognizing this differing, this striving. Our soul differs – is determinate – as the ability to differ from the whole sphere of differences *as differences*. It is our soul which is the space of universal differing – the *chora* – or, as Aristotle says of mind (which he describes as Timaeus describes the *chora*) the place of all forms. Mind is the cause of all things being able to be what they are, because it is the space of recognition – the space of comparison in terms of forms, that is, in terms of the good as such.³⁹⁰

Thus, as I have argued from the beginning, to understand the transcendence of the forms it is necessary first to articulate this power of the soul as the *cause* of the determinateness of all beings.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p 411.

³⁹⁰ Russon 2000, p 80.

Chapter 8

Forms and Participation

§1 Harmony

We have seen that the internal multiplicity in the self – that which gives rise to “all factions and strife and wars” – is far more complex than speaking in terms of an opposition between soul and body, or in terms of a tri-partite soul, can explain. By a close reading of the second sailing, we see that these different accounts of multiplicity arise from the different λόγοι in which we present ourselves to ourselves, and attempt to come to grips with our own cognitive dissonance and inner conflict. One source of the multiplicity in our own souls is the multiple λόγοι which have a “wondrous hold” on us – in addition to discernible *powers* of the soul, which are not seriously discussed in the *Phaedo*. We will, then, never be able to develop a unified, harmonious condition out of which to act unless we engage in the philosophical process of harmonizing these λόγοι. Unfortunately, while Socrates’ call for this harmony is clear, the “method,” if it is such, is anything but.

Beginning his account of his “randomly smushed together” method, Socrates says he “on each occasion puts down as hypothesis whatever account I judge to be mightiest (ἐρροωμενέστατον); and whatever seems to me to be consonant (συμφωνεῖν) with this, I put down as being true, both about cause and about all the rest, while what isn’t I put

down as not true.” (100a) Socrates rightly assumes that Cebes will not have understood him, saying “right now I think you do not understand.” (ibid.) When Cebes agrees that he is not following, Socrates makes a strange move that has generated a considerable amount of debate: He begins to speak of the forms. Without immediately clarifying how his talk of the forms is related to the turn to the λόγος, nor to the method of hypothesis, Socrates returns to speaking about the “cause” of things; he says “all I mean is this – nothing new but the very thing I’ve never stopped talking about at other times and in the account (λόγος) that’s just occurred as well.” (100b) He says he will return to the “much babbled about” forms and begin from them. (ibid.) Is the existence of the forms, then, merely a hypothesis? Does Socrates use the theory of the forms to convince Cebes because Cebes has already assented to the existence of the forms? Or is there a necessary connection between the method of hypothesis and explaining generation and corruption with reference to the forms?

1.1 Method and Confusion

There is endless debate in the secondary literature about how the harmonization of λόγοι that Socrates has called for here can explain generation and corruption – if that is, in fact, its goal – and about precisely what *procedure* Socrates is calling for in these passages. This confusion arises from a simple fact: *The text is not at all clear about what the procedure is, and how it is supposed to explain the cause of coming to be and passing away.* I will argue, briefly, that the text gives us strong reason to believe that, in fact, *Plato does not want us to accept the presentation of the “Theory of the Forms” in the*

Phaedo as given, nor as a solution to issues of causation. To fully accomplish this exegesis would take a considerable effort, and literally thousands of pages have been spent working through the details of this section of the dialogue (100a-107a).³⁹¹ I will here give only a brief and cursory account of the confusions that have arisen in order to give some idea of how difficult these passages are; then I will show that one reason commentators have been unable to discover clear instructions for a philosophical “method,” in the modern analytical sense, is that this is not the intention of the passage.³⁹²

³⁹¹ There is lack of clarity at every stage of the argument, and I hope I can be forgiven for not performing the textual exegesis necessary to articulate Plato’s intent here. As Klein puts it : “The ‘demonstration’ he offers resembles indeed a most intricate maze.” (1965, p 136) Ronna Burger also does a good job of working through many of these problems, and articulating the lack of clarity (1984, Chapters 11 and 12). I agree with most of her conclusions. There is also an excellent discussion in Gonzalez, 1998, p 195ff, which focuses on the “methodological” concerns that I am not giving sufficient attention to here. See also Dorter 1982. The variety and breath of the interpretations in the secondary texts that I will be working from further testify to the depth of confusion these passages give rise to. Cf Gentzler: “There is much that is mysterious about Socrates’ description of the first two steps of the hypothetical method in the *Phaedo*.” (1991, p 166) Cf Tait 1986: “For in my opinion there is no way to read the text that is compatible with this view of the role of the doctrine of Forms in the method and the attempt to do so has led to a variety of disparate readings.” (p 456) Cf Sharma 2009: “Yet as to what precisely is going on in the passage, there has been considerable disagreement. And although scholarly dispute is often a source of interpretative riches, the lack of agreement here extends, quite remarkably, even to the broadest outlines of an adequate interpretation.” (p 137)

³⁹² Hubby, after arguing that commentators have been wrong to work so hard to derive a method from these passages, since, she argues, no such method is provided from 99d-102a, says: “What then has Plato been trying to do in this passage? If we think he is saying something of profound importance about logical method, we have to admit that he is saying it badly. But it is probably a mistake to suppose that Plato at this stage at any rate had a clear concept of method in the abstract.” (1959 p 14) Cf Bluck: “. . . the passage as a whole cannot be primarily concerned with general logic, for it would be irrelevant to its context if its theme were not the causes of generation and decay.” (1955, p 103) However, it seems that Socrates has dropped any talk of generation and corruption, and is only speaking about the cause of the *being* of anything, no longer concerned with matters of becoming. Cebes fails to notice this transition, and so it is not commented on. Sayre disagrees, arguing that there is a clear method being described: “if we think of the relationship of agreement at 100a as holding between convertible propositions, then the difficulties. . . disappear, and Socrates’ comments on method become perfectly lucid” (1994, p 21) Bedu-Addo counters, saying “But surely propositions like ‘Participation in Beauty is the cause of beautiful things’ and ‘Participation in Duality is the cause of two’ which accord with Socrates’ ‘safe hypothesis’ can hardly be said to be mutually deducible, or convertible.” (1969, p 130) Robinson laments: “Plato’s methodology in the *Phaedo* is at variance with his epistemology as stated in the *Republic*” (1953, p 146) Robinson, unfortunately, does not conclude that neither

These commentators generally make the mistake of removing this passage from the context of the dialogue as a whole; they fail to see that this is advice given on a specific occasion to specific interlocutors, and thus is not intended as advice for all philosophizing everywhere. Further, by being attached to a concept of “method” which has no place in Greek philosophy, commentators have been approaching these passages in the wrong way.³⁹³ Specifically, I argue that almost all of these commentators have mistaken the nature of λόγος by taking Socrates’ comments to be about harmonization between *arguments* – and thus, have taken the passage to provide an (erroneous) system of “logic.” They have failed to place these comments in the proper context of the dialogue, and have not taken proper consideration of the ethical and psychological importance of harmonization. Considering that Socrates has called this argument the “husband” of Simmias’ λόγος which, immediately preceding this section of the dialogue,

of these accounts are to be taken at face value without critical assessment; rather, he assumes Plato was in earnest at both times, and changed his mind about the best philosophical “method.” His basic argument, contra many of other commentators, is that the method of hypothesis is introduced *not* as a general method, but rather *specifically* to prove the immortality of the soul. Unfortunately, having discovered that fact, he does not assume that Socrates is using it to convince a specific interlocutor of a specific conclusion; rather, he assumes that *Plato* is employing this method to *prove* a conclusion that he actually believes. (ibid. p 134)

³⁹³ Plass, for example, is so confused by the inconsistencies of the argument that he assumes Plato was himself confused. He is unable to discern any reason that these inconsistencies would have been intentional on Plato’s part – since that would imply that Plato *wanted* his readers to be critical of the theory of forms. Thus, he implies that the *Phaedo* was the product of a thinker uncertain of himself, and of a youth trying to find his way in philosophy. He argues: “Most of the problems of interpretation stem from the conflict between the apparently precise statement of method with its emphasis upon a hypothetical proposition and the much greater looseness of Socrates’ practice, even in the argument which he cites as an example. The simplest explanation of this conflict can be found in Plato’s continuous philosophic development. He wrote the *Phaedo* at a time of transition from the earlier dialogues which are probably accurate reflections of Socrates’ views to the later dialogues which advance and develop Plato’s own more clearly defined views. Method was all-important to Socrates, and Plato was still looking in two directions when he handled the problems raised in the *Phaedo*: in the statement of method he attempts to formulate Socrates’ somewhat formless procedures and at the same time he has an eye on his own definite commitment to the theory of Forms upon which much of his argument depends. (1960, p 114)

treated the *soul* as a *harmony*, it is startling how few commentators have inquired into this connection. Preferring to treat this λόγος in isolation, as an account of logical method – and then finding it lacking – they fail to ask what connection might exist between the harmonization of λόγοι and the harmony within the soul that Socrates frequently calls for in the dialogues as a call to *ethical life*³⁹⁴ – including his use of this image in this dialogue immediately preceding this section. In their defense, commentators are right to find fault with the logic of Socrates’ arguments in this section. The problem is, since Socrates calls upon the “much babbled about” *forms*, which they take as a matter of dogma to be the heart of Plato’s “doctrine,” commentators almost universally assume that in these passages we find an accurate account of Plato’s own thought, however faulty at the time of the writing of the dialogue. How can we take any argument which uses the existence of the forms as a hypothesis to be ironic? I will briefly show that attention to the dialogue *as a whole* reveals these arguments to be *intentionally* incomplete.

The first problem in these readings is that they operate on unexamined assumptions:

1. They assume that Plato believes in the immortality of the soul, and 2. They assume that Plato believed in “the forms,” without being critical enough about what this belief means,

³⁹⁴ As yet another example, see the *Laches* 188d. In describing how he might be thought to be a *misologue*, Laches says: “Whenever I hear a man discussing virtue or some kind of wisdom, , then if he really is a man and worthy of the words he utters, I am completely delighted to see the appropriateness and harmony existing between the speaker and his words. Such a man is exactly what I understand by “musical,”—he has tuned himself with the fairest harmony, not that of a lyre or other entertaining instrument, but has made a true concord of his own life between his words and his deeds, not in the Ionian, no, nor in the Phrygian nor in the Lydian, but simply in the Dorian mode, which is the sole Hellenic harmony. Such a man makes me rejoice.” (188d) As Burnet notes: “The different modes or scales in Greek music were associated with different moral feelings. The Dorian was most favored, as having a manly, stately character: the Ionian was more passionate and contentious. The Phrygian and Lydian were foreign modes, on the character of which there were various opinions.” Cf. *Rep.* 398-399.

what the εἶδει actually are, and what their relation to particulars is. As such, they assume that, since this is Plato's "final word" on the soul in the dialogue, and since the argument uses the existence of the forms as a hypothesis, the argument must have been intended as valid proof.³⁹⁵ However, there are many indications within the text that place this in doubt, as I will argue below. Before turning to these, I will give a short account of some of the major points of disagreement in the literature to give an idea of the multiplicity of confusions arising from this passage.

Commentators have had special trouble with Socrates' suggestion that the consequences of a hypothesis can be dissonant with one another. (101a) That is, if Socrates is describing a method of deducing results from a hypothesis, unless the deduction is logically invalid, all consequences deduced will necessarily be in agreement. Secondly, it is not clear why we should take any proposition which is simply "consonant" and thus logically consistent with our hypothesis as true. As Gonzalez puts it, simply because "The moon is made of green cheese" is not logically inconsistent with "Virtue is

³⁹⁵ Bedu-Addo, in his influential paper on this section of the dialogue, claims that "Plato undoubtedly regarded" the final argument for the immortality of the soul "as the most satisfactory and convincing." (1969, p 111). Cf Hackforth, "Surely the purpose of the method is to establish the truth of a single proposition: in the example, the proposition that the soul is immortal." (1955, p 139). Bedu-Addo, however, feels that the hypothetical method *is not designed to prove the immortality of the soul*: "That is to say, the method which Socrates is describing here as his 'second voyage' in search of the cause of generation, existence and destruction is the method whereby he attained knowledge of that cause; it is not a process of proof. Indeed, the proof of the immortality of the soul which immediately follows Socrates' description of the hypothetical method (102a-107a) is not really an illustration of the hypothetical method; it is rather meant to be seen as a proof based on knowledge of the cause of generation, existence and destruction attained by means of the hypothetical method." (1969, p 119) However, startlingly, Bedu-Addo does not make it clear *how* he thinks reference to the forms "solves the puzzling problems of generation, existence and destruction." (ibid) He is right that the interlocutors agree that it is solved, but he does not make it clear why that agreement should be sufficient to make us draw conclusions about the actual sufficiency of Socrates' argument, and certainly not about Plato's own belief about the sufficiency of this "method." I think it is clear that this "safe but stupid" method, as Socrates explicitly calls it, certainly cannot explain generation and corruption.

knowledge” doesn’t make it true.³⁹⁶ Robinson famously suggests that Socrates might thus be referring to logical *entailment*; any proposition that is logically entailed by our hypothesis must be taken to be true.³⁹⁷ However, this interpretation has problems of its own, as Robinson himself points out. Specifically, he argues that Socrates would have to then mean that anything which is *not* entailed by our hypothesis is assumed to be untrue, as Socrates says, so he can’t mean “entailment” after all.³⁹⁸ Bostock simply concludes, as a result of this necessary confusion (when this statement is taken as an account of a logical method), that it is “a slip on Socrates’ part” to talk of agreement.³⁹⁹ Sayre concludes that Plato was unable to distinguish between the appropriate methods for

³⁹⁶ 1998, p 196.

³⁹⁷ 1953, p 134ff.

³⁹⁸ “It has often been suggested that Socrates' statement of the method here involves a logical impossibility, for the notion that a hypothesis can itself entail consequences that contradict one another is logically absurd, since any propositions that follow from a given proposition are necessarily consistent with one another.” (Bedu-Addo, 1969, p 120). Cf Vlastos 1969. See also Plass 1960: “It seems either high-handed or naive simply to reject as false whatever disagrees with your proposition and accept as true whatever agrees with it. In so bald a form such a procedure is neither method nor meaningful dialogue. . . ‘Agreement’ and ‘disagreement’ are similarly broad in meaning. Propositions shown to be true are commonly in agreement with the initial proposition, but often not specifically with it as 100a implies, since Socrates often refers to the entire argument as the basis of proof. Each step of the argument is also “in agreement” and true (though not the object of proof) through its admission by the interlocutor. “Agreement” means “fits into”, “is agreeable”; it is a matter of consistency rather than of strict inference.” (p 110). Cf Genzler: ““To be consistent with” seems to be the most natural reading of συμφωνεῖν. However, it is unlikely that Socrates would advocate, even in a “second best” method, that we posit as true all propositions that seem to us to be consistent with our hypothesis.” (1991, p 266) Robinson argues that “a hypothesis as complicated as the Theory of Forms it could reasonably be expected to reveal any hidden contradiction in this way.” (1953, p 14) Thus, he assumes that the hypothetical method is not supposed to apply to hypotheses in general, but only to the specific hypothesis Socrates speaks of in this passage. Gonzalez 1998 has a good discussion of the problems and various interpretations of this passage (p 196-199 and notes). See also Bailey 2005, who gives a persuasive argument that “we should take the musical connotations of the term [συμφωνεῖν] seriously, and that Plato was thinking of a robust analogy between the way pitches form unities when related by certain intervals, and the way theoretical claims form unities when related by explanatory co-dependence.” (p 95) Pointing to the difficulty of interpreting this passage, Bailey states: “. . . it seems that we must either impute an ambiguity to his use of συμφωνεῖν, or give him a lunatic methodology that no one could possibly follow.” (p 96)

³⁹⁹ 1986, p 162ff.

mathematics and philosophy.⁴⁰⁰ What, then, does Socrates have in mind when he suggests this procedure of testing the coherence of the conclusions of a hypothesis?⁴⁰¹

Connected to this problem is the issue of whether or not examining the things that “spring forth from that hypothesis” is supposed to be a test of the hypothesis itself; how is an examination of the consequences of something we assume to be true supposed to help us discern if that hypothesis itself is true?⁴⁰² Bedu-Addo suggests that: “The retention of Socrates' initial hypothesis will depend on how successfully it is considered to have explained particular cases of generation existence and destruction in comparison with other explanations that are not consistent with his hypothesis. The procedure is, in effect, a test of the hypothesis.”⁴⁰³ Thus, he suggests that we take Socrates to allow for the philosopher to check the results of a hypothesis against empirical results; if the hypothesis makes a *prediction*, and that prediction does not come true, then this counts as a refutation of the hypothesis. Thus, examining the conclusions deducible from the hypothesis is not a test in itself, but rather allows for specific predications to be made

⁴⁰⁰ 1983, p 196.

⁴⁰¹ At 436d in the *Cratylus*, speaking of the “method of hypothesis” as used in “geometrical constructions.” Socrates says that even if all the consequences of a hypothesis are consistent with each other and with the hypothesis itself, they may still be false if the hypothesis itself is false: “That’s why every man must think a lot about the first principles of anything and investigate them thoroughly to see whether or not it’s correct to assume them.” (436d) At 533c in the *Republic*, Socrates asks: “For where the beginning is something one does not know, and the conclusion and all that intervenes are constructed out of what one does not know what contrivance is there for ever turning such an *agreement* into knowledge?” (533c, emphasis added) Clearly, since the hypothesis of the forms is *not* adequately proven, but simply *agreed* upon by Cebes, we have reason to doubt its conclusions, and further, to suspect that Socrates is being ironic in saying that this method has reached truth. Cf Nehamas 1973.

⁴⁰² Sternfield and Zyskin argue that hypothetical arguments “are not grounded in the nature of things.” (1977, p 56)

⁴⁰³ 1969, p 117.

such that the hypothesis can be tested against experience.⁴⁰⁴

Another question on which there has been little agreement is whether or not Socrates intends his ‘method’ specifically for agonistic eristics. Many commentators have assumed that Socrates is specifically presenting the method of hypothesis as a technique for dealing with challenges to one’s beliefs. Some have gone so far as to assume that the manuscripts are in error, and substitute ἔφοιτο for ἔχοιτο at 101d.⁴⁰⁵ Others simply

⁴⁰⁴ Bedu-Addo argues: “That this is what Plato has in mind is indicated by the fact that when he makes Socrates undertake to explain this statement more clearly (100b-c), what he does is to make him state his general explanation of the cause of generation, existence and destruction, namely, the theory of Forms, and then proceed to posit as true the explanations of particular cases of generation, existence and destruction which are consistent with it, and as false those that are not consistent with it, namely, all mechanistic explanations of generation, existence and destruction. (100c-101c) Here, Socrates seems clearly to consider that whereas the applications of his principle to particular cases are consistently tenable, the corresponding explanations of the physicists lead to conflicting consequences.” (1969, p 117). Cf Hare, who says that this: “may show (however reluctant Plato would have been to admit it) that there is after all an empirical element in the elenchus: are we not in practicing it looking for possible falsifications of the empirical hypothesis that, in their ordinary discourse, people use a word in a certain way.” (1965, p 34) It seems odd to draw this conclusion from the *Phaedo*, and then claim that Plato would have been reluctant to admit it, especially given the importance of sensory experience in the recollecting equality. We will find that their suggestion here – while it does not sound much like traditional Platonism, and is seemingly in tension with Socrates’ claim that we turn away from the senses in the second sailing – is attested by the 7th letter at 344b. Robinson disagrees that the hypothesis is intended to be falsified: “To Plato an hypothesis was primarily a premiss and not a demonstrand, a proposition posited in order to prove something else and not in order to be established or refuted. The original statement of the method makes the hypothesis unequivocally a premiss (100a). The employment of the method in the dialogue is equally unequivocal. The hypothesis chosen is the theory of Ideas. There is no question of testing or recommending this theory in any way; but it is used as a premiss for inferring another proposition, namely that the soul is immortal. . .” (Robinson 1953, p 134) Cornford disagrees that testing against sensory experience is referred to in this text, claiming that “the fact that sensible experience may be the occasion of Recollection is lost sight of.” (1957, p 6) Bluck 1955, p 149, disagrees. Dorter argues that the hypothetical method does not allow us to rise above the confusions of everyday experience. (1982, p 134) Cf. Gonzalez 1998, p 176-177.

⁴⁰⁵ For a discussion of this debate, see Byrd 2007, p 146-147. Byrd disagrees with the change, first proposed by Madvig. Burnet, Gallop, Bluck and Hackforth agree with her, myself, and the translators of the edition I am using – Brann, Kalkavage and Salem – in taking the verb in its usual sense of “hold to.” Burger 1984, surprisingly, disagrees.

translate ἔχουτο as “to attack” rather than its far-more-common “to hold to.”⁴⁰⁶

As a result of not agreeing on these points, it is not surprising that the commentary leaves it unclear what is to be understood by the ‘upward way’ of testing the hypotheses until something ‘adequate’ is reached. Some assume that the final, sufficient stopping place Socrates speaks of is the good; others say that there is no evidence for this, and that the method in the *Republic* is substantially different from that sketched in the *Phaedo*, and so their highest goals should not be assumed to be the same.⁴⁰⁷

I argue that the failure of this method is not confined simply to a lack of clarity in its method; the hypothetical method fails by not giving us adequate *understanding* of the

⁴⁰⁶ Bedu-Addo argues: “The view that the ‘upward path’ described here is for the benefit of the ‘objector’ or the ‘outsider’ is untenable if only because on this view ‘drawing the consequences of an hypothesis to see whether they accord with one another or not’, becomes necessary only when the initial hypothesis is ‘attacked’. Surely, Plato is only using the language of the ‘dialectical process of questioning and answering’ (Phd. 75d); and ‘objectors’ are not ruled out in the description of dialectic in the *Republic* either.” (1969, p 131) Byrd says: “Despite these apparent similarities between the two methods, though, some argue that the method of hypothesis is separate from and inferior to dialectic. Recall that the main objections here are twofold: (a) the adequate stopping point in the two dialogues is different, and (b) the method of hypothesis is, unlike dialectic, a *deuteros plous* often translated as ‘second best’. According to proponents of (a), the ‘higher’ hypothesis is merely a hypothesis adequate to meet an opponent’s challenge. Richard Robinson, for example, argues that the passage concerns someone objecting to your hypothesis; thus ‘adequate’ *can only mean adequate to satisfy the critic*.” (2007, p 145, emphasis added) She argues that the method in the *Republic* and that in the *Phaedo* “mirror” one another. In agreement with her are Gulley 1986, and Hackforth 1955. Gallop 1999, and others, disagree.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf Bedu-Addo: “I shall argue that the widely accepted view that the *anhypothetos arche* reached at the end of every dialectical enquiry is the Good or a proposition about the Good, is mistaken.” (1969, p 131) See also Sayre 1983, p 46 ff. Gonzalez 1998 has a good discussion of the confusions in this “upward path.” (p 198ff) Robinson agrees that this sufficient account is the *anhypothetos arche* of the *Republic*. (1953, p 138) Cherniss disagrees, saying there is “every reason” to make this equation. (1947, p 141) Friedlander also claims that there is “hardly anyone” who has not identified the *hikanon* of the *Phaedo* with the *anhypothetos arche* of the *Republic*.” (1945, p 246) Tait agrees with this identification. (1986, p 476) Dorter *disagrees* with the identification. (1983, p 133ff) See also Hackforth 1955. I will speak about the ‘upward path’ briefly below.

forms, or of the soul, or of participation, or of life; what is called for is not deductive logic, but inquiry into these concepts and how they operate in our understanding of our world. Robinson argues that the problem with the hypothetical method is that it cannot prove the hypothesis, only decide what is consonant with it.⁴⁰⁸ Gonzalez argues that the problem is much deeper: “The main problem is that Robinson insists on locating the provisionality of the argument in the form of deduction involved, while Socrates clearly locates it elsewhere, namely, in a failure to examine the *meanings* of the terms used. What the method of hypothesis is lacking is not logical rigor, but *understanding*.”⁴⁰⁹

Rather than trying to sort through these problems (something done adequately by Gonzalez and Burger), I would like simply to point out that there is ample evidence within the text that Plato did not intend for us to take the hypothetical method, nor the hypothesis of the forms, as his central teaching in the *Phaedo*.⁴¹⁰ First of all, we note that the theory of forms has not been proven, but simply agreed upon *explicitly* as a hypothesis – one which Socrates chooses because it is a hypothesis to which Cebes has

⁴⁰⁸ For another account of the problems with the fact that the *Phaedo* fails to ground the theory of forms in anything ‘higher,’ see Byrd 2007, p 151. Cf Robinson (1953, p 135), Ross (1982, p 29), (Rose 1966, p 466), Bluck (1955, p 22). Kenneth Dorter argues that this work is carried out in the *Parmenides*. (1983, p 139) On this point, see also Gallop (199, p 189), Robinson (1953, p 142).

⁴⁰⁹ 1998, p 342, n. 52. Cf Bluck (1955, p 88) Of the problems with Cebes and Simmias’ acceptance of these arguments (102a: “ ‘What you say is very true,’ said Simmias and Cebes together.”), Burger says: “Yet their enthusiasm is suspicious: they have never even asked if the hypothesis of the causality of the eidei is only one illustration among others of the general procedure of hypothetical reasoning, and if not, what the necessary connection between them is.” (1984, p 158)

⁴¹⁰ Much of the belief that Plato took these arguments as conclusive come from Aristotle’s account; cf. Aristotle *On Generation and Corruption* 335b: “But one party has thought the forms sufficient *aitia* of generation, as Socrates says in the *Phaedo*: for he too, after reproaching others for having explained nothing, hypothesizes that some existents are Forms, others participants in the Forms, and that each thing is said to be in virtue of the Form, and to become in virtue of participating [in the Form] and to perish in virtue of shedding [the Form]. Hence, if this is true, he must believe the Forms *aitiai* both of becoming and of perishing.” Cf. also *Metaphysics* 99b3-4: “In the *Phaedo* the matter is put thus: The Forms are *aitiai* both of being and of becoming.”

already affirmed his commitment.⁴¹¹ We further note that Socrates calls for us to re-examine this theory, and *any* hypothetical agreement, at 107b; after Simmias (reluctantly) admits that he still harbors doubts about the immortality of the soul, saying that he “still has some lingering distrust within” himself, Socrates responds: “What you say is good, but also our very first hypotheses – even if to all of you they are trustworthy – must nevertheless be looked into for greater surety.” (ibid.) Simmias expressed uncertainty about the conclusion alone – that the soul is immortal; Socrates asks, as (nearly) his final request, that they extend that doubt to their ‘first hypotheses’; his failure to specify what those ‘first hypotheses’ are serves to extend that doubt to *anything* that they have agreed upon. It seems clear, then, that we are not supposed to simply accept any argument which follows from an untested hypothesis without adequately examining that hypothesis – a process which is not carried out in the *Phaedo* – partly due to the fact that Cebes immediately affirms the existence of the forms without questioning their applicability to the question at hand, despite Socrates’ trying very hard to elicit Cebes’ distrust, as I will

⁴¹¹ Unfortunately, there has been no agreement about the status of this hypothesis. Bluck is so certain that Plato believes the theory of forms to be the highest and most unquestionable truth that he claims the hypothesis *cannot* be the existence of the forms, arguing that if the hypothesis “were indeed the theory of Forms itself, it is impossible to see what the ‘higher’ hypothesis could be by means of which the theory of Forms might have to be explained.” (1955, p 161). Bedu-Addo recognizes that the text makes it clear that any “Theory of the Forms” is presented merely as a hypothesis: “It is important to recognize here that since a hypothesis is an opinion, it does not constitute knowledge, however strong it may be.” (1969, p 114) However, certain in his faith that Socrates subscribes to the explanatory power of the forms, and that therein lies Socrates’ confidence in the face of execution, Bedu-Addo concludes: “Thus we are not supposed to think that Socrates is merely taking for granted the truth of the theory of Forms on which the final proof of the immortality of the soul is based. At this stage the theory of Forms is only an opinion. Socrates believes, or rather thinks he knows that Forms do exist; but for the moment we are to regard his explanation of generation, existence and destruction in terms of the theory of Forms only as an assumption. He chooses the theory of Forms as his strongest λόγος here precisely because (1) the quarry for this particular enquiry is the cause of all generation, existence and destruction, (2) that theory itself has already been shown to the satisfaction of his interlocutors to be plausible by the arguments adduced in support of the theory of recollection (72e-78b).” (ibid.)

show.⁴¹²

1.2 Μέθεξις

The first indication we get that Socrates does not want his interlocutors to take the theory of forms, or the proof, as a dogma without further analysis, comes in Socrates' initial introduction of the hypothesis to Cebes at 100b. Socrates says that he has “never stopped talking about the same thing,” which he calls “the much-babbled-about (πολυθρούλητα)” forms. He says that he has *always* done what he is going to do explicitly with Cebes – that is, he is going to *assume*, to “put down as hypothesis that there's some Beautiful itself by itself, and a Good and a Big and all the others.” (ibid.) This certainly implies that, on his deathbed, Socrates is saying that the forms have always been a hypothesis laid down for further investigation and discovery, and thus not to be taken as doctrine, but rather as something that would need to be grounded in something “higher.” Further, in referring to them as “much-babbled-about,” Socrates implies that there is something lacking in the λόγοι that have been given, by himself and others,

⁴¹² As Gulley puts it: “Plato recognizes... the limitation of the method of hypothesis, and of human argument in general, as a means of establishing with certainty the truth of any postulate.” (1986, p 43). In the *Meno*, for example, the hypothesis chosen by Socrates – that virtue is teachable – is explicitly argued to be false. Cf *Republic* 533c and *Cratylus* 436d, as quoted above. Again, I will unfortunately not be able to discuss all of the positive aspects of this theory, as an account of the theory of forms would take an entire dissertation, and would take us too far afield from our concern with the method of hypothesis *as* advising a harmonious condition of *soul*. As such, I will simply be showing that the argument is presented as questionable, and is not intended to “prove” what it claims. I argue that this method, and this example, are not intended to be taken as Plato's teachings, but rather to have been chosen *specifically* to convince Cebes; in addition to his confessed attachment to the theory of forms, the method of hypothesis, as drawn from geometry, can be expected to appeal to Socrates' Pythagorean audience. Cf Bedu-Addo: “It is clear from the *Meno*, as Bluck sees, that Plato is indebted to the mathematicians ‘for his own conscious practice and development of a ‘hypothetical method’.’ This applies to the search for ‘higher’ hypothesis, i.e. the ‘upward path’ of the method. Socrates' interlocutors, Cebes and Simmias, as well as Echecrates in the ‘outer dialogue’ are all Pythagoreans, and may reasonably be expected to listen to the description of the hypothetical method with a familiar ear.” (1979, p 131) Bedu-Addo cites Bluck. (1955, p 85)

concerning the forms – including in this very dialogue. (65b, 76d, 78c)

I will argue that one of the central ways in which this ‘theory’ has been lacking, and continues to be lacking, is by failing to provide a coherent account of μέθεξις; this is significant because, as I will show, this is precisely the account that would be necessary to finalize the proof of the immortality of the soul. Considering that Plato *explicitly* calls attention to this failing, as I will show, he was obviously aware of the insufficiency of this final argument.⁴¹³

Cebes immediately agrees with the hypothesis, and Socrates says that if anything is beautiful, it is beautiful by participating in the beautiful. The way he expresses this participation makes it clear that the argument is lacking; Socrates says that a beautiful thing is beautiful “by the presence or communion (παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία) with that Beautiful – *or however and in whatever way you say it happens.*” (100d, emphasis added)⁴¹⁴ Socrates compounds this startling admission by saying, “As for that, I don’t yet make any definite assertion. . .” (100d-e) The “yet” is especially troubling given his situation. Earlier in the dialogue, when calling for the development of a τέχνη of λόγος, Socrates expressed concerns that he might “leave his stinger behind,” by convincing his friends of λόγοι that are not true (91c); in this light, he asked them to “give little thought to Socrates and much more to the truth.” (ibid.) In that light, his admission that he makes no assertions *how* forms “cause” particulars, coupled with his insistence that forms are

⁴¹³ Cf Nehamas: “All else apart, this view is vague not only because its theoretical domain (the Forms) is unspecified, but also because the relation connecting Forms and particulars needs to be explained. Plato himself underscores this (100D4-6) : ‘. . . nothing else makes it (viz., a beautiful particular) beautiful but the presence of, or its communion with, or whatever it is that connects it to, that beautiful (viz., the beautiful itself).’ His language shows his uncertainty about that relation.” (1973, p 463)

⁴¹⁴ I am thus disagreeing with Bluck, who claims that the *Phaedo* includes a “full statement of Plato’s theory of Forms.” (1955, p 2)

this cause, is troubling. It is more troubling that most commentators take this account of cause to be Socrates and Plato's final word on the nature of cause, implying that Socrates has, indeed, left his stinger behind in the form of "Platonism."

How are we supposed to think that the beautiful itself by itself causes the beauty of anything beautiful? It *seems* that the cause is not simply the existence of the beautiful itself, but rather *participation* – that is, the bare *existence* of the form is irrelevant unless there is a *causal relation* between the form and any given particular thing which is responsible for the beauty of the particular; as Burger says: "In fact, however, Socrates seems now to have identified the cause of such an attribution not with the *eidos*, but with the relation of "participation."⁴¹⁵ Thus, without an account of μέθεξις, it is premature to claim that the forms "cause" generation and corruption, or being.

Certainly Socrates and Plato want us to consider these questions: What do all beautiful things have in common? What is the nature of beauty? How can it be known? However, in leaving μέθεξις as a "common search," as Aristotle put it in the *Metaphysics*, he clearly did not intend any proof based in the forms as a hypothesis to be taken as dogma.⁴¹⁶

After Simmias and Cebes say together that they take Socrates' arguments to be "very true," (102a) Plato draws us out of the conversation, back into the frame dialogue. As if to highlight the confusion that an attentive reader should be feeling, Plato has Echeocrates say: ". . .it seems to me wonderful (θαυμαστῶς) how lucid (ἐναργῶς) that man made all this – lucid even to someone who didn't have much of a mind (συμκρὸν νοῦν ἔχοντι)!" (ibid.) After Phaedo agrees that everyone understood Socrates perfectly,

⁴¹⁵ 1984, p 149.

⁴¹⁶ Again, for a fuller account of the lack of clarity in Socrates argument, which Cebes misses, see Burger 1984, esp. p 150-160.

he demonstrates the falsity of this claim; Echecrates asks what was said next, and Phaedo is *uncertain*: “This, I think (ἐγὼ οἶμαι).” He then says “it was agreed that each of the forms *was* something, and that everything else that has a share (μεταλαμβάνοντα) in them gets its name from these very things.” (102a-b) Of this summary, Burger notes: “What should presumably constitute the philosophical peak of the dialogue, Phaedo presents as a mere conclusion with no argument in defense, introduced by the qualification ‘I believe.’”⁴¹⁷

Despite these problems, Cebes does not object; Socrates thus concludes that he does not need any of the other “wise” or “sophisticated” (σοφάς) causes (100c). However, having said this, Socrates very soon has recourse to a more “fancy” or “sophisticated” (κομψοτέραν) account of causes;⁴¹⁸ thus, it is unclear how we should understand the status of this early “safe but stupid (ἄμαθῆ)” answer (105c).⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ 1984, p 159-160.

⁴¹⁸ Cf Burger: “Socrates’ refined answer represents an advance in knowledge of cause in the ordinary sense, but only at the price of giving up irrefutability. It assigns a cause that is neither sufficient – since its safety depends upon its essential connection with some independent opposite – nor necessary – since the result it produces might just as well have been produced by some other cause. The argument that prepares for this refined answer has established that fire can be the cause of heat only and not of cold, but it did not and could not have established that fire is the only cause of heat; conversing might just as well be the cause of heat (cf. 63d), or even fever, as Socrates suggests by adding it between his original examples of fire and number.” (1984, p 172)

⁴¹⁹ The more “sophisticated” account has its own trouble. See Vlastos 1969 for a good examination of its many problems. After arguing, convincingly, that this account is confusing and incomplete, and listing the problems with it, Vlastos says: “It is impossible to tell from this passage to what extent Plato was assailed at this time by such doubts. Here, as elsewhere, he has a way of keeping the spotlight of his discourse on just those areas where he is most confident of the answers, content to leave much else in obscurity. This artful chiaroscuro makes life difficult for anyone who tries to expound his thought systematically. Time and again we come across gaps in his thought, not knowing how he would expect us to fill them. This way of writing philosophy is not to be excused, and I have no desire to excuse it. But this much can at least be said for Plato: his silences are themselves suggestive not of confusion but of a canny, self-critical awareness of the limitations of his theory. The problems he persistently declines to discuss in the middle dialogues are those whose solution eludes him. This is conspicuously true in the present case. If Plato had really thought we could syllogize our way the secrets of the natural universe, his confidence in such a fantasy would have been pathetic.” (p 323) I, of course, disagree with this

1.3 The Sophisticated Answer

I will now take a brief look at the “more sophisticated” argument concerning the forms. Again, my goal is not to give an exhaustive account, but merely to show that there are serious problems with the presentation of the hypothesis of the forms which indicate that Plato was aware of the insufficiency of this argument, and thus expected his readers to use his comments to *begin* an inquiry into the nature of the truth of beings, and not to rest content with any supposed answers found in this or any other book.

After drawing us into the frame-dialogue at 102a, Phaedo returns to direct discourse, saying that they agreed that “everything gets its name (ἐπωνυμίας)” by participation in the forms, then reporting that Socrates then asked “whenever you claim Simmias is bigger than Socrates but littler than Phaedo, aren’t you on those occasions asserting that both these things, Bigness and Smallness, are in Simmias?” (102b) In *The Republic* (523aff.) Socrates uses the example of a *finger* that is both big and small to illustrate a similar point; here, he refers to three proper *names* to make his point about how things get their name. Burger writes:

To say that things receive their names from the eidei in which they participate might seem to suggest, as its paradigmatic illustration, the individual person designated by his proper name. The proper name operates like the Athenian λόγος that each year declares the sacred ship, despite its being worn away part by part, to be the very “ship of Theseus”. . . Socrates points out rhetorical power

conclusion; I have shown that Plato was fully aware of these problems, and that he left several hints to the attentive reader such that we would share his doubts. Plato *does not want* us to be able to “expound” *his* thought systematically, but to develop our own. Unfortunately, Vlastos does not turn his remarkable insight into asking *why* Plato would present an intentionally faulty argument, since he seems to assume that Plato was either unaware of these faults, or was attempting to hide them – however, clumsy those attempts must be thought to be.

of the proper name right before he drinks the poison, he tries to comfort Crito by commanding him not to say, as he buries the corpse, that he is burying “Socrates,” for to speak in that way produces terrible effects (115e). By means of this restriction, Socrates hopes to convince Crito of the identification of self with psyche that is unaffected by death and burial; the proper name betrays the pathos that motivate our particular interest in positing the identity of the self that remains the same through all change. But while Socrates chooses Simmias as an example of a pragma, he does not ask in which *eidos* he must participate in order to receive the name Simmias.⁴²⁰

Socrates will go on to argue that “Bigness itself is never willing to be big and small at the same time,” and that “the Bigness in us never abides the Small, nor is it willing to be exceeded.” The problems with this formulation have been well attested; specifically, it is not at all clear that Bigness itself can be either big or small, since it is not a physical entity, as the first claim implies. Secondly, in his account of how the bigness *in us* never “abides” the Small, he claims that Simmias “by submitting his Smallness to the Bigness of the one for that one to exceed it, while supplying his Bigness for the other’s Smallness to be exceeded by it.” (102c-d) This account *clearly* implies that Simmias can only be “named” “big” or “small” based in how his size is “submitted” *by conscious comparison* to another magnitude. Thus, the power of the soul is again implicated in making this “submission.”⁴²¹ If someone that was once called small is to become big, either the

⁴²⁰ 1984, p 161.

⁴²¹ This is a very important passage; unfortunately, it would be necessary to make a lengthy digression into the *Republic* to explicate its full importance. Klein (1965, p 116ff) has an excellent discussion of the passage in the *Republic*. He says that Socrates indicates that while some perceptions have enough clarity such that they do not raise any questions (e.g. “What is a finger?”) others seem perplexing “because ‘opposite’ qualities have been somehow ‘mixed up’ in them. . .” This experience ‘calls our thought,’ since apprehending “‘opposition’ or ‘contradiction’ is the province of *διάνοια*, not of the senses. . .” (ibid.) Our thinking is called to solve the perplexity, and it “removes the confusion, contradiction, or obstacle arising in our perceptions by *distinguishing the relations* in which a finger stands with regard to its neighbor. A finger may be big in relation to its left neighbor and small in relation to its right neighbor. Or, as we read in the *Phaedo* (102b-c), Simmias is tall not by virtue of being Simmias but by virtue of being *taller than* Socrates. . . Simmias is tall and short in different respects. In distinguishing those respects, our thinking, our *διάνοια*, both discriminates between and relates the things under consideration. In

smallness in her has “fled” (φεύγειν) and “gotten out of the way,” (ὑπεκχωρεῖν) or it has been “destroyed (ἀπολωλέναι).” (102e) Unfortunately, Socrates does not explain what “fleeing” or “being destroyed” means in this context, which will be central to his argument for the immortality of the soul.

Notably, Socrates says nothing about how Simmias comes to be called “Simmias,” or “Human,” or “A man.” *Something* must remain constant in order for this comparison to be made, namely, Simmias *himself*. But what is the status of that “himself?” The dialogue has been driving us to ask this question since the first word, and now it appears, once again, that an answer to this question – to the nature of the separation between the self as ψυχή and the body, which we determined to be a *separation in λόγος* – is connected to understanding the transcendence of the forms.

Immediately after giving his account of how we come to be named big or small by submitting our bigness or smallness to comparison, Socrates sheds serious doubt on the completeness of this account by smiling, and saying: “I seem to be even on the verge of book-speak! But it really is pretty much the way I’m describing it.” (102d)

By failing to make a distinction between how we come to have the “name” Big and Small, Sick and Healthy, as opposed to names such as Human or Simmias, Socrates leaves a great deal out of this account of the forms, and of the nature of participation. However, his interlocutors *nearly* pose no questions, nor challenge the completeness of the λόγος. However, one person objects; provocatively, *Phaedo cannot remember his name*. (103a) Socrates has claimed the opposite must “flee” or be “destroyed,” and thus that no contrary can ever become its contrary. The unnamed speaker objects, saying that

the case of a finger, the διάνοια has, first of all, to explore whether its being both big and small means that we are facing something which is ‘one’ or whether it means that we are, for example, facing something which is ‘two.’” (p 116) Also, see Dorter 1982, Burger 1984.

earlier (at 70dff), they had agreed to the opposite conclusion – specifically, that opposites come to be from the opposite, e.g. the living from the dead. Socrates replies easily, saying that one must simply attend to the difference between the forms themselves, and the particulars which participate in them; the particulars come to be from their opposite, but the forms can never do the same.

However, after this easy answer, he turns to Cebes, and asks if anything the interlocutor said troubled him. (103c) Cebes is not troubled, but what did Socrates have in mind with this question? Why did Socrates feel that this argument should have upset him? Without doing an in-depth analysis of the passage, we can see that, once again, that the objection has drawn to the fore the “insufficiency of Phaedo’s summary of the fundamental hypothesis on the *participation* of the pragmata in the eidei.”⁴²²

In any case, it is *seemingly* this objection which causes Socrates to introduce his “more sophisticated” (κομψοτέραν) answer (as Gonzalez argues). Socrates says that not only will hot never admit cold, but fire will never admit cold “while still being fire,” and like cold itself, snow will never admit being hot “while still being snow.” (103c-d) At 104c, he repeats that these “bearers” of the form (as they have come to be called) will either “perish or give way” (ἀπολλύμενα ἢ ὑπεκχωροῦντα) when the contrary eidos “comes at them.” (104b-c) Thus, the presence of fire (and not just the form of heat) can be said to be the cause of something being hot. This reference to fire as cause is an example of Socrates’ more sophisticated answer. Unfortunately, this answer, by turning our attention to particulars as cause, has taken us even further from understanding participation in the forms. As Gonzalez puts it: “We are still postulating between forms

⁴²² Burger 1984, p 165, emphasis added. On this unnamed objector and his λόγος, see also Gonzalez 1998, p 204-205.

and particulars a relation that we do not understand, and we are still speaking of forms without knowledge, but in now using particulars as causes we are less aware of this ignorance than ever.”⁴²³

Without articulating the nature of participation, it is impossible to be fully convinced of Socrates’ final proof. Socrates says that since ψυχή is a bearer of life – just as fire is of heat, and three is of odd – it can never admit death. There is certainly some truth to this: insofar as ψυχή can be understood as the separability, in λόγος, of the life-force of a living body, it makes little sense to speak of the ψυχή “dying;” it is the human being, the ζῶον that dies. However, Socrates has said twice that it might “perish” at the approach of the opposite; it is not as if snow flees and is safe “somewhere” at the approach of heat. (cf 106a) How do we know that soul, at the approach of death, does not suffer the same fate as snow at the approach of heat, as Socrates asks (106c)?

Socrates says they would “need another argument” to prove that the soul did not perish. (106c-d) However, he *immediately* retracts this, saying that they need no other argument since “hardly anything else could fail to admit destruction (φθορὰν μὴ δέχοιτο) if the un-dying (ἀθάνατον), which is everlasting, will admit destruction (φθορὰν δέξεται).” (106d) In this argument, Socrates plays on the terms “death”(θάνατος) “un-dying” (ἀθάνατος), on the one hand, and “destruction” (φθορά), “imperishable” (ἀνώλεθρος), and “perish” (ἀπόλλυμι) on the other. If something is ἀθάνατος, Socrates insists without argument, it cannot experience φθορά, destruction. Cebes says this is true with “great necessity (πολλὴ ἀνάγκη).” (106d) However, the relation between particular and form has been left unthematized; Socrates has further

⁴²³ 1998, p 205.

explicitly said the “bearer” can perish at the approach of the contrary, and has *explicitly not* argued for the position that the bearer of life, since it does not “admit” death (and is thus ἀθάνατος) is therefore also ἀνώλεθρος. Thus, we are left to wonder about the outcome of the argument Socrates fails to give.

Surely fire, as such, is as ἀνώλεθρος as is heat itself; however, any individual instance of fire can be quenched and thus perish. Why is this not also true of soul? Why is it not the case that soul as such is both ἀθάνατος and ἀνώλεθρος, but any individual soul, at the approach of death, is destroyed? Without a clarification of participation, and without more clarity concerning the relation between particular and universal, the introduction of the “bearers” proves merely to be a distraction which hides our ignorance of this relation, as Gonzalez argued, and not a solution to our troubles.

Further, we note that this argument would equally claim that the soul of *any* animal or plant – anything that could said to be “alive” – would be equally immortal; Socrates’ final argument has completely removed the aspect of the ψυχή which links it to *reason*, and has thus reduced ψυχή to a principle of *life* in order to carry off this final argument to Cebes’ satisfaction.

Cebes is convinced, but Simmias is not as certain. (107a-b) Socrates explicitly applauds his mistrust of these (as we have seen, insufficient) arguments, and says “What you say is good, but also our very first hypotheses – even if to all of you they are trustworthy (πιστὰι) – must nevertheless be looked into for greater surety (ἐπισκεπτέαι σαφέστερον).” (107b) Socrates does not make it clear what these “first hypotheses” are, but the most obvious textual reference would be to the assumption that the beings

themselves *are*. In any case, I hope to have shown that the hypothetical method has not led to certainty in the *Phaedo*, and that there is thus some purpose to Socrates' introduction of this method *other* than the desire to prove the immortality of the soul, *or* the existence of the forms (which he simply assumes).

1.4 Harmony of Soul

What these commentators fail to see is how Socrates' call for harmonizing our λόγοι – since it is obviously not intended as a final, thorough account of philosophical method – must be understood in connection to the rest of the dialogue.⁴²⁴ Luckily, understanding that there is an obvious connection between ἁρμονία and συμφωνεῖν, we find that the section of the dialogue immediately preceding the one in question offers us ample clues on an alternate way to understand the call for harmony.⁴²⁵ Specifically, we saw that there, as in many of the dialogues, harmony is explicitly linked to *virtue*. Secondly, as we have seen that the dialogue has raised the issue of unity and multiplicity – part/whole, one/many – we have reason to think that the call for harmony resonates with the concerns of the dialogue.

Thus, we can begin to sketch a *double* connection between harmony and human virtue. First, we have seen that cognitive dissonance is a problem in the dialogue, and has been shown to lead to unethical reactions, and to being governed by emotions rather than

⁴²⁴ For example, Sharma says that, given the *problem* of the confusion and disagreement surrounding the second sailing passage: “Confronting that problem head-on will necessitate a new account of the ‘autobiography’ as a whole.” (2009, p 139) However, even recognizing that a broader textual analysis is necessary to try and work through the confusion evidenced in secondary literature, Sharma fails to interpret these passages in terms of the *Phaedo* as a whole, expanding his analysis only to the autobiography as if it was intended to be read in isolation.

⁴²⁵ On the connection between these terms, see *Cratylus* 405c.

rational, ethical responsiveness to the world. Secondly, we have seen that the characteristic activity of the soul – the defining ἔργον, the excellence of which equates to *human ἀρετή* – is to identify the unitary wholes that are the locus of intelligibility in the world. When the soul is divided against itself – i.e. when the λόγοι through which we gather beings (and situations - πράγματα) into their intelligible unity are multiple and disharmonious – it is difficult to know how to act. The soul pulls in multiple directions because, for example, fleeing the prison and remaining and awaiting your sentence both appear as the best action. Insofar as the soul fails to be harmonious, so too does the world fail to settle into simple intelligibility. *The condition of the soul – as knower*, as the “field” in which differences and determinateness of intelligible πράγματα become manifest – *is reflected in the way the world, the whole, appears*. To call the self into its proper unity is *directly* connected to calling for a recognition of the intelligible *unity* of the whole. It is, again, in this sense that Mind is cause.

1.5 No One Does Wrong Willingly

I will now turn to a *brief* suggestion of how this interpretation of the activity of the soul in the *Phaedo* can help us understand some of the more puzzling things Socrates says about virtue.

As I have repeatedly argued, it is through λόγοι that we gather the world into an intelligible order in which we are *called to act*. Our ethical responsibilities appear against the horizon of our ontology. Everyone has a conception of the good which operates in their lives and is visible in their actions because everyone acts in a more-or-less

intelligible world. It is easy to see that this account makes sense of Socrates' famous "paradoxes" that virtue is knowledge, that no one does wrong willingly, and that all virtues are one.⁴²⁶ If someone performs an action, we know that they (or, as we have seen, at least some part of them) operates on a λόγος that gathers the πράγματα into its intelligibility as a place in which that action is the best – that is, that action is called for and demanded as a rational response to their situation. The "Socratic denial of akrasia" has puzzled commentators because the paradigmatic "ethical situation" which they envisage is one in which an individual stands transfixed before a moral dilemma, rationally puzzling out how to act. For the most part, however, our ethics are revealed in how we go about our days acting largely without such (rather rare) moments of crisis. Our everyday stances toward the world – the way we gather the world into its intelligibility – can be, however, revealed by how we act in what might be incorrectly thought of as "crisis moments"; specifically, by observing our behavior we can see why these crisis moments are so rare.

To use a common example, think of seeing an expensive cell phone left sitting on a table; what *we* would do, perhaps, is call some of the numbers in it, give it to some sort of lost and found, etc. We would *immediately* try and return the phone to its owner – no moral crossroads, it is simply what we would do. When I was working as a bouncer, *several* of my coworkers simply pocketed phones fairly regularly. It wasn't an issue for them either – pocketing the nice phone was simply the reasonable response to such a lucky occurrence. The difference is not how we process the different arguments for and against the actions – no process is necessary. We can begin to speak about class issues,

⁴²⁶ The best analysis of these paradoxes, by far, is Roslyn Weiss' *The Socratic Paradox and Its Enemies*.

and upbringing, but the fact is any route we take to explain this has to begin with the recognition that the response arose naturally from how the world appeared to the individual – for us, the world appears as a place in which a lost phone calls for us to return it without question; for them, the world simply appears as a place in which a lost phone is great luck, and a moment to be celebrated and bragged about.⁴²⁷ To “know” the world in these different ways is to have our actions flow immediately out of that knowledge; to know the good is to do the good; or, what we know as “good” is revealed in what we immediately do; or, in everything we do (as well as in our conception of the world, and of any given πράγματα), a conception of “good” is revealed.

A more striking example would be the startling number of incidences of date rape in fraternities that involve alcohol. For us, coming upon a naked girl unconscious in a room is not an occasion for a moral dilemma – raping an unconscious girl just doesn’t appear as an option, let alone as a temptation. However, as astonishing as it is when we think about it, for thousands and thousands of young men, finding a drunk, unconscious girl is a stroke of luck, and *obviously* the thing to do is take advantage of her. They do not take it as a point of shame, as something to be hidden. They film it, brag to their fraternity brothers about it, and engineer situations such that they can do it again. Astonishing, disgusting, but true. The answer is that these boys live in a *culture of rape*. What has to be addressed is the *λόγοι* through which the world – and specifically, the

⁴²⁷ I also experienced, during this same time period, a situation in which a friend regarded finding a lost iPhone as a moral dilemma. He asked my wife what she thought he should do – return it or keep it. By asking *her* advice, instead of one of his more unscrupulous friends who were plentiful and ready-to-hand, he must already have known what the “right thing” to do was (as Sartre pointed out). His question was about his *commitment* to the right thing vs. the ‘easy’ or irrationally self-interested course. This example shows that finding such situations to be moral dilemmas – and thus finding oneself open to akrasia – *can be* a step from total vice toward virtue, but is certainly not yet fully-developed virtue.

nature of women – appears to these boys in such a way that rape is a rational response to the situation. While it may be a temporary response, teaching boys to withstand the temptation of taking advantage of these girls should not be the final solution; there needs to be an *ontological* shift such that rape is no longer a temptation to be resisted.

This is *not* to say that *akrasia* does not exist; the situation in which the right thing to do *immediately* appears without question is a situation in which our souls are in harmony with themselves, and this is not always the case. As we know from other everyday examples – like resisting the desire to eat chocolate, or call in sick to work when we simply don't want to go – there are *often* situations in which *multiple* courses of action appear as choiceworthy, and *akrasia* appears as a reasonable explanation for the phenomenon.

However, here we have reason to believe that Socrates is offering a different account of the phenomena than the claim “desire is overcoming reason.” Rather, the account here appears to be that *both* ‘appetitive’ and ‘rational’ aspects of ourselves are offering differing *opinions* about what is best.⁴²⁸ The soul is disharmonious because it

⁴²⁸ There is a great deal of debate about this point. See Hoffman 2003: “The standard interpretation of Plato's account of desires attributed to the appetitive part of the soul, most notably the biological desires for food, drink and sex, is that they are blind in the sense that they do not involve a conception of their object as good (alternatively, a belief that their object is good). They all read the passage as implying a denial of the Socratic view that all desire is for the good, or at least the perceived good.” (p 171) For examples of commentators who take this standard position, see Penner 1990, Irwin 1977 p 191ff., White 1979, p 124ff., Reeve 1988 133ff. Reeve claims that by rejecting the view that all desire is for the good at *Republic* 438a, Plato is laying the foundation for his rejection of the Socratic view that *akrasia* is impossible (1988, p 133-134). Hoffman disagrees, claiming: “I do not think it could be more plainly stated by Plato, at least on the usual translation, that he thinks every soul in every action aims at the good. This applies to those ruled by appetite as well as those ruled by spirit or reason.” (2003, p 172) While I have shown that the structure of this debate is mistaken – since the soul harbors far greater multiplicity than the tri-partite theory suggests – I think it is clear from the *Republic*, as well as from Socrates' claim that his “body's” desire for flight is a conception of what is best, that we should consider the self to harbor conflicting opinions of what is best.

contains different conceptions of good. Ideally, of course, this would no longer be the case, as we would have attained a level of virtue in which we flow immediately and silently to the right course of action because we have harmonized our own souls; the prerequisite for this is, of course, that we undergo the process of self *examination*. Once we have examined our own lives, and undergone the work of developing a harmonious condition of the soul by harmonizing the λόγοι through which we gather the world into an intelligible structure in which the proper course of action will appear immediately. We have hope that we will be drawn to the good without faltering, and without need of the violence of self-mastery.

While this account certainly does not solve all of the problems arising from the “Socratic paradoxes,” hopefully this brief discussion will suffice to show how a fruitful beginning can be made when we attend to the connection between ethics and ontology in the *Phaedo*; specifically, headway can be made when we focus on “care of the soul” as concerned with the *activity* of the soul, gathering the world into intelligibility, and to the place of our (ideally harmonized) λόγοι in this process.

Epilogue: Dialectic and Νοῦς

I would like to end by briefly indicating that I have said *nothing* about νοῦς. I have said that our beliefs, λόγοι, and the desires in our soul must harmonize, but why

could there not be perfect harmony directing a soul toward injustice?⁴²⁹ I have argued that we are caught within the horizon set by our λόγοι, but what of truth?

There is a radical suppression, in the *Phaedo*, of the issues of the *body* as the source of reproduction, of eros, and of phusis; how does nature resist our conceptions, our λόγοι, our naming, and drive us toward better explanations? How is this essentially *physical* dimension of our existence figured by a contact with a natural world whose truth is never fully captured by our λόγοι?⁴³⁰ It is *Plato*, after all – surely there is a contact with something beyond our own social or private worlds that drives us toward Truth?

In Chapter 7 (§2.2.3) I claimed that the evaluative stance of λόγος does *not* immediately reveal beings in light of the truth, the good itself, or the actual good of whatever is being made manifest. The account I have given has perhaps made it seem like the truth of beings is simply *projected* onto the world – that we live in a world which is simply constructed by a projection of our conceptions.

We have seen many places in the dialogue where the issue of the projection of a set of pre-conceptions has limited the ability to understand an issue. The second sailing has allowed us to better understand the *wonder* in the “wondrous hold” that these λόγοι

⁴²⁹ To consider the possibility of a harmonious soul which is not equivalent to full virtue, we might offer the Spartan warrior as an example; surely the (ideal) Spartan is unified, and experiences little to no cognitive dissonance. However, I hesitate to claim that such a soul is the *Socratic* ideal. Above, I pointed-out a double relation between virtue and harmony; the virtuous, harmonious soul is *self-reflexive*, and concerned with its own essential activity (ἔργον). Surely, the (mythical, ideal) Spartan has not achieved this level of self-awareness.

⁴³⁰ We note that Socrates often – for example, in the *Theaetetus* (171d, 178cff.) – uses physical *health* as an example with which to distinguish truth from empty rhetoric, the expert from the one who merely convinces fools; in such examples, Socrates argues that the body presents its own standards of interpretation to the soul – i.e. man is not the measure of what will heal the body. See also the use of this image in Socrates initial argument with Gorgias. With a longer examination of the *Republic*'s account of the healthy condition of the soul, we might begin to see how harmony in the self necessarily, not incidentally, leads to a healthy and virtuous condition of the soul. Cf *Phaedrus* (261b through the end) for an account of how the proper τέχνη of speech, specifically *dialectic* (which I will turn to in a moment) leads toward truth and a healthy soul.

have on us. Λόγοι are not simply a reflection set over against the immediate manifestness of beings; rather, it is only *through* λόγοι that the world can come into manifestness. As Burger noted, in Socrates' musings on pleasure and pain there is a projection "onto the feelings themselves of the human will to separate them."⁴³¹ Further, we saw that the projection of a conception of death can go ahead of a thinker and determine what he takes death to be – that is, a προδοξέω can limit our access to the truth, to "the way it is with the things the argument is about." (Chapter 2, §2.3) Without any access to the true nature of things, caught in our own conceptions, have we any access to the truth of beings?

The Protagorean thesis rears its head here: Is man the measure of all things? Plato considered this stance toward λόγοι to be a danger for a reason. If we risk blindness in any attempt to transcend our individual perspective and go "straight to the beings," if we are thus caught within the horizons of our λόγοι, determined by our παιδεία and the limits of the πόλις, is there any hope of finding truth? It is clear how this threat can arise in this context of turning to the λόγοι. However, the second sailing is *supposed* to allow us to avoid *precisely this danger*. In Socrates' warning against misology, he claims it is through developing a τέχνη of λόγοι that the Protagorean position can be avoided. How is it – on the account of the second sailing – that we are able to discover truth *outside* the limits of our current conceptions of what is true?

In fact, Socrates has *not* saved his companions from the minotaur at the end of the *Phaedo* – he has not given them a "sufficient" λόγος. Thus, the certainty to be found in λόγοι is *not* demonstrated by Socrates' arguments. That is, the danger of misology has

⁴³¹ 1984, p 27, as noted in Chapter 3, §2.1 ff.

only been delayed, and the interlocutors, while temporarily ‘cured’ of their fear of death, still face the danger of thinking that no truth is to be found in λόγος. This danger will be made especially poignant if they follow Socrates’ advice and “go over the things said from the beginning.”

All Socrates has done is postpone the experience of disillusionment by temporarily convincing them of the soundness of λόγος, without giving them an adequate instruction in the ‘upward way.’ It is this upward way – *dialectic*, left unspoken in the *Phaedo* – that will lead them to truth, test their own conceptions, and challenge the λόγοι which they *currently* think are strongest.

The error in Socrates’ description of his “mixed up” method is its failure to distinguish the upward way from the downward. Socrates ‘mixes up’ “the way from, and the way to, first principles.”⁴³² As Klein shows:

These two ways of proceeding, Socrates takes care to remark, the one towards consequences which spring from the safe supposition, the other concerning its source [περί τε τῆς ἀρχῆς], should not be ‘mixed up,’ if one wants to find something genuinely true. We cannot fail to observe, however, that Socrates, in the very choice of his words, does not separate clearly the downward and upward motion of the διάνοια and merges the meaning of “supposition” [ὑπόθεσις] with that of “source” in his use of the term ὑπόθεσις. These ambiguities are tied to the general mythical character of the dialogue.⁴³³

What then, can we briefly say about the relation of the *Phaedo*’s account of λόγος and dialectic – which is, I suggest, the ‘upward way’ – the nature of which is not adequately revealed in the dialogue?

In the *Republic*, Socrates describes dialectic: “Isn’t this at last the song (νόμος) itself that dialectic performs? . . . when a man tries by discussion (διαλέγεσθαι) – by

⁴³² Burger, 1984, p 157.

⁴³³ 1965, p 137.

means of argument (διὰ τοῦ λόγου) without the use of any of the senses – to attain each thing itself that *is* and doesn't give up before he grasps by intellection itself (νοήσει) that which is good itself. . .” (532a emphasis added) Socrates then connects this process to the *upward way* out of the cave. Thus we see that it is *through λόγος* that we come to be in a position to have the noetic vision which can challenge the λόγοι with which we begin the search. Socrates says that this “*journey*” (πορεία) is called dialectic (διαλεκτική). It is a journey which begins in λόγος and works through λόγοι by “rubbing them together like fire sticks” (*Republic* 435a); by challenging one another's accounts, and by responding to the truths we experience in the world, and in our own souls, we are not caught within the accounts with which we begin (ὑπόθεσις).⁴³⁴ As Plato tells us in the 7th letter, without getting a hold of the λόγος, we will never achieve ἐπιστήμη or νοῦς (342bff.) He states: “Only when all of these things – names, λόγοι, *and visual and other perceptions* – have been rubbed against one another and tested, pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy – only then when reason (φρόνησις) and intellection (νοῦς) are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of any object.” (344b, emphasis added) Thus we begin to see that it is in the good-natured ἀγών of dialectic, as well as in attending to our *experience* (“visual and other perceptions”), that we can follow the upward way toward noetic vision of the truth. As Sallis says: “. . . the intellection, the noetic vision (νόεσις) that would

⁴³⁴ I have pointed, at several places in this dissertation, to the importance of interpersonal *dialogue*, and to the development of philosophical *community* for the philosophical life. There is, further, a conspicuous lack of an account of ἔρως in the *Phaedo*, and I take ἔρως to be the *drive* that pushes the philosopher along the ‘upward way’ toward a unified vision from which we are – as embodied and finite beings – *essentially* alienated. Thus, I take there to be a deep connection between the suppression of ἔρως and the failure to give an account of the ‘upward way.’ The *proper maintenance* of our interpersonal erotic connections is, then, in some sense essential to the work toward the “sufficient” vision of the whole.

comprehend that which is always one with itself must be μετὰ λόγου, with discourse, by way of discourse.”⁴³⁵ However, as Plato tells us, it is essential that the individual first prepare their souls: We must develop our natural capacity to be “akin to justice and all other forms of excellence” in order to “attain the truth that is attainable about virtue.” (344a-b) As we have seen, λόγος is anything but external to this preparation of the soul for contact with the truth. In fact, it is only through λόγος and with respect to λόγος that the ψυχή actualizes its natural kinship with the truth.

⁴³⁵ 1999, p 48.

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