

interpretation

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The Dramatic End of Plato's Socrates

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How does the structure of a philosophic exposition contribute to the meaning of a philosophic argument? I shall try to say something about the question in a context that is special and limited but not trivial—the context of a segment of the Platonic corpus. The dialogues to which I want to draw attention are those between the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedo*; and before doing anything else, I must explain what I mean by “between.” That explanation will serve to introduce the particular meaning of structure that will appear in the rest of this paper. The dialogues “between” the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedo* would be, by one conventional reckoning, the ones that Plato wrote in that order. Of course, the order in which the dialogues were written remains largely conjectural, and whatever depends on a firm determination of that order is equally in doubt. There is, however, another order into which a number of the dialogues, especially those “between the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedo*,” can be placed with much greater certainty, namely, a dramatic order. If the order of composition may be called the poietic order of the dialogues, the order in which the conversations are depicted as occurring may be called the dramatic order. Of the poietic order one might say that it reveals the author's intellectual development; the dramatic order reveals his intention. I am going to suppose not only that Plato's intention is more distinctly inferrable from the dramatic order in which he placed his inventions than any poietic order is inferrable from any evidence that survives, but also that his intention is more important to our comprehension of his thought than is his development as a thinker. I concede with regard to the latter point that significant truths about an author's intention may lie concealed within his development; after all, his development is the growth or decline of his intention; yet even if only to follow the course with the less speculative premise, I shall throughout consider “structure” to mean dramatic order.

The *Theaetetus* is a Socratic dialogue that is recounted by one man to one or more others, some number of years after the words being reported are represented as having been spoken. The dialogue ends with Socrates' saying that he must go to the *stoa* of the king in order to answer to Meletus's indictment, but that he expects to meet the company again in the morning to continue the conversation. By ending the *Theaetetus* with this brief passage, Plato indicates that the trilogy of *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman* is at least a quartet that includes the *Euthyphro*, the dialogue that takes place at the porch of the king. The same concluding passage makes plain that the quartet occurs within weeks or months of

the end of Socrates' life. (Also indicated is the need to interpret the *Euthyphro* as a component of the quartet into which Plato cast it. This means that the argument on the civil and theoretical implications of piety toward gods and fathers should be articulated with the arguments presented in the neighboring dialogues.)

It follows from the connection of *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman* with the trial of Socrates that that group of dialogues is linked in dramatic time with the other famous trilogy of *Apology of Socrates*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. In crowding these seven works upon each other in time, Plato signifies his conception of them as a unity of some kind, a unity that it is convenient to call the dramatic end of Plato's Socrates.

Of course one wonders how the supposition of this "structure" could contribute to the interpretation of the texts and the disclosure of Plato's thought. An easy conjecture is that Plato has devised an account of Socrates' end—his indictment, defense, condemnation and execution—that transcends the limits of the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*: an enhanced version of the trial of Socrates. This speculation assumes that the quartet should be drawn towards the trilogy for interpretation, that the center of gravity of the seven dialogues is the judgment of Socrates in a sense that is dominated by his civic indictment even though it transcends his public accusation and his own defense. I shall try to show, in the bulk of what follows, that useful though this conjecture may be, it needs to be stated differently. When the seven dialogues are examined concretely, they point to a still larger structure of Platonic dialogues, a larger structure that interests us because it does contain a judgment of Socrates, but on so broad a plan as to leave the trial as such shrunken by the expansion of the horizon within which it is viewed.

Specifically, the reader of the first trilogy will be aware that the three dialogues are, in different ways, penetrated by the presence of two famous rivals of Socrates, Protagoras and Parmenides. Protagoras is important to the argument of the *Theaetetus*, so important that Socrates impersonates him in a long speech in which Socrates does justice to Protagoras' views on perception, motion and knowledge with such success that Theodorus expresses his enthusiastic admiration. Theodorus, an active if sometimes reluctant interlocutor, is himself a Protagorean though apparently with reservations. His pupil is Theaetetus, who also appears to be Protagorean, although very docile to the argument of Socrates, perhaps because Protagoreanism is not a bad preparation for Socratism. (Of Simmias and Kebes, the Pythagoreans, similar things will be said below when we turn to the *Phaedo*.) As one might say, the *Theaetetus* is suffused with the spirit of Protagoras; but it is not for that reason an un-Socratic dialogue, rather if anything the reverse: Euclides reports that he wrote this conversation down and that in the course of doing so, he would consult Socrates whenever he needed help in clearing up a doubtful point. This consultation would have to have taken place in the short and presumably preoccupied period between the indictment and the execution of Socrates. Besides embodying the active collaboration of

Socrates in its written preservation, the *Theaetetus* contains an autobiography of Socrates, what one might call his obstetric autobiography, with a view to its content and also in order to distinguish it from the autobiography in the *Phaedo*—another superficially un-Socratic dialogue.

A point has been made of the Protagoreanism of the *Theaetetus*; but there is a dialogue called *Protagoras*, in which the thought of Protagoras is obviously prominent. Do the Protagoreanisms of *Theaetetus* and *Protagoras* harmonize? Why are two Protagorean dialogues necessary? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the *Theaetetus* and *Protagoras* gravitate toward one another, and the *Protagoras* becomes attached to the basic structure of the septet by a line of filiation. In the same way, a line of attachment develops between the *Sophist* and *Statesman* on the one hand and the *Parmenides* on the other, for Parmenides is as actively present in the latter dialogues through the Eleatic Stranger as Protagoras is in the *Theaetetus*. The recurrence of themes in the Platonic dialogues is a familiar fact that would lead to the attachment of the *Meno* to our growing structure by the link of the doctrine of anamnesis, employed prominently in the *Phaedo*. Many other examples could be given. If carefully pursued, the dramatic, thematic, and personal ligatures would include some large part, perhaps all, of the Platonic corpus.

I have not come so far in order to suggest that there is a Platonic cosmos, but rather to speculate on what guided Plato in the construction of it. Raising the question is meant to set aside the routine reply that the shaping of the Platonic cosmos was governed by the shape of the real one—not because that is not true but because it is not what the already discerned structure indicates most pointedly, namely, that a great weight of non-Socratic thought presses on Socratism and must be reckoned with. The presence of non-Socratic thought defines the horizon in which the transpolitical or philosophic critique and apology of Socrates may be found. The cosmos to which the Platonic cosmos corresponds is to a surprising degree the theoretical, not the natural cosmos.

Taking advantage of the privilege claimed by introductions, I will introduce the body of the argument to come with an as yet unsupported assertion: it would not be wise to assume that Plato fashioned his world and populated it with non-Socratics merely to mirror the intellectual milieu that Socrates inhabited and, while sketching that world, to set the scene for Socrates to deflate every living and dead pretender to understanding beginning with Homer. It cannot be denied that Socrates is shown slaying his thousands; but his antagonists often have little enough to say for themselves and are not of great stature. Plato does cause his Socrates to put the armies of the fee-takers to the sword, but he also shows him at times occupying their towers without a proclamation to announce the appropriation. Most surprising, Socrates occasionally goes into direct battle armed with weapons borrowed from unidentified armories that belong to other champions whom Plato's contemporaries could and did name and who are recognized even by us. I have in mind, to give one striking example, the doctrine of invisible and

most real intelligibles by which and by which alone the phenomenal world is to be understood. This was Pythagorean tradition by Socrates' time, though likely to be thought of by us as Socratic idealism. It is worth recalling that, in the *Parmenides* (130b), when Parmenides asks Socrates whether the ideas are his own invention and whether he thinks that there is likeness and unity and plurality apart from the concrete things that participate in these ideas in themselves, Socrates says yes, but his response appears directed to the second question, the first going unanswered. When Aristotle sets out, in *Metaphysics* 1, to give the history of thought about causes, he sketches a picture of Greek intellectual life that should remind the reader of the mosaic panorama of the Platonic dialogues. In Aristotle's history, Plato looms large, as Socrates does in Plato's. Aristotle says that Plato was a Heracleitian both early and later in life, for he saw the world of phenomena as always in flux (*Metaphysics* 987^a34). Is it not surprising that one could construct Plato-Socrates out of Pythagorean idealism and Heracleitian flux? In brief, there is a view of Plato and Socrates, and Aristotle is the greatest depicter of it, according to which Plato and Socrates are intimately bound in with and must be discussed as belonging to the milieu of that host we call pre-Socratic. In that view, the recognition of Plato-Socrates' preeminence does not sever their historical connection with their predecessors, nor does it entail their freedom from debt to those predecessors. The Platonic corpus seems at first like a depiction of the same pre-Socratic landscape, with Socrates included in it, but in a completely different perspective from Aristotle's. Those thinkers whose thought Aristotle diligently distills and criticizes appear, when they exist as personae of Plato's dialogues, like mere foils for the virtuosity of Socrates. Plato's perspective seems to make Socrates a giant among mediocrities and a luminescence among the dim or semidim. Did Plato not see Socrates on a human scale even as Aristotle saw Plato, who was called divine in his own lifetime? I believe that Plato's perspective was not less detached than Aristotle's, and I shall try to show this. But if it was thus clear-sighted, why was it given the appearance by its author of being the apotheosis of Socrates, the perfect philosopher with no debts, no peers, no errors, the man who cannot even proclaim his ignorance without adding luster to the testimonials of his wisdom? What was the unprecedented achievement of Socrates that justified so extraordinary a portrayal? The closing words of the *Phaedo* do not constitute an adequate answer. What follows here is an attempt to move toward an explanation, through the interpretation of a few elements of the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedo*. My general intention is to argue that the Platonic corpus contains—perhaps simply is—the appraisal of Socrates; and that one of the instruments of appraisal is the depiction of Socrates as a man in the company of all those with whom it is useful to compare him, whom he taught, whom he could not teach, whom he refused to teach, and from whom he learned or conceivably even refused to learn.

The *Theaetetus* is recounted in Megara (whither Plato is said to have gone after the death of Socrates). In the recounted dialogue proper, Socrates is engaged

in conversation with Theodorus, who is a geometer, an associate of Protagoras, and a teacher of Theaetetus. According to the tradition, he is someone with whom Plato himself studied in Cyrene. Theaetetus is introduced into the dialogue as the youth in the middle of a group of young men who are approaching. It becomes known that one of the others in the group is Young Socrates, the interlocutor of the *Statesman*. There must have been at least one more youth in order for Theaetetus to have been “in the middle,” but no other youth is named or otherwise identified. Theaetetus is described as resembling Socrates in appearance, Young Socrates resembles him of course in name. Plato maintains silence in all respects about the conjectured third youth. Socrates begins his interrogation of Theaetetus by enumerating, in the form of a question, the subjects that he supposes Theaetetus to be studying with Theodorus: geometry, astronomy, harmony, and arithmetic (145c, d), which the youth confirms. This list is the same (“music” being substituted for “harmony”) as the list of arts that Protagoras recites when, in the *Protagoras*, (318e) he derides the vulgar sophists who force their pupils back to the distinct conventional arts rather than teaching them, as he himself does, good counsel in domestic and civic affairs so that they may be as effective as possible in the city both in action and in speech. Protagoras is said to look at Hippias while speaking; it may be understood that he would look as pointedly at Theodorus. In pursuing the interrogation of Theaetetus, Socrates asks whether the increase of knowledge is the same as increase of wisdom, and whether knowledge and wisdom are the same. Now arises the chief question of the dialogue: what is knowledge? Theaetetus answers by referring to Theodorus’s curriculum of the arts, adding also the productive arts such as shoemaking. Socrates turns this answer back because it gives examples instead of saying what the thing itself is; it adduces a many where a one is wanted. This is the same objection with which Socrates confutes Meno’s definition of virtue (*Meno* 72a, b). What might be called the routine position of Socrates, namely, that the intelligible is a unity to which the multiplicity must be referred, bears an unexpected resemblance to Protagoras’s apparent reason for disapproving of the ordinary sophists; they offer an assortment, he purveys wisdom itself in its unity.

Theaetetus admits to a concern over the meaning of knowledge and Socrates encourages him to take heart and go forward, offering to put his own peculiar powers at Theaetetus’s disposal during the investigation. This becomes the occasion for a lengthy statement by Socrates about himself, a statement that might be called his obstetric autobiography because he discloses in the course of it that he is a midwife of thoughts. His self-description is a curious mixture of depreciation and pretension, for he appears as a barren god, incapable of generating a thought but able to deliver a man of those he has within, distinguishing the pregnancies that issue in progeny from those that have spurious fruit and, like a god in his beneficence, fostering the true and exposing the false offspring. It is worth noticing that this characterization of his dialectic pedagogy differs from the one set forth in the *Meno*, where Socrates claims to be able to elicit all knowledge from

all men by appropriate questioning: everyone knows everything by virtue of the immortality of the soul, and needs only to be reminded. There is a tacit withdrawal from that doctrine in the *Theaetetus*, where memory plays indeed an important part, but the memory in question is of the ordinary, earthly kind and depends on perception rather than on immortality of the soul or on the availability of ideas as objects visible in a realm above. This is the more in need of consideration because the *Theaetetus* begins the sequence that ends in the *Phaedo*, the place where Socrates argues the immortality of the soul partly on the premise of anamnesis. In any case, the *Theaetetus* ends inconclusively, aporetically, for the question what is knowledge is not answered. Socrates does not repeat the success of the *Meno*, where he induces the boy to discover, i.e., to discover in himself, an application of what we call the Pythagorean theorem. If the *Meno* tends to argue that through the application of the right method all normal men can be shown to possess all knowledge, the *Theaetetus* can be said to show that the quest for knowledge even about knowledge itself staggers through an arduous process of trial and error and reaches the edifying conclusion that failure in the investigation will make Theaetetus gentler with others and better able to avoid believing that he knows what he does not know. How important this wisdom might be is demonstrated in the immediately subsequent conversation of Socrates with Euthyphro, in the next dialogue. Whether the practical circumstances surrounding Socrates' end and the willfulness of the men who brought it about have anything to do with Plato's intention in closing the *Theaetetus* with aporia would require a separate investigation. For the present, it is necessary to inquire into the path by which Plato brings the *Theaetetus* to the conclusion it reaches.

Stimulated by Socrates, Theaetetus replaces his first suggested definition of knowledge with another, which is that knowledge is perception. Socrates immediately identifies this as Protagorean, and as tantamount to the formula of Protagoras that runs "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are and of the things that are not that they are not." Socrates interprets this to mean that each man is the judge of the coldness, hotness and other qualities of the things he perceives, and there is no way to go beyond the perceived appearance of things to their being in truth. In an unobtrusive remark, Socrates raises (152c) what will prove to be one of the most difficult points that he and Theaetetus will have to contend with throughout the dialogue, and which they will not be able to settle: What is error? The issue arises because, if what every man perceives is true for him and there is no truth beyond the truth of perception, or how things appear, no judgment about a thing can be wrong. By the end of the dialogue, the interlocutors have succeeded no better in accounting for or defining error than in defining knowledge. In this sense, "the problem of error" is an element of the discourse that survives to the end of the dialogue. This problem, which arises out of empiricism-relativism, survives the refutation in the dialogue of the original premise, namely, knowledge is perception (or "man is the measure") out of which it grows, which is surprising in the highest degree. Particular

importance should be attached to whatever in the argument survives unrefuted or unresolved through to the end because, in an argument that ends formally in aporia, one must ask whether the work has in fact no affirmative conclusion or whether perhaps the conclusion consists somehow of whatever has been introduced into the argument but has not been eliminated from it by refutation. The *Theaetetus* especially calls for the consideration of some such hypothesis because the dialogue consists overwhelmingly of trial and error, of three major tentative definitions of knowledge, all of them overthrown when shown by Socrates to be untenable. It is possible that in such a case, some part of what survives must be sought in the negations, the statements of objections that effectually eliminate the affirmations which are cast out of the discourse. Obviously, a negative that eliminates permanently some factor of the argument and is not itself contradicted should be counted as permanently affirmed in the discourse as a whole. Collecting those negatives belongs to the fullscale interpretation of the dialogue and not to the present paper. I note, however, that in reflecting on what an aporetic dialogue may be said to affirm formally, one might have to include the undisposed of issues raised by refuted positions, and the contradicting arguments by which refuted proposals are eliminated.

I doubt it will have escaped notice that this dialogue, in which the participants fail to find the meaning of error, was described above as proceeding throughout by trial and error—seemingly teaching in act what the obstetrician and his patient labor in vain to bring forth. If the dialogue were thus to present its teaching in act, then the judgment that the work as a whole ends in aporia would have to be modified: the genuine resolution of the issues would be embedded in the action or structure of the discourse as a whole. The dialogue has the appearance of being an enactment of error which fails in its efforts to articulate error or to define it in words. Because the definition of error and the definition of knowledge are mutually dependent, the dialogue inevitably has also the appearance of being an enactment of knowledge which fails in its efforts to articulate knowledge or to define it in words. If the *Theaetetus* were designed to present its own action or “structure” (i.e., Form) as the paradigm of knowledge, it would be offering a serious alternative to the doctrine of ideas as *νοητά* that are remembered by an immortal soul and that are drawn out of latency through a method of interrogation. It would be presenting knowledge and therewith learning as well as teaching in a purely terrestrial medium, within the realm of experience as one might say, linked to perception and ratiocination. However far this is from *defining* knowledge, it does indicate that the definition is to be expected to lie in some realm of being that is not out of touch with perception or appearance. One can only wonder if this speculation is to any extent supported by Plato's causing Theaetetus to reply with “it appears” (or, “it seems so”) when Socrates argues provisionally, on behalf of the Protagorean view, that perception is always of what exists and, qua knowledge, cannot be false (152c).

Let us hold in abeyance the surmise that the aporia of the *Theaetetus* might be

resolved in the retained elements of the argument and in the action or Form of the dialogue as a whole, and let us return to the progress of the argument. Theaetetus, as was said, proposes that knowledge is perception (151e). Socrates, unnoticed and without explanation, reverses the order of the terms and then proceeds to the identification of “perception is knowledge” as Protagorean and as tantamount to “man is the measure.” By this understanding, each thing is as, and what, it is perceived to be by the one perceiving it, and error or falseness in apprehension becomes impossible. Socrates now asserts that this doctrine is the view that “nothing is one and a self-same thing itself” but everything proceeds from movement and the mixing of things: nothing ever is, but is always becoming (152d). On this, he says, all the philosophers except Parmenides—that is, Protagoras, Heraclitus, and Empedocles—concur, as well as the loftiest poets of the two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. It is surprising that there is no mention of Pythagoras. Socrates offers in support of this position, which he will attempt eventually to weaken, that motion does go with being and life, and rest with nonbeing and dissolution; and that heat and fire, the source and support of other things, is caused by motion. However provisional this advocacy might prove to be, a very important part will ultimately be played by heat or fire in Socrates’ unretracted thought as brought out by the end of the *Phaedo*.

Socrates elaborates in considerable detail (156a–157c) the “Protagorean” doctrine that all perception is born of the motion of the endlessly moving percipient and object of perception. Attached to this “kineticism” is the notion that perception, the vital concomitant of motion, cannot be “wrong.” One can only say about perception that it occurs. Apparently in order to refute the kineticism of Protagoras, Socrates moves to attack the infallibility of perception by referring to the state of dreaming, insanity, and illusion, arguing that we have “perceptions” in those states that can surely be called false. Socrates pursues the theme of dreams in his further refutation of Protagoras, asking Theaetetus how he would prove that the two of them were not dreaming their actual conversation. Theaetetus allows that the thing is too hard to prove. This paltry sophism is followed by the astonishing remark of Socrates (158d) that the previous point gains in weight because we are asleep and awake for equal periods of time. I take it that when an assertion is refuted by the use of feeble or false contentions, it may be regarded as having survived the refutation. In any case, the frivolity of this and other arguments in the vicinity is implied by Socrates when he begins to speak (166a) in the name of Protagoras, delivering a defense to which we will soon turn. For the present, two points seem to emerge: first, that in some indistinct way the Protagorean or materialist-kineticist ascription of special importance to heat retains its force, and with it so much of the Protagorean doctrine of motion and multiplicity in the all as must accompany it; and second, that for reasons at present at least equally unclear, the Protagorean view that man’s perceptions are the measure of the being of things is also permitted to remain alive in

some small degree. It should be made emphatically clear that nothing that has been said is intended to mean that Plato's Socrates is a crypto-kineticist. There is a very energetic denunciation of the Heraclitians or "Ephesians" (179e–180c), which happens by the way to be delivered by Theodorus, and which is mildly resisted by Socrates, who suggests that those sectarians perhaps speak differently in private and in public. He enlarges on the theme of dissimulation, distinguishing the ancients, who concealed their kineticism from the many with poetry (apparently Homer, 180d), and the moderns, who blurt out their wisdom so that the very cobblers will abandon the commonsense belief that some things are in motion and other things are at rest. He reminds himself that there are those who teach the opposite, namely, that all is one and at rest, a doctrine that can apparently be published without harmful effects, for nothing is said about the wisdom of concealing it. Whether this has anything to do with Socrates' own arguments and positions is exceedingly hard to judge. He goes on, however, to refute radical kineticism by showing the impossibility of saying anything about anything if all things are always moving and changing, that is, becoming rather than being. He concludes not only the critique of the theory of motion but of the associated Protagorean doctrine of "man the measure" by rejecting that formula *except if the man be sensible* (φρόνιμος) (183b,c). To see how far this insight constitutes a rejection or refutation of Protagoras, we must return to an earlier point in the dialogue.

Beginning at 166a, Plato causes Socrates to deliver a remarkable speech in which he impersonates Protagoras rebuking Socrates for the levity of his disputation to that point and then going on to present Protagoras's understanding with unimpaired seriousness. "Protagoras" asseverates his belief that every human being is unique and will perceive and "know" idiosyncratically, in a literal sense "idiotically", but this flatly does not mean that there is no such thing as wisdom and the wise man. The wise man is precisely he who can so deal with us that when bad things appear and are to us, he can cause good things instead to appear and to be. The first illustration is the sick man and the physician. To the sick man, food tastes and *is* bitter. The physician will bring on a change in him to a condition in which food will taste and *be* sweet. The sick man is not ignorant nor is the healthy man wise because of the unwisdom or wisdom of their opinions; that is, the correction of the sick man is not a matter of rectifying his thinking: to make a man wiser is impossible, says "Protagoras." The required change is from a condition that is not good to one that is better. Physicians do this with drugs, teachers of wisdom (σοφιστής) with arguments or words (λόγοις). "Protagoras" argues that it is not a matter of making a man who thinks (δόξασαι) falsely think truly but rather of remedying a bad condition (ἔξις) of the soul so that the man will experience perceptions (φαντάσματα) that are better, but not more "true." The Socratic "Protagoras" now makes a remarkable observation: physicians are those who correct the condition of the body with a view to improving its perceptions or sensations, and farmers are the ones who treat sick plants, replacing bad

perceptions in them with good, healthy and true perceptions (*αἰσθήσεις*) (167c). Wise and good orators make the good rather than the wicked seem just to the cities. It is to be noted that in each case, the word for “good” in the expression denoting the perception of the better condition is not *ἀγαθός* but some form of *χρηστός* which has an overtone of “useful” Socrates’ impersonation of Protagoras continues with interesting assertions that we can omit from the present discussion. What has emerged is this: in the first place, Protagoras insists on the difference between wisdom and the absence of it. There is such a thing as a wise man, he differs from ordinary people, and his perceptions of the world might be the measure of it if his wisdom qualifies him as the *φρόνιμος* of Socrates’ remark (183b,c) referred to earlier. While the wise man’s wisdom far exceeds the vulgar understanding, the two have something in common. “Protagoras” sees the good as tinged with the beneficial, needful, useful as any man could readily understand those terms. There are good conditions, and health is a paradigm of them. So also is possession of abundance of wealth—Protagoras sees no reason to be apologetic about his own fee-taking. His moral standpoint is that of the ordinary man with his average perceptions, perceptions that would be called natural if natural means primary and unmodified by belief in any force or criterion higher than perceptible experience, either gods or eternal ideas. Nothing further from his thought can be imagined than Socrates’ depreciation of life and body in favor of death and soul, as in the *Phaedo*, which would seem to him demented. “Protagoras” speaks of soul and its *ἔξις* or habitual condition (167b1), but his curious references to the perceptions or sensations of plants are indicative of a strong tendency toward materialism in his doctrine, a tendency which would harmonize with his belief in motion as primary. He appears at first to alienate from each other Good, Truth, and Wisdom, which Socratic philosophy strives to reconcile or to amalgamate; but in fact his philosophy reconciles them, though on the plane of the empirical, terrestrial, and natural. His thought reflects energetically on experience, but it remains on the level of its own objects: transcending and even despising mere opinion, it does not hypothesize any entity that opinion—the prephilosophic conclusions from experience—cannot encompass. In an earlier passage, (162d) Socrates presents a reply that Protagoras or someone speaking for him might have given to Socrates’ injection of the gods into the discussion. The reply is to the effect that the being or nonbeing of gods is excluded from Protagoras’s speech and writing. One might say that he has no need of that hypothesis, nor of ideas either. No standard higher or more enduring than man and his experience comes to sight, and the soul itself has no pronounced primacy.

“Man is the measure” and “knowledge is perception” may prove to be untenable propositions, but they have so deep a foundation that they have reasserted themselves in one shape or another down to our own time. Socrates’ numerous refutations of them and of their implications are uneven in their gravity, as he admits while impersonating Protagoras. To determine precisely the details of his judgment on Protagoras would be a considerable task, but it seems as if one

might say that Socratism clashes seriously with Protagoreanism on the issue of the practicality of wisdom. Protagoras seems to replace “truer” with “better;” his wise man is a healer or improver of bodily or psychic conditions. One thinks of Socrates as teaching the natural impulse of the philosopher to recoil from the world of practice, beginning with politics and including acquisition and other affairs of business. The simplicity of this pattern is disturbed by Socrates’ demonstrations in various places that the true king, the true rhetor, and—if Xenophon is to be believed—the true proprietor of an estate (and the true teacher of generals) is the philosopher. I believe there is another conflict between Socrates and Protagoras, a disagreement that might be called practical, that might serve to keep them apart as effectually as most other differences. Protagoras teaches that what seems good to the city is so for as long as the opinion holds, just as each man is the measure for himself. Whatever one might superimpose on this by way of distinctions between the wise and the others, this doctrine must put it into the mind of every city and every man that he or it *knows* (176d, 177a). If all the world were Protagorean, the hope of persuading anyone of the importance of knowing that or what he does not know must inevitably decline. How this point bears on the argument of the *Euthyphro*, the next dialogue, is too obvious to say. How it bears on the *Apology of Socrates* and on Athens itself is if anything more obvious. While the empiricism, materialism, and apparent atheism of Protagoras, and their underlying premise of universal motion, might not make it impossible to name or discuss anything, they do help to democratize the polis and obstruct the rule of the wiser sort. Protagoras’s wise man is capable of becoming rich, a sign that his wisdom recommends itself to the many, or at least to those who can pay, as a thing of value. The wisdom of Socrates brought him of course a very different compensation, which is foreshadowed in the last lines of the present dialogue.

Is the relation between Socrates and Protagoras one of unrelieved disagreement? Probably not. The argument of the *Theaetetus* is much too complex to be summarized, and for the present purpose only a few points need be mentioned. After extensive efforts at defining knowledge, Theaetetus recalls (201c,d) having heard someone say that knowledge is true opinion together with reason, and that the things that are not subject to reason are not knowable. Socrates replies curiously, offering one dream for another, something that he thought he heard some people say, in exchange for what Theaetetus heard someone say. (A dream seems to have something in common with a rumor—speech emanating from an anonymous source. Cf. page 162 above, on dreams.) What Socrates heard is that the primary elements or components of ourselves and of all composites are not subject to reason or to being explained or accounted for by reason. That is, Socrates addresses first that part of Theaetetus’s formula that introduces the unknowable. Clearly, if there are things that are unknowable by virtue of being intractable to reason (whatever that might mean), then about such things there could be at best only true opinion. How one could know that the opinion about

them is true is not clear, but that the argument is drifting toward the problems of the *Euthyphro*—piety and the gods—seems likely. At any rate, Socrates turns the discussion to the question whether the primary elements of things are unintelligible or are more or less intelligible than the composite things into which they enter. He concludes that the primary irreducible things (*πρῶτα*), of which the letters of the alphabet and the musical notes are illustrations, are if anything more intelligible than the composites made up of them: the things of perception, the things we see and hear stand high in the order of knowability (206a,b). Socrates reaches the conclusion that the syllable, the paradigm of a composite, even if regarded as “some one indivisible idea” (205c) and “one idea,” (205d; also 203e, 204a) is saved from unintelligibility by the intelligibility of the letters, those particles known to us in the only way in which they can be known, not by explanation but by perception. There seems to be some sense in which knowledge is perception and perception knowledge.

Socrates turns now (206d) to the question “what is reason intended to signify for us?” Without the formality of asking Theaetetus, he lays it down that reason—that which is to be added to true opinion to form knowledge—means one of three things: the verbal reflection of thoughts in speech; rendering an account of things in terms of all of their elementary parts; explaining something in terms of the characteristic that distinguishes it from everything else. Socrates proceeds not by supporting or refuting the claim of any of the three to be the definition of reason but rather by showing that no matter which definition prevailed, true opinion plus reason would not be a tenable definition of knowledge. He does this by showing that the possession of reason in the first two senses is incompatible with error, and that the third involves tautology (209c): the peculiar snubnosedness of Theaetetus will not enter into combination with my (true) opinion that that is Theaetetus until it has already been distinguished in my mind from all other snubnosednesses that I have ever seen—and this by its having been impressed on my memory in the first place in its difference from all others; and similarly with all the other characteristics of Theaetetus. Once that impression in terms of singularity has occurred, meeting with you again tomorrow, i.e., seeing you, will remind me and cause me to have right opinion of you. In brief, Socrates has come round again to perception plus memory quickened by a renewed perception. He seems to have rediscovered Protagoras’s empiricism and terrestrialized collection.

We turn next to the *Phaedo*, a dialogue that shows Socrates demonstrating the immortality of the soul during his last hours, and in the course of that demonstration exalting the soul over the body while maintaining that death is preferable to life (59b). In order to accomplish his purpose, Socrates introduces his familiar theory of ideas, the intelligible and eternal archetypes, of which we retain revivable impressions as we pass through our disembodied toward our incarnated states. Contributory to his showing the immortality of the soul is an argument to the effect that things are brought into being by their contraries, as pleasure fol-

lows pain and life itself is consequent upon death. By the time the dialogue has run its course, the reader has been made to wonder how far Socrates himself believed the soul to be immortal, to what extent he considered the soul to be independent of the body, and whether he had not admitted ponderable variations of the orthodox idealism always associated with his name.

The conversation is related by Phaedo, who was present, to Echecrates, a Phliasian who is remembered as a Pythagorean and who shows a sympathetic interest in Socrates. Also present at the death of Socrates was a sizable group of Athenians and others, of a variety of philosophic persuasions. It is made explicit that Plato was not there: "Plato was, I think, sick" (59b). Whether or how this mention of Plato's absence is to be connected with Phaedo's remark, after Socrates' account of the ideas as causes, that "all who were there" thought Socrates had made the thing wonderfully clear, must remain more or less conjectural (102a). Euclides and Terpsion, the Megarans of the recounting of the *Theaetetus*, were there. So also were Simmias and Kebes, two Thebans who are described by Socrates as pupils of Philolaos (61d). Philolaos is the Pythagorean who is said to have sold the written report of the esoteric tenets of Pythagoreanism to Plato himself. Simmias and Kebes are the principal interlocutors of the *Phaedo*, together with Socrates, and their reservations and doubts, as well as their unquestioning concurrences, are instruments that Plato uses in giving the argument much of its shape. As the thought of Protagoras moves in the *Theaetetus*, so that of Pythagoras affects the *Phaedo*, in ways that I can only illustrate here with great incompleteness.

I should like to begin by asking why Simmias and Kebes are made the partners in discourse of Socrates during most of the dialogue. I believe that an indication of the answer is to be found in the following places rather early in the conversation.

First, at 64c. Socrates asks Simmias whether death is anything but the separation of the soul from the body. Without hesitation Simmias replies that it is nothing but that. This is a begging of the question that forms the context of the exchange, for if it were known that death consists of such a separation, it would be known also that the soul is capable of and has an independent existence, a point which Socrates in fact attaches to the question to which Simmias has given an affirmative answer. Simmias sees nothing arguable here.

Next, at 70a, Kebes wishes to hear dispelled the common fear that the soul disintegrates upon being separated from the body. He would like some assurance that the soul exists and has any power and intelligence (*φρόνησις*) when the man has died. Socrates refers to "some ancient account that we remember" to the effect that the souls go from here to the infernal region and return and are born from the dead. And if this is so, he asks, if the living are born again from the dead, how might our souls not exist there? The support for the affirmative is to be found in the doctrine of the generation of all things from opposites. As pleasure is born of pain and everything that becomes becomes from the opposite of what it

turns into, so also living arises out of being dead just as dying follows living. Kebes accepts this astonishing mixture of an old story and a flimsy analogy without a murmur, although he is not generally a passive interlocutor. Strengthening this argument with another, Socrates declares that if there were not a universal reciprocation between opposite states, the universe would collapse into ubiquitous death. Kebes is persuaded, and Socrates makes an unusually strong statement, declaring that it seems to him that it is altogether exactly thus, and that return to life and the birth of the living from the dead and the existence of the souls of the dead are the reality (72d). Kebes agrees and confirms all of the foregoing by introducing a favorite Socratic doctrine, that of anamnesis, as an additional proof. Of course, if the soul carries forth into life various impressions that it received before birth, it must have lived on somewhere. Simmias would like to be reminded of the proof of this position, and Kebes furnishes it with notable economy. Human beings can answer well-put questions about anything, which they would not be able to do if the knowledge were not within them. In order to reinforce Kebes' argument from anamnesis, Socrates refers without explanation, as if it were self-evident, to a man's knowledge of things as gained through seeing, hearing, or other perception (73c). The *aporia* of the *Theaetetus* seems to dissolve in the tacit acceptance of the spurned Protagorean suggestion.

Returning to the question why Simmias and Kebes are made the chief collaborators of Socrates in this ultimate dialogue, I think that Socrates' description of them as pupils of Philolaos, which means Pythagoreans, gives a clue that gains in plausibility by their conduct in the exchanges just summarized. Their easy acquiescence in the most problematic assertions apparently comports with their Pythagorean training, which would have put those conceptions, thought to be peculiarly Socratic, well within the range of the familiar or the authoritative. As one might say, Plato could not find more agreeable interlocutors with Socrates on questions of immortality and the migration of souls than Pythagoreans. The same indoctrination would prepare them equally well to accept the theory of generation of opposites by opposites, at least if Aristotle is to be believed when he ascribes to the Pythagoreans the belief that "contraries are the first principles of things" (*Metaphysics* 986^b3). All of this is said without intending to minimize the weight of the objections that Simmias and Kebes will oppose to the doctrine of the eternal vitality of the soul as distinguished from its capacity to survive the body for a limited time. Perhaps Simmias and Kebes are imperfect Pythagoreans, as Theodorus was a deviating Protagorean. It is not possible now to try to clarify these relations of detachment on the part of certain members of philosophic sects when they contemplate their orthodoxies. It is well worth noticing, though, that Simmias and Kebes make objections to Socrates' doctrine of immortality, and that, upon the completion of the statement of those objections, the whole party is disconcerted by the inroads that have been made on what was thought to be an unassailable position, to such an extent that doubts about reason itself arise. Beginning at 88b, Phaedo breaks into the account in his own charac-

ter with certain remarks to Echeocrates. Phaedo relates how Socrates caressed him, and drew a parallel between misanthropy and misogyny: both arise out of misplaced trust too readily given, followed by repeated disenchantment until eventually hatred of all men or of all reason ensues. The lesson is caution, not dogmatic skepticism. What this speech that Plato puts in the mouth of Socrates betokens for Plato's own understanding of philosophic sectarianism is necessarily matter for speculation. At any rate, here at god, Phaedo concludes his exchange with Echeocrates and resumes the report of the argument proper, ending what might be called the Phaedo section. If one were to wonder why this crucial work was named after a character who did nothing in the dialogue but serve as addressee of the admonitions just related, I think one might plausibly conclude that Plato attached much importance to the chief point of the Phaedo section. Those who find the location of a given passage in a text significant will wish to know that the Phaedo section divides the dialogue as a whole into very nearly equal parts.

Let it be supposed that Plato has injected Pythagoreanism into the elaboration of Socratism in a way that indicates some congeniality of the one doctrine to the other. By these tedious evolutions, we seem merely to be rediscovering the judgments of Aristotle on Plato's provenience, although doing so by concrete reference to the dialogues, which Aristotle does only on occasion. There is, however, another feature of Plato's critical method of constructing the argument to which one must pay attention in order to interpret the texts. It seems that with regard to some weighty issues, Socrates makes powerful representations which he himself unobtrusively qualifies, certainly presents with the utmost tentativeness, or perhaps even seems at last almost to reverse. In order to observe this, we must follow an argument that develops after Kebes has shown a need for a proof that the soul not only preexists the body but is altogether imperishable (95b et seq.). Socrates declares that this is tantamount to a demand for a thorough investigation of the cause of generation and corruption. Socrates now gives a remarkable account of his intellectual experiences as a seeker after knowledge about causes. He relates how his explorations into natural philosophy, apparently on materialistic principles, led him into confusion and discouragement, causing him eventually to forget even what common sense had plainly if insufficiently taught him. Then he discovered Anaxagoras, whose dictum that mind is the arranger and cause of everything delighted him. He reasoned that mind does all that it does with a view to the good: mind causes the generation and corruption of each thing in order to procure what is best for it. Thus the study of generation and corruption is really the study of good. Great was his disappointment when Anaxagoras went on to introduce air, aether, water and many other foolish things as causes, i.e., to vitiate his doctrine with matter, as if any such could explain why (that is, with a view to what good) anything came into being or happened. Anaxagoras, in mixing matter with mind, lost sight of the distinction between cause and the conditions necessary for the operation of a cause. He and others ignore the good,

more powerful than any other power to keep the whole together. Now Socrates describes his second or post-Anaxagorean voyage in search of the cause. He begins by stating his method of inquiry. He adopts each time some explanation (*λόγος*) as a hypothesis that he judges to be the strongest, and he posits as true whatever agrees with it and rejects as untrue whatever does not (100a). Now he will hypothesize the existence of the beautiful in itself, and the good, and the great and all the others. "If you grant me this and concur in the being of these things, I hope to be able to demonstrate cause, and to prove to you that the soul is immortal." Astonishingly, Kebes grants the existence of the things themselves without a question. We might notice at this point that the doctrine of ideas, at least in the present context, is subordinate to the theory of cause and the demonstration of the immortality of the soul.

Briefly, each thing is, or rather is made to be, what it is by that "thing itself" in which it participates. A beautiful thing is made beautiful by beauty itself, by its "participation" in the beautiful. Socrates calls this "the safest answer I can give" to the question "what is the cause?" (It must be said immediately that a few pages later, Socrates will call this account not only safe but stupid. So we must not jump to conclusions about his naïveté.) Socrates praises the clarity of the results of his method, and Echekrates breaks into Phaedo's report to join in the praise. Phaedo replies, as was said above, with the remark that everyone there thought Socrates had clarified everything amazingly. Now Socrates shows how a man can be larger than one man but smaller than another: *he* can participate in the great and the small, which can simultaneously cause him or be present in him, but neither the great nor the small, the thing itself, can admit or participate in its opposite without being destroyed. When the opposite approaches its opposite, one of them must either withdraw or be destroyed. The importance of this for the life of the soul will appear soon.

Now an unnamed interlocutor notices that beauty's being the cause of beauty means that like is caused by like, which contradicts the earlier doctrine that generation is by opposite of opposite, as pleasure out of pain. Socrates easily distinguishes "things" from "things in themselves:" the former are generated through opposition, the latter as has just been said are repelled or destroyed by contrariety. Socrates takes the next important step by distinguishing heat and fire, cold or coldness and snow. Heat and coldness are what they are in themselves, fire and snow are not heat and coldness but hot and cold. His point is that the things in themselves have surrogates which behave like them but differ from them. Thus, if fire approaches snow, one or the other must withdraw or be destroyed; neither can tolerate its contrary. Sometimes, Socrates says, "not only the idea itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος*) deserves the same name forever and ever, but also something which, while not being that idea, always whensoever it exists has that form" (103e). For example, three may always be called three, but although it is not The Odd, it may also always be called odd. Now three will oppose anything Even just as strenuously and eternally as Odd itself would do, because three contains the

idea of odd. Obviously, Socrates has prepared a position that goes beyond his first argument that something beautiful is made so by Beauty itself. Socrates now says (105b,c), "If you ask me, what causes something to be hot, I will not give you that safe but stupid answer that it is Heat, but rather out of our present work a more sophisticated reply, that it is fire; and if you ask what causes the body to be sick, I will not say Sickness but fever" (in Greek, something like "fieriness").

All this comes to an immediate head in a brief passage in which Socrates shows that the soul is to Life as fire is to Heat. Soul is not Life itself but Life's surrogate, and it and death are opposites that must flee one another or be destroyed. Thus it follows that when death descends upon the body, the soul must flee, and thus its survival of the body is proved. The reason that the soul must flee death and cannot stay to be destroyed by its opposite, as snow is by heat, is given thus: if the deathless is also indestructible, the soul cannot be destroyed when death approaches it (106b). One thought that the question was precisely whether the deathless is necessarily also indestructible. The demonstration now seems to take the form "if something is deathless, its vitality is the same as or is the sign of its insusceptibility to destruction." What must live must be. But does this formula mean, what must live must be alive as long as it exists, and it cannot exist once it no longer lives; or must the formula mean, life is of the thing's essence, it must be in life and there is no way to think of it without implying its life and thus its existence? This latter formulation will certainly remind of a particular kind of proof of the existence of God: if there is a being such that existence is of its essence, then there is no way to discuss it without acknowledging the necessity of its existence. In either case, as the demonstration is left by Socrates, it has something of the appearance of begging the question. Is the immortal soul indestructible? is answered with the assertion that what cannot die cannot pass out of existence. That this conclusion is as interesting to gods as to men is made explicit (106d). At any rate, it could have been asserted as well at the beginning of the argument as at its end, for nothing in the argument proper visibly addresses this issue.

The demonstration of the soul's imperishability is puzzling also in that, while the soul is characterized as the carrier or surrogate of Life, death acts for itself, capable of approaching and, presumably but only for a while, withdrawing. Is death the surrogate of a larger Idea, or is there a Death Itself, the Idea of Death? Is not death simply a negative, the privation of life? What is the ontic status of privations? Are they nothing? If death is ontically nothing, a nonentity, does it for that reason cease to be discussable or cease to be a source of anxiety? The dialogue never suggests that death is not discussable or that it is not a source of anxiety to man and perhaps even, if rarely, to Socrates. The status of privations is not an explicit theme, but it is an active one, in ways that I cannot take up here and of which I will give only a single example. At 106a, the cold is called the heatless or unhot and the hot is called coldless or uncoldest. Socrates says nothing about how far one can go in translating anything into the privation of its oppo-

site. If heat and cold can be named by some process of reciprocating privation of negatives, can death and life be similarly named? After all, the absolutely living is called in Greek as in English the deathless, and Socrates says of “the very idea of life” (*αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος*) that it is “deathless” (106c). There is a special reason for raising the question through the particular conjunction of the examples of heat and cold alongside life and death, as will appear. I think it is fair to infer from the foregoing that Plato presents Socratism as both affected with Pythagoreanism and as being developed by Socrates in ways that differ from the simple orthodoxies of Socratic idealism. A question opened up by this inference, but especially by the second branch of it, is how far the conjectured attributes of Socratism belong to Socrates’ thought and how much to Plato’s. On this difficulty I shall have nothing to say now.

In what direction does the Platonic Socrates seem to withdraw from the rigidities of the ideas and even perhaps of the superiority of death to life? I can give only one suggestion, one that arises out of the place of Crito in the world of Socrates. Crito is Socrates’ interlocutor in a famous dialogue in which Crito tries to persuade Socrates to save himself from death. In the present dialogue, Crito resists Socrates’ death to the very last moment, urging him to use any small means to prolong life—and this after the colossal efforts of Socrates on behalf of death. One inclines spontaneously to say in spite of, but I mean to suggest that one should perhaps say because of Crito’s imperviousness to the radical depreciation of body and life, Socrates shows him a marked and touching affection. I wonder whether Socrates doesn’t like him for his common sense, healthy humanity, and his unshakeable adherence to the simple dictate of natural experience. Nothing can make Crito see death as anything but fearful, bad, and to be avoided as long as possible, and he cannot feel anything but unashamed grief over the loss of one he loves. Socrates does not spurn him because, I suspect, for all his manifold abstractions from body and contradictions of natural experience, Socrates was not completely in accord with his own orthodoxy. Blinding ourselves to this, we will probably be poor readers of Plato’s Socratic dialogues. I find some imponderable support for this speculation in two facts included by Plato in the *Phaedo*: when Socrates’ bonds were removed from his legs by the jailers, he put his feet on the ground and sat thus until the time came for him to die (61d); and when his wife came to bid her seventy-year-old husband a last farewell, she was carrying a babe in arms.

However this may be, the argument of the dialogue is not yet over. Having shown that the soul is imperishable as well as immortal, Socrates desires to depict its fate after its emancipation from the body. This requires him to give a description of the nether regions, a description that unobtrusively becomes a description of the whole world. Socrates presents it as something of which he was persuaded by someone unnamed. To begin with, and stated conditionally, if the earth is round and is in the middle of heaven, it needs nothing to support it but the homogeneity of heaven and its own equilibrium or equipoise (*ἰσορροπία*).

The earth does not fall because it is in a place and condition of perfect opposition of forces, and thus of rest. As for the earth itself, it is a body whose surface is indented and whose interior is hollowed and channelled with an intricacy of passages like a system of arteries and veins. The bulk of Socrates' myth of the earth describes the fluids—primarily water, air, and aether—that lie in and over the pitted surface and that circulate through the great passages within the body of earth. It is a scene of endless flux and oscillation brought on, as he says, by the bottomlessness of the fluids. The cause, he says, is that the fluids have, in the Greek term, no “basis” or step, nothing on or with which to stand. There is a reciprocating rush of fluids from side to side, and out of this melange of fiery, muddy fluxions comes an equipoise. Socrates, who professed his dissatisfaction with Anaxagoras as a doctor of causes, appears to have lapsed into Anaxagoreanism or some form of Heraclitianism at the last moment. The subversion of body has drifted toward a hypothesis of body as cause. What he admits as cause is simple mechanism of matter, and it would be straining credulity to maintain that the cause of that intricate contraption of fluids in motion is the good, namely, the just accommodation of departed souls, rather than the equilibration of spherical earth that must hang without support in the heavens. The cause of the world order is certainly not the good if the good is tantamount to or implicated in the good of man.

There is one last conjunction of notions in the *Phaedo* to which I should like to draw attention. Early in the conversation, (63d) Socrates notices that Crito has been trying to say something, and he asks him what it is. Crito replies that the man in charge of the poison was trying to admonish Socrates to talk less because speaking warms one up and the heat counteracts the poison. Later (105b,c), when Socrates is transcending the safe but stupid dictum that the cause of heat in something is The Hot, he gives as an illustration of the improved conception the statement that what causes the body to be sick is not the presence in it of Sickness in Itself but rather of fever, i.e., fieriness, or heat to excess. In the last sentences of the dialogue, the effect of the poison on Socrates is described as a growing coldness beginning in his feet and rising, like death itself, through his limbs until it reaches his heart, when not only his members but himself died. I wish to suggest that life itself is portrayed as some condition of a man or rather of his body, indeed of any animal or its body, in which heat and cold are in a state of equilibrium or rest, an equilibrium that can be upset by things introduced from without such as drugs, and that can be affected, at least in some men, by an activity of the mind such as speech. (It is not clear whether Socrates in fact required the double or triple dose.) How far the life of man can be understood through the *Phaedo* as a mechanical thermal equilibrium, a microcosm of the fluid equilibrium of the world, is problematic. One would like to know what significance, if any, to attach to the fact that the Greek word for soul is *ψυχή* and for cooling *ψύχω*. Can one be certain that Socrates' last words, the reminder to Crito to pay the debt to Aesculapius, were not a mark of his gratitude to the great druggist for a pain-

less death through cooling numbness rather than for release from life as if it were a disease? What the text does seem to make clear is that the intention of Plato cannot be discerned unless his Socrates is seen in his depth, free from the bonds of an exoteric dogmatism that is, after all, incompatible with his famous irony.

The Socratic dialogues of Plato portray a large variety of philosophic schools, human types, and professions. To understand Plato is to grasp the outcome of the many dramatic meetings in which those actors are brought together for talk. How the reader perceives the outcome of those many discussions should lead him to Plato's premises; but we are tempted to reverse the process and to derive the outcome from some prejudgment of Plato's premises. I have tried to examine some parts of Plato's work presupposing as little as possible about his judgment of Socrates; and I have done so for the sake of understanding what Plato's true judgment of Socrates was and therefore, from Plato's perspective, what Socrates was. I have tried to keep an open mind on the question whether Plato kept an open mind, and I was led to conclude that he had done so. I do not find that Plato blinded himself any more than Aristotle would do to the ligatures that bound Socrates to the thought of his predecessors, or that he believed that alone among men Socrates had no origins to speak of. Nor does it appear that the doctrines for which Socrates is most famous were held by him as dogma or without regard to their value as exoteric.

What entitles Socrates to the encomium of Phaedo at the end of the dialogue—that Socrates was the best and wisest and most just man of that time of whom those about him had experience? Perhaps the answer lies in this: that he achieved the decisive translation of Greek philosophy onto the plane of sobriety. He seems to have taken Pythagoreanism with its cultic and other extremes and domesticated it for prudent men. This domestication included a drastic reformulation, toward restraint, of philosophy's political pretensions. On the other hand, he appears to have elevated Protagoreanism by reminding it of soul and heaven, of which the Pythagoreans were only too frantically aware. Socrates seems to have moved among the schools and professions of the Greeks like a judge in the midst of enthusiasts, pedants, mountebanks, thinkers, climbers, connivers, poets and others. After he had done his work, the stage was set for the seriousness and restraint of Aristotle. That the achievement of Socrates was a historical achievement seems to be some part of the burden of Plato's Socratic corpus. How much of that achievement was in fact Plato's is an enormous question that must remain present to the mind of anyone who hopes to understand Plato.

Socratism appears as a turning point in Greek and thus in all thought, as the cautious deradicalization of its extremes of spiritualism, cultism, and metaphysical dogmatism, accomplished through a careful sifting of the best resources available. There is reason to think that the history of philosophy in the modern age has been a record of the radicalization or intensification of the primary conceptions, a course opposite to that which came to a climactic point with the

philosophizing of Socrates. If this observation were to prove correct, it would indicate that the decline of society is compatible with the most contradictory evolutions of man's theoretical existence. One must be singularly devoted to truth, to be cheered by this discovery.