

# interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

*May & Sept. 1987 Volume 15 Numbers 2 & 3*

- |     |                   |  |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| 157 | K. L. Yeager      | Man and Nature in Plato's <i>Phaedo</i>  |
| 179 | David Bolotin     | The <i>Theaetetus</i> and the Possibility of False Opinion                             |
| 195 | James C. Leake    | Tacitus' Teaching and the Decline of Liberty at Rome (Chapters 3 to 7)                 |
| 309 | Richard Burrow    | Credulity and Curiosity in <i>A Tale of a Tub</i>                                      |
| 323 | Kenneth L. Grasso | Pluralism, the Public Good and the Problem of Self-Government in <i>The Federalist</i> |
| 347 | Chaninah Maschler | On the Wisdom of Nathan  |
| 367 | Will Morrisey     | Robert H. Horwitz, 1923–1987   |
| 373 | Will Morrisey     | Review of <i>The Fate of the Self</i> by Stanley Corngold                              |

# interpretation

Volume 15 numbers 2 & 3

Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin

Editors Seth G. Benardete • Charles E. Butterworth • Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz • Howard B. White (d. 1974)

Consulting Editors Joseph Cropsey • John Hallowell • Wilhelm Hennis • Erich Hula • Harry V. Jaffa • David Lowenthal • Arnaldo Momigliano • Michael Oakeshott • Ellis Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Kenneth W. Thompson

Associate Editors Wayne Ambler • Maurice Auerbach • Fred Bauman • Michael Blaustein • Patrick Coby • Christopher A. Colmo • Edward J. Erler • Maureen Feder-Marcus • Joseph E. Goldberg • Pamela K. Jensen • Grant B. Mindle • James W. Morris • Will Morrissey • Gerald Proietti • Charles T. Rubin • Leslie Rubin • John A. Wettergreen • Bradford P. Wilson • Hossein Ziai • Michael Zuckert • Catherine Zuckert

Manuscript Editor Laurette G. Hupman

Design & Production Martyn Hitchcock

Annual  
subscription rates individual \$15; institutional \$18; student (3-year limit) \$7.50. There are three issues of INTERPRETATION a year.

Address  
for correspondence INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in INTERPRETATION are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send clear and readable copies of their work.

Copyright 1987 • Interpretation

# Man and Nature in Plato's *Phaedo*

K. L. YEAGER

*Boston College*

"Indeed not only this, O Simmias," said Socrates, "but also the first hypotheses, even if they are certain to you, still ought to be examined more clearly; and if you go through them sufficiently, as I think, you will follow the argument to the greatest extent possible to a human being to understand; and if this itself becomes clear, you will not search further."  
—*Phaedo*, 107b

The *Phaedo* is the Platonic dialogue that relates the events of the day of Socrates' death and the conversation which supposedly took place between Socrates and his companions on that day. The arguments contained in the *Phaedo* are focused almost wholly on the soul. The first part of the dialogue provides three major arguments that the soul must always exist. The second part supplies a description of Socrates' own search for the causes of what exists, is generated, and perishes.

In some ways, the *Phaedo* is the counterpart to another dialogue, the *Apology of Socrates*; it could be said to be a second apology, or defense. The arguments given by Socrates here are a response to his companions' demands that he should provide a defense of his apparent willingness to separate himself from them through death. One might reasonably expect this second apology to go deeper than the first apology which was made publicly to the whole mass of the Athenian citizens. When Socrates was called upon to justify his activities before his fellow citizens he defended himself by arguing that he was educating them. He made people think seriously about virtue, he said; in essence, he required the Athenians to take care of their souls. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates speaks to those who have already heeded the advice he gave to the Athenian populace to pay attention to virtue, to learning and wisdom, to one's soul.

The *Phaedo* has little in it which is expressly political in the manner, for instance, of the *Republic* or the *Laws*. It is a strange, esoteric dialogue all about the interaction between body and soul (and in human beings, *νοῦς*, or mind). It does not explicitly ask such questions as "what is justice," "what is the best regime." Still the discussion of the soul is vast in its implications and indeed it is hard to imagine that one could give answers to these particular political questions without thoroughly understanding the causal relationship between body and soul and mind.

Both political and philosophic discourse are ultimately concerned with issues of causation and of order. Pure philosophy is concerned with such matters in a politically disinterested way; political theory becomes involved in debate about causation because it is concerned with justice and therefore with freedom. The concept of freedom, as we human beings know it, presupposes some split—

between something ruling and choosing (i.e., causing) and something being ruled and controlled (i.e., being effected). Justice and law make sense as moral issues only if freedom of choice really exists, the choice to harm or not to harm, to obey law or not to obey. An innate body-soul (including especially the intellect in human beings) dichotomy is the precondition for all our debates about individual responsibility and self-control versus cultural determinism. Justice, freedom, and self-determination or societal self-determination, are core concepts of political theory. No political debate goes far without mention of such matters. How, for example, could a society justify either punishing or rewarding its citizens if there is no certainty as to whether freedom of choice belongs to the individual or not?

Reflection on the soul is the foundation from which all lasting social and ethical recommendations must rise. Near the end of the *Republic*, Socrates states that everything discussed therein would become more clear once the true nature of the soul has been more adequately examined. Of all the dialogues, the *Phaedo* comes closest to fulfilling the promise of a comprehensive inquiry into the nature of the soul. For this reason the *Phaedo* has one of the most tragic settings of any of the Platonic dialogues. The inquiry into the nature of the soul takes place at a great junction where religion, politics, and philosophy (including the study of nature) all meet and play out their conflicts.

In the *Phaedo*, philosophy meets the ancient Greek alliance between religion and politics on common ground and transforms it. The transformation takes place at various levels, in various ways. I will argue in this paper that Plato tries to show in the *Phaedo* that the development of *voûς* (the faculty of reason and conscious decision) is part of a continuum. It is neither a matter of chance material causation nor is it caused by some outside organizing (i.e., divine) noetic force. An implication of Plato's analysis of soul and mind and body is that there is no sharp division between the natural world and the human social and political realm—which means that there is no metaphysical basis for the fact-value distinction. For this reason the philosophical investigation in the *Phaedo* is of significant political interest.

Philosophic discourse about causation necessarily trespasses on the territory of the society's ruling gods. Indeed, this conflict between philosophy and the *πόλις* and its gods is the dramatic context of the dialogue. However, the conflict is resolved through various measures, including the forging of an alliance between philosophy and the god, Apollo. This alliance with the gods smooths the way for the dialogue's active social engineering aspect. Being much more than a set of abstract arguments about the causes of the order of the natural whole, the *Phaedo* contains very powerful myths about the individual soul's immortality and its judgment and reward or punishment after death. These myths have had a profound and continuing influence on human society's politics. Of the many political facets of the *Phaedo*, this one is discussed in the least detail in the present paper. After all it is not possible to discuss myth qua myth until it is shown to actually *be* myth through an analysis of Plato's philosophical arguments.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DIALOGUE

The *Phaedo* has a tightly ordered composition, despite first appearances to the contrary. After Socrates has made an “apology” which his companions find unacceptable, he undertakes an actual examination (cf. 70c) into the question of whether and how the soul exists after death. He offers three major proofs that the soul exists after death, which I will refer to as “the nature argument,” “the recollection argument,” and “the noncomposite soul section.”

Socrates begins with the most basic hypothesis about soul in the nature argument and then advances upward through more and more complex ones in the recollection argument and in parts of the noncomposite soul section, in response to the incompleteness in each preceding argument. In the center, forming a link between the first and last parts of the dialogue are two counter-arguments (presented by Socrates’ two primary interlocutors, Simmias and Cebes) which stand in opposition to Socrates’ proof that the soul must always exist. These counterarguments address the issue of the causal significance of soul and the question of whether soul is something formed by body or whether instead body is formed by soul.

In answer to the counterarguments Socrates finally gives an autobiographical account of his own search for causes and his new “mingled together” method of inquiry—a method which he clearly has used already in the first part of the dialogue. From this point on Socrates makes a complicated retreat from some of the earlier conclusions about the soul, and the discourse then culminates in an acknowledged myth (cf. 110b) about the individual’s journey after death. Nonetheless, taken together the various arguments encompass a very precise attempt at accounting philosophically for the order of the whole in a certain manner.<sup>1</sup>

There are two major undercurrents, two motivations or objectives, that pull the dialogue in various directions and move it along. One of these (the current which is more visible) is that this dialogue answers to the need of most human beings to believe that they will somehow survive death. This is what his companions initially demand of Socrates (cf. 69e–70b)—a proof that his and their souls will exist after death—and it is the requirement the myths seek to satisfy, and the arguments at least on the surface. From the standpoint of the drama of the *Phaedo*, this requirement is the motivating force behind the vast inquiry into the nature of the soul. In addition, Socrates carries on a more hidden dialogue with

1. This underlying attempt is obscured because the dialogue does rely on Pythagorean and Orphic mystical traditions to give the appearance of having proven that the individual soul must always exist. Unfortunately commentators have been too willing to accept these elements at their face value; therefore, they stop at a point where the arguments appear inconsistent or merely wrong. They are then forced to the logical conclusion that Socrates or Plato or both are mystic and doctrinaire “philosophers.” See, for instance, *Plato's Phaedo*, ed. by John Burnet with introduction and notes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. liv–lv, and *Plato's Phaedo*, trans. by R. Hackforth with introduction and commentary (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1972), pp. 3–6.

his fellow-philosopher, Anaxagoras, who is not really present of course, but whose views Socrates brings up at crucial points (cf. 72c; 97b–99d). This is the other current, the more purely philosophical strain of the argument.

The dialogue with Anaxagoras concerns the causes of the generation, existing, and perishing of the beings and what is necessary in order that generation should continue to occur. The philosopher asks to understand the processes which take place in the whole, of which we human beings are merely a small part—a part which nonetheless has to be explained. How is it that beings exist having *voũç*? (*Noũç*, I will leave untranslated in this paper, since it has such a range of meanings—mind, the faculty of reason, of thought, of conscious decision. At 98b–99b acting with *voũç* is described by Socrates as involving conscious choice of the best.) Discussions in the dialogue's first half will eventually lead up to the question of the role of *voũç* in ordering of the whole—the role of *voũç* as an original causal principle, cause of generation and decay. It is the earlier arguments and counterarguments about soul that allow the questioning to reach this peak. Only because the earlier arguments have been gone through can this issue be raised and the answer be attempted.

Anaxagoras seems to have been the first philosopher to suggest that *voũç*, existing independently from all other things, is the original and central ordering principle.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of the dialogue (in the course of answering Cebes' objections), Socrates responds directly to Anaxagoras' thesis and explains why he finds it untenable on various levels. Within the *Phaedo*, Socrates analyzes form and freedom as coming to be and advancing from within the beings rather than as something imposed or given from without, as in Anaxagoras' theory that *voũç*, existing by itself, originally began to order and arrange all things. Nonetheless, the dialogue shows that some principles of the human political order are active in the natural nonman-made order. There are also disharmonies between human need and the conclusions of philosophy, which are muted by salutary myths that reinterpret our relationship to the divine and to the natural world.

Part of the strength of the myths is that they are very carefully given the appearance of being rooted in philosophical proof rather than in human need. The dialogue as a whole is built around the question of *how voũç* relates to bodily form. The surface mythic argument suggests that *voũç* and philosophy can exist in complete separation from body, i.e., *voũç* does *not* depend upon bodily form. (And thus each individual soul can be immortal.) The seriously analytic part of the dialogue takes the fact that *voũç* is related to bodily form as a given—a fundamental datum of experience—and therefore focuses on the question of how *voũç* comes into being and how it is interconnected with, and yet in some aspects free from, a certain bodily form.

It is almost impossible to overestimate Plato's philosophical empiricism in the

2. See Simplicius *Phys. Fr.* 12, 164,24 and 156,13 or *The PreSocratic Philosophers*, commentary and translations by G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1957), pp. 372–73.

*Phaedo* and his parsimony in making hypotheses concerning causation. Yet at the same time Plato's empiricism is nonreductionist—it is very different from the threadbare empiricism of modern times. No perception is discounted merely because it is invisible to the eye. No fundamental human experiences are stripped of significance during the pursuit of the causes which order the natural whole. Plato (cum Socrates) starts with the minimal hypothesis in the nature argument that there is some always existent potential for life in the whole, even when all reproducing living beings have died off. This potential he calls “soul.” Additional hypotheses are brought in with the recollection argument *only* in response to the incompleteness in the nature argument; the two arguments are inextricably bound together. In the extremely complex recollection argument, a series of new hypotheses are considered—including the hypothesis that the nonliving world aims, despite all appearances, not at uniformity, but toward a beauty and good belonging to life. The recollection argument projects the experiences of living, thinking beings back into the nonliving world. Although at first glance this appears to be an illusory projection of our own will (to suggest that what is nonliving aims at anything at all, let alone at some beauty and good), there are philosophical reasons why it is necessary and consistent for Plato to make the hypothesis.

Not only does Plato's analysis avoid positing *voũς* as a separate, original (i.e., god-like) causal force, it also avoids the opposite, which is the mechanistic approach. At the opposite extreme, *voũς* becomes something that pops into being suddenly in a chance way. Bypassing the political and metaphysical problems of each of these opposing approaches, Plato hypothesizes that there is a complex of powers (which he calls “soul”) always existent in the world. Thus *voũς*, when it comes to exist in living beings, does not pop into existence in an arbitrary, and ultimately inexplicable, way, but instead *voũς* is the natural outcome of innate powers and aims, or strivings, within the natural whole. On the other hand, utilizing *voũς* as an independent ultimate cause is also avoided—the Anaxagoras-type usage of *voũς* that Plato argues does not mesh with our human experience of what *voũς* is and redefines *voũς* into nonexistence.

The *Phaedo* begins where Plato's *Apology of Socrates* leaves off. The *Apology of Socrates* closes with a short description of what the soul may experience after death if, as is said, the soul changes from this habitation and goes to another place. (Cf. *Apology of Socrates*, 40c–41d.) In the *Phaedo*, Socrates' first reply to his companions—when they too demand an “apology” of him (63b)—is a pious one. Socrates asserts that the soul can exist in separation from the body after death. When in this state those who have been pure during life may come to “know purely” the pure truth (67a–b). This should seem most desirable to all those who are true philosophers. Socrates also suggests that the gods may be the ones who place the soul in the prison of the body temporarily and he hands himself over to their care and control. The gods are our caretakers and we human beings are their property (62b). Because of these things the companions of Socrates

should not be distressed at the prospect of his imminent departure from them.

This approach will be very quickly abandoned in the new inquiry that follows, but this picture of the individual souls in Hades will be returned to again and again. Socrates' apology remains an important point of reference, although its tenets are not proven. In the arguments which follow the apology, Socrates strikes out in the opposite direction. He leaves behind any mention of the divine rule of human affairs in the first two arguments and only returns to the gods in the third section, which is of questionable character. Socrates proceeds in the first argument, the nature argument, to strip the human soul bare. Whereas the souls he had just described in the apology were richly human (cf. for example, 68a–e or 66b–67b, 64a–b), the soul discussed in the first argument is not recognizably human. The one in the second main argument, the recollection argument, is not a social or political soul. Only in the last argument is anything that touches directly on our social nature mentioned.

Soul becomes inextricably linked to the problem of the cause of generation and decay in the nature argument, and it remains so throughout the dialogue (cf. 95d–96a, 106c–d). Soul is said to be the entity which must always exist if the regeneration of living beings is always to be possible. The nature argument makes certain hypotheses about soul by looking at it from the outside, by analyzing “generations” or processes that appear never to cease to take place in nature. The recollection argument, on the other hand, looks at soul from the inside. From the perspective of what we know of the functioning of our own souls, this argument suggests that there are additional characteristics that always belong to soul which would explain more specifically how it is that the soul “comes into life.” Only perceptions of outer phenomena are discussed openly—perceptions of external likenesses and deficiencies in objects such as sticks and stones. The existence of the human soul's inner desires and deficiencies is merely alluded to. Furthermore, no distinction is made between our human type of souls and inanimate objects in that they too are said to aim and to fall short. The recollection argument, with its concentration upon the soul's perception of the world external to it, is an intermediate step between the nature argument, where none of our souls' own activities and functions are directly discussed, and the third argument. Only in the noncomposite soul section are the soul's inner perceptions detailed—the soul's various desires, the soul's attempt to rule body and itself and to grasp itself by itself. As the recollection argument makes no distinction between animate and inanimate soul, similarly the noncomposite soul argument ignores aspects of the division between the various species of animate soul.

Soul is seen to exist at three levels in the three arguments: as a power oriented toward life, as a being which is receptive and moves toward greater perception while also holding within itself the past through recollection, and finally as a being which perceives itself and becomes occupied with remolding itself. At each step it exhibits freedom of one kind or another and it exerts a forming and re-forming influence. In the last argument, the noncomposite soul section, the

soul's internal attempt to grasp itself by itself, to "collect itself together," and to escape the things which are bodily appear as the highest freedom.

## THE FIRST THREE ARGUMENTS

### *The Nature Argument*

There were numerous difficulties with the apology. It contained no real proof that the soul can exist in *complete* separation from the body or that like beings will exist together after death, i.e., the pure souls with what is pure. Neither was there a proof that the gods exist and rule benevolently. Cebes states the problem in the following way: Many people fear that the soul scatters at death and is nowhere; if it does exist collected together itself by itself, and if it has some power and prudence then there is reason for hope. (Cf. 69e–70b.) The three arguments which follow respond to the difficulty as it is set forth by Cebes. The first argument deals in the abstract with the power of the soul after death. The next argument takes up the issue of the prudence of soul. The third is concerned with the matter of the soul's collectedness.

We turn now to the nature argument—the first part of what Socrates refers to as an actual examination into the things that concern us about the soul (70c). This argument is based upon an analysis of what must be necessary if nature is to be perfect (or not "maimed" or "imperfect," cf. 71e). As has been mentioned before, it constitutes a radical departure from the tenets of the apology section. Socrates sets out to prove that the soul always exists by proving that the living are generated out of the dead. Although to begin with he recalls the ancient saying that the souls exist in Hades, conjuring up an image of individual souls having some resemblance to the living person, ultimately this argument is quite unsuited to proving that any individual soul exists after death.

Socrates argues that if all generated beings come to be from their opposites then the living must come to be from the dead. Each generated being must repay the others by going into its opposite—otherwise all would come to have the same form, experience the same thing and would stop coming to be (72b). From the fact that things have *not* come to be in this state Socrates will surmise something about the necessary structure of things. An underlying assumption which he makes is that the material of generation is limited, able to be used up. "And if all should become compounded, but would not separate again, quickly it would happen as Anaxagoras said, 'all things together'" (72c).

In the final stage of the argument, Socrates contends that even though the living things presently come to be from other living things, if all the living should die off, then there are no means by which all would not be spent up into death unless the process of "coming to life again" (*ἀναβιώσκεσθαι*, cf. 71e–72a, 72d) exists—the coming to be of the living again from what is nonliving.

if all should die off, which partake of life, and when they had died, the dead would remain in that same form and would not come back to life again, is it not altogether necessary that all at last be dead and not even one alive? For if the living things should come to be from the others [seemingly Socrates refers to the other living things here], but the living things should die, do any means exist by which all would not be spent up into death? (72b–d)

Thus the basis of the nature argument must remain hypothetical since it rests upon the assumption that at some hypothetical time all the living simultaneously cease to exist. At such a time when the generation of living beings can not take place through the reproductive processes belonging to the living, the coming to be again of the living can be explained through generation of the living from their opposite, the nonliving.<sup>3</sup>

The last segment of the nature argument contains an important analogy between sleeping and waking and dying and coming into life again. Here Socrates uses the illustration of the sleeping Endymion (the lover of the moon, who was said to sleep eternally in the hills). Endymion, Socrates says, would be idle talk and would appear to be nowhere if all came to be asleep and there were no awakening from sleep (72b–c). In this case, it seems, it would no longer make sense to refer to anything as asleep, since sleeping necessarily implies the potential to waken. Potential must imply actualizability, for if a potential were *never* actualized it would no longer be potential—that would be only “idle talk.” Endymion then would be “nowhere” in the sense that what defines him, his sleeping or his potential for wakefulness, no longer exists.

What does this tell us about soul? How shall we compare falling soundly asleep and waking up (changes within particular individuals) with the processes of living and dying? In going from the one example to the other we move from one level of being to another. If the living did not come to be from what is dead

3. I use the terms “dead” and “nonliving” interchangeably in my discussion because as Plato uses the term *τὰ τεθνεῶτα* in his nature argument, it becomes synonymous with “the nonliving” in meaning. It becomes indistinguishable because Plato shifts from speaking of individual, generated beings to speaking of processes or generations. He really only gives arguments why certain types of generations must always exist. And the fact that Plato is able to argue convincingly that the processes or generations always exist means that it is no longer necessary to suppose the *individual* souls exist after death. If there is no continuity of *individual* soul after death, then there is no basis upon which to distinguish the dead from the nonliving. What is dead? For something to be “dead” (in the way the superficial argument for the immortality of the soul requires) there must be an individual soul-related continuity with what the specific being was while living. The nonindividuation of death becomes especially clear at 72c–d where Plato argues that all would be “spent up into death” (*εἰς τὸ τεθνάναι*) if all living beings should die and if the process of return to life again (*τὸ ἀναβιώσασθαι*) did not exist. It is also clear at 77c–d that Plato is discussing life and death as general states and not at the individual level: All the living come to be from the dead for soul comes into life from no place other than death and a state of death (*ἐκ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ τεθνάναι*). Unindividuated deadness has no element to separate it out and differentiate it from something that is merely nonliving. Of course, it is important for Plato to continue to use the term “the dead” throughout the nature argument given that he wishes to maintain the appearance of having proven that the souls of dead *individuals* will exist in Hades after their deaths. (Additionally, there is no handy Greek equivalent for “the nonliving” even if Plato had wished to use it—certainly not *ἄβιον*, and there is no *ἀζῶον*.)

and if the living things all die, there are no means by which all would not be “spent up” into death. This was a statement about what would occur within the whole taken in its entirety. Socrates hypothesizes that everything can actually at some point die; this hypothesis is necessary to his argument. The state of the whole when this occurs is like the sound sleep of an individual in that the potential that things will again partake of life must exist—just as the potential for waking exists in the sleeping individual. The functioning of the nonliving natural whole is such that living beings can again be generated.

In what way then is soul to be understood given Socrates' discussion, none of which has had anything to say specifically about soul itself, at least not about the souls we know as our own? The arguments seemed to aim at proving that the potentiality for life must exist in what is not alive. If the arguments finally have proven in fact that “the souls of the dead exist,” as Socrates concludes, what can be surmised about soul without going outside the sphere of these arguments themselves? Soul seems finally to be a potential for wakefulness which exists in the whole even when all is dead, or “asleep” in the terms of the analogy. What exists before soul has “come into life” can be said to be asleep (i.e., to have the potential for life, but not actually presently experience the things of life, such as sense perception, consciousness, knowledge of self, etc., which we experience) without speaking idle nonsense because the living must always come into being again.

Beyond this potential for life, no other qualities are ascribed to soul within the nature argument. Socrates no longer claims the souls exist in Hades. They do not exist in some separate place. Potential for life, or soul, rests somehow within what is dead. It is even difficult to say that soul “exists somewhere,” as Cebes had hoped Socrates would prove, for what exists as potential does not exist in the same way as what is actual.

### *The Recollection Argument*

Not surprisingly, one of those present, Cebes again, is still not satisfied: What is the connection between this ungenerated soul, this potential for life shown to exist through the nature argument and our own souls? Cebes now brings up the argument for recollection. He is concerned that it be shown that the soul always has knowledge and right reason, that it has some link with the soul we human beings know as our own. Cebes mentions as proof that we always have knowledge and right reason within, the fact they are able to be made conscious through questioning and answering, and therefore they must have been there originally all along. There is a difficulty in this proof (which remains throughout the rest of the recollection argument) because before this knowledge becomes conscious it is unknown to us and not a part of our conscious being.

Socrates soon takes over this argument from Cebes, but he begins at a much more basic level of argumentation than the questioning and answering process of

human beings. He begins with the innate receptivity belonging to living beings. When we perceive anything we also “receive in mind the form” of something perceived in the past (Cf. 73c–d). Socrates gives various examples wherein recollection is caused by like and by unlike things. The role of eros is merely alluded to: It is lovers (*οἱ ἐρασταί*, 73d), in Socrates’ first example, who recollect a beloved boy upon seeing a lyre or cloak which belonged to him. When things are unlike, we seem to recollect most readily when we have a strong emotional investment in what is recollected. (However, eros is not supposed to belong to the soul according to the apology section, at least not any nonphilosophical, impure desires.)

Socrates’ recollection argument preserves the link established in the nature argument between the soul that exists before “coming into life” and the living souls which have been generated, or have come into life. In his analysis of recollection, Socrates treats inanimate things (sticks, an instance of something dead, but once living, and stones, an instance of something we think of as always and completely nonliving) as though they too must aim and strive at something and yet fall short of what they “eagerly desire” (cf. 74d–75b). Thus in this way Socrates does not divide us off from the nonliving things; in the recollection argument, stones and sticks experience the aiming and striving—the intentionality—usually ascribed to the living alone. As Socrates’ arguments will attempt to show and as he finally will suggest (cf. 74e–76d), it makes no sense to say these experiences or “knowledges” suddenly come into being at birth. We can give no account of how or why this should be so.

In the next stage of the argument, after having described what he means by “recollection,” Socrates gives an account of how we come to have knowledge of “the equal itself.” Our ability to conceive of “the equal itself” appears to be possible only because we have certain innate capacities, such as an inborn ability to perceive likeness and, at the same time, deficiency or lack (cf. 74a). Eros, or desire, is the positive aspect of the perception of lack. Socrates’ account of knowing includes the sensation of aiming at something, reaching and grasping at something beyond us, in with the other things known and perceived. Socrates says that if someone should see the sensible equals and think that they aim to be like “the equal itself,” he must have known “the equal itself” in some previous time, and he then uses this argument to prove that we must have had “prudence” before birth (76c).

In the middle of the recollection argument, Socrates tacitly drops “the equal itself” as the being at which nonliving things (such as sticks and stones) are seen to aim. Nonliving beings cannot really aim at the equal itself, even though to us they might appear to become more like as they decompose or disperse. That the nonliving should aim at something other than complete likeness is crucial to the argument as a whole at this point. Thus far in the dialogue’s proof Socrates has not assumed as necessary the existence of any external impetus which would be the cause of continual generation and decay; therefore, the impetus must come

from within the regenerating being itself. Socrates seems to be following the path of his new “method” which is described later in the dialogue at 97b–106d. He is moving up through one hypothesis to the next until he reaches one which is sufficient. He seems to be exploring a possible explanation of the continual genesis of living beings without recourse to some separate outside ordering principle—such as *νοῦς*, which served this function in Anaxagoras’ analysis (cf. pages 159 and 160 above). If the nonliving progressed toward perfect likeness, all would become moniform; but this is something which the nature argument hypothesizes is never able to happen, since if it did all would cease to be generated and all would now have been spent up into death. Socrates quietly substitutes the beautiful and the good as that which is aimed at (75c–d, 76d–e).

Whereas the conclusion of the nature argument is restated often, and significantly amended each time (cf. 71e, 72a, 72d, 77c), the recollection argument lacks an official conclusion. Socrates asks *if* it is true that *if* the things which we are always talking about such as beauty and good exist, and if we refer all the things of the senses toward these, which being ours we discover existing before, and if we liken the things we perceive to this or by means of this, then is it so that either our soul or our souls (plural) exist before we are born in this human form (cf. 76d–e). The suggestion here seems to be that only if there is always some reference toward beauty and good and some making of likenesses or representation in response to this perception of beauty can we really properly call what exists before our birth “soul.” Otherwise the being which was referred to as “soul” in the nature argument (the potential for life) lacks any real likeness to the souls which we know as our own during life. The arguments of the previous sections and the conclusion that the soul always exists would have been “spoken in vain.”

Since Simmias immediately answers Socrates’ complicated question in the affirmative, all manner of difficulties are covered over. By first saying that this would mean that our soul would exist after death and then changing to our souls (plural), Socrates silently points to a problem. Does the previous existence of this aiming or reference toward beauty and good (a form of knowing which Socrates calls prudence at one point) prove that our own individual souls exist? It seems not to; the knowing and aiming of soul before it comes into life seems to be subconscious or unconscious, like the knowledge in us which Cebes spoke of to begin with which is not conscious before it is brought out in questioning and answering. Another indication that this reference toward beauty and good is not personal or conscious is that Socrates gives no account of how and why such things are forgotten at birth. Such an account is necessary if these things were consciously known.

At the end of the recollection argument when Simmias complains that there has been no proof that the individual soul exists after death, Socrates directs him back to the nature argument, insisting this supplies all the additional proof which is necessary—the nature argument having already shown that the soul (soul in the singular, not our individual souls, in the final amendment at 77c–d) must al-

ways exist if the living are to come to be again from the dead. The nature argument standing alone, although concluding that the capacity for regeneration and change always exists in nature, had not shown in detail how and why the living come to be, or even why separations between things are maintained, given that opposite things come to be from opposites.

The recollection argument, taking qualities which belong to our own souls, hypothesizes that these activities might also belong to the ungenerated, always existent soul of the nature argument. Soul's directedness toward something beyond it, its sensation of lack, together with its involvement with form (with images like but not precisely like what it has "known" in the past) might explain in greater detail how soul is a source of change even before it comes into life. If one does not go outside of the circle of the nature and recollection arguments, the beauty and good which soul is said always to reach toward seems as though it must be the greater perceptivity and knowledge, including self-knowledge, which belongs to life. This would be true of soul even when it exists in the nonliving state.

Socrates gives various indications that the conclusions of the recollection argument are more tentative than those of the nature argument, but it has extended the nature argument and attempted to fill up the incompleteness in that argument in the only way possible—by considering the activities of our own souls, our souls' powers of reference and representation. These powers exist even when soul is not yet conscious or self-conscious. Involvement with form is something which also takes place at nonconscious levels in the regeneration of the living and the reproduction of offspring, which are images too in their own way that are like, but not completely like. The soul's apprehension of form is not solely a conscious activity even when soul is alive. According to the nature argument, the existence of soul is necessary for the coming to be of the living; as such it is a source of change, of metamorphosis, in fact. If, as the recollection argument intimates, the soul of the nonliving world is moved and is a source of becoming through some sensation of lack or deficiency, then our souls and the soul of the nature argument would have a kinship to one another. With its analysis of soul's innate receptivity to form and soul's innate sensation of deficiency, the recollection argument has taken us further down a path toward an explanation of generation and decay—but it has also lead us further away from the pure, disembodied soul of the apology.

### *The Noncomposite Soul Section*

The recollection argument has brought to light new issues, new questions. How, precisely, does soul aim away from perfect homogeneity toward life and toward greater knowledge, including self-knowledge? Pursuit of the answer will require a discussion of the interrelationship between soul (the being shown to be involved with form and potential) and body. Directed by the requirements of the

ongoing investigation, the question takes the form of an inquiry into the “collect-  
edness” of soul. The nature and recollection arguments did not prove that our  
own souls exist, each still “gathered together” after death (a third requirement in  
Cebes’ initial objection to Socrates’ apology, 70a–b) and for all time nor is there  
any proof that the soul can exist in complete separation from the body, quite the  
opposite in fact. When Simmias now wishes Socrates to show in addition that the  
soul is not scattered after death, Socrates says that they require a charm to charm  
away their fear of death (77e). Thus the last argument that the soul is noncom-  
posite and therefore unable to disperse at death is of a questionable character,  
charm being linked with myth (114d) and myths with the poets, who compose  
myths, not arguments (*λόγοι*) (61b).

At the end of the recollection argument, Simmias suggests that the soul, hav-  
ing been put together from some other source, might simply disband again at  
death. Socrates does not proceed by arguing that each individual soul remains  
gathered together after death, as Simmias intimates he might; instead he argues  
that the soul is not composite and for this reason unlikely to disperse. He sets up  
a dichotomy which is alien to the two previous arguments, but which is compati-  
ble with the apology section. The world is divided into two kinds of being—  
invisible, changeless, noetic, noncomposite, and visible, constantly changing,  
anoetic, composite. Socrates gives a series of proofs that the soul fits into the cat-  
egory of the noncomposite form of being. However, soon after he describes the  
activities of various human souls, including philosophic souls, in such a way that  
the human soul appears to be a gathered and gathering type of being—the philo-  
sophic soul most of all (cf. 83a). Subtly and not so subtly, he undercuts his own  
argument that the individual soul is noncomposite and not able to disperse.

The process of making the division between the two separate forms of being is  
complicated and contains many layers of hypotheses, but the supporting argu-  
ments themselves are not fleshed out. After positing that *if* anything happens to  
be noncomposite, then that thing, *if* anything, ought not undergo dispersion  
(78b–c), Socrates turns, not directly to soul, but to what is apprehended by the  
soul. The equal itself and the beautiful itself are said to be taken hold of only by  
the reasoning of the intellect (79a); the role of sense perception is now denied  
(compare 74a–b). These invisible things grasped by the soul are said to be  
changeless and monofrom and the soul is said to be akin to (but not the same as)  
them. On the other hand, the visible, tangible things, such as men, horses or  
cloaks,<sup>4</sup> which may be called equal or beautiful, are claimed to be constantly  
changing and never in any way like each other or themselves (78e–79a). Soc-  
rates ignores the likeness between members of a species that allows them to be

4. Socrates uses combinations of a cloak, lyre, horses, and human beings, and pictures of these things, as illustrations in the recollection and noncomposite soul arguments (73d–74a, 78e). The lyre and cloak anticipate images of soul that Simmias and Cebes will later use, but the horses draw our attention to another dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, with its important discussion of soul. In the *Phaedrus*, the powers, or desires, of the composite human soul are likened to two horses and a charioteer.

called by the same name—man or horse—and he ignores the unity and likeness the being itself has with itself as it exists through time.

The present division between the invisible, changeless form of being and the visible, changeable form also passes over whole categories of things which fit into both groups. The actual experience of perception and of reasoning is invisible and changing, so too are passions, desires, fears, hopes, etc. Nonetheless the argument about the two forms of being turns into an attack against sense perception and all information supplied by the senses, including presumably hearing, which is one of the senses that grasps what is invisible (cf. 79c).

The most devastating argument against the dichotomy is given by Socrates himself. Immediately after positing the changelessness of soul and the things perceived by soul and right before formally severing the connection between soul's reasoning and sense perception, Socrates overturns his own argument. He points out, gratuitously it might seem, that the division between the visible and changing things and the invisible, changeless things is based in human nature (79b–c). It is the senses themselves, telling us what is visible and what is not, which supply the information that yields the body–soul dichotomy—the very senses now and in the apology section under attack. The validity of the argument (which deprecates sense perception) and the value of sense perception stand or fall together. Contained within this delicate Platonic irony there is of course an implied challenge—what is the answer then, how much in the dichotomy is correct, how much of it is false? Sense perception by itself is neutral; it is the intellect's interpretation of the evidence supplied through the senses that is right or wrong.

After the division between body and soul has been completed, Socrates adds on two important new characteristics. These characteristics apply only when soul and body are together, not if they were to exist in separation. The soul rules and is master while the body is ruled and serves. Because of its ruling and comprehending capacity, soul is said to be like the divine, since what is divine guides that which is bodily and mortal (cf. 79e–80a). Soul, alone by itself, is not claimed to be divine, only soul in conjunction with body.

How important then is the divine and guiding aspect of soul? This is an issue linking the first part of the noncomposite soul argument with the last part. The second part contains discussions of the interrelationship between body and soul. In this section soul is described as a being that changes according to the direction of its loves, desires, and passions. Underneath the question of whether soul is composite and changing or noncomposite and changeless another more basic issue lingers—the freedom of soul. The noncomposite soul section treats the problem of soul's freedom on a new level, the level most interesting to the political theorist. Although the nature and recollection arguments dealt with certain innate capacities for change belonging to soul, neither of these two major arguments had anything to say about change in form in the kind of soul that is specifically human. When human beings talk about freedom and virtue they are speaking

about the possibility of change that occurs in response to opinion (δόξα, 98e–99a) (itself able to change) about what is best, as opposed to change initiated by what is bodily in form. The noncomposite soul section, which opens with an explication of the body-soul separation, has thus taken us over into the political realm of human beings. Prior to making the distinction between soul and body—one part ruling, the other obeying—there is no possibility of discussion of freedom and choice of action. Likewise, of course, there is no possibility of the discovery of determinism or, put into more ancient terms, the belief that everything happens by necessity, in the form of chance.

If the import of the nature and recollection arguments has been accepted, the issue of determinism is more or less moot. The whole thrust of the philosophic analysis in the *Phaedo* has been toward an understanding of soul as a source of change and metamorphosis. In these two previous major arguments soul has been shown to have certain capacities or potentials. It has always been involved with change of form at some level. To quickly recapitulate, in the nature argument soul was analyzed as a power allowing the emergence of life, a potential that always remains even when all is still embedded in an unconscious or “sleeping” state. In the recollection argument soul was surmised to have innate powers of perception of likeness and deficiency, and along with this a directedness always toward some good and beauty. The recollection argument linked the soul of the nature argument with the conscious and directed type of soul we know as our own. At the conclusion of the recollection argument it remained to relate the powers of the soul of the recollection argument to the transforming potency of the human soul existing within a political and philosophical environment. At least this further step is necessary if the nature of the human soul is to be fully examined.

The noncomposite soul section began by setting forth a “bodyform”–“soulform” dichotomy. Now that the body–soul separation has been maneuvered into place—this distinction being a most essential one for political discourse, and of course for philosophy altogether—the noncomposite soul argument turns to an analysis of political and philosophical activity. The second half of the noncomposite soul section is immensely complex in its description of the soul’s guidance and transformation of body and of the soul’s attempt to free itself from the body.

At first the gods have a prominent role in the account (cf. 80d, 81a, 82b–c)—reminiscent of the apology section where lovers of learning say that “the god himself would set us free” from the body (67a). This is despite the fact no proof has yet been given that the gods exist. Instead the intervening arguments have worked together to eliminate the power of the god(s). The noncomposite soul argument itself has just linked the gods with what is bodily in form insofar as they are divine and ruling in nature (79e–80a). However, as the argument progresses philosophy takes the place of the gods. At 84a philosophy, as opposed to the god(s), is said to set us free from the body. The bringing in of this new god, phi-

osophy, is done with great subtlety and in such a way that philosophy seems to be in alliance with the ruling gods. Preservation of this link is important practically speaking, since philosophy, love of wisdom, becomes the whole basis of morality here. The orderliness and courage of the philosopher consist in not being moved by loves and desires other than love of wisdom (83e–84a). The philosopher’s virtue has been called the only genuine sort of virtue (69b).

Philosophy is elevated and, like a Greek god, given a persona of its own (cf. 82d–83b, 84a) as though it existed apart from being a love in the souls of specific human beings. At the same time the political realm is degraded and in a somewhat less subtle way than the downgrading of the role of the gods. With several sentences the autonomy of the political sphere is dissolved:

Those who have preferred injustice and tyranny and rapacity enter into the race of wolves and hawks and kites; or where else can we say those of such sort go?

Of course, said Cebes, into the ones of such sort.

Therefore, he said, also the others are clear, where each would go, according to what is most like its own care?

It is clear, he said, certainly.

Accordingly the most happy of these and those who go into the best place are those who have practiced the social and political virtue, which they call moderation and justice, having become such from habit [or custom] and care without philosophy and *voũç*?

How are these the most happy?

Because these are likely to go again into some such political and tame race, either some such as of bees or of wasps or of ants, or even into the same human race again, and moderate men come to be from them.

Probably (82a–b).

It is not the practice of customary social virtue that makes us specifically human. Even some insects practice these virtues; in essence, there is no difference. This strange consequence would follow from the nature and recollection arguments. If all soul is understood to be somewhat free, we can not divide off one segment of living soul from another and say it only has freedom, with the attendant possibility of choice and virtue. According to the statement quoted above, philosophy and *voũç* are what distinguishes us from the other living beings.

Philosophy is a new entrant at this point in the inquiry into the nature of soul. The nature and recollection arguments are examples of philosophic inquiry it seems—later this type of inquiry is referred to as “wisdom (*σοφία*), which they call investigation of nature”<sup>5</sup>—yet philosophy itself qua species of love, an aim of the soul, has not been explored. How does it come into being? What is its status? How does this most complex love connect with, or flow out of, the more basic loves in the soul? These questions are of utmost importance given the So-

5. *Σοφία* when it appears here at 96a is particularly striking since the noun by itself occurs so rarely in the *Phaedo*. In fact I think this is the only place it appears in the dialogue.

cratic assertion that the soul in its innermost, truest nature is inclined toward pursuit of knowledge.

First, it is crucial to note that love of wisdom and freedom are closely tied in the last segment of the noncomposite soul argument. And freedom is discussed in terms of escape from the imprisonment of what is “bodyform.” As to the positive aspect of truth—what the soul reaches toward and grasps when it escapes what is bodily—this is not discussed in any detail. The positive aspect, the goal, is presented later in the dialogue. It is knowledge of always existent causes of generation and decay, a knowledge which incidentally leads to discovery of the deathlessness of soul (cf. 95e–100c), though not of the individual soul.

As was mentioned earlier, there are two basic presentations of the soul’s freedom from body here. In the first, the one heaviest in references to the gods, the individual soul is highly responsible for its bodily form. Each soul in its next life takes on a form corresponding to its desires and concerns (80d–82c). A picture is drawn of how the world might appear if, at some point, the individual soul through its aims and concerns chose its own species form. In the second account the consciously aiming soul is responsible for much less. What the conscious soul exercises freedom in is its response to sense perception and pleasure and pain—changing and invisible things felt in the soul (cf. 82c, 82e–83e).

Freedom from these invisible but body-related perceptions is achieved through philosophy, the love of wisdom. As presented by Socrates, philosophy seems to come upon the soul suddenly, taking possession of it when it is wholly bound and fastened in the body (82d–e). Yet as the description is expanded, evidence accumulates showing that the prephilosophic soul is not really so “wholly bound fast in the body.” To the extent that philosophy can speak with this soul, exhorting and reasoning with it, to the extent the soul is susceptible to varying beliefs, nurture, and even rhetoric, (cf. 82d–84b), it seems to be already independent from body. There is a hint that the soul philosophy begins to speak to is a soul engaged in a social and political existence. Philosophy suggests to the merely political human being that he is not as free as he had thought. It asserts that the orderliness and bravery of “the many”—qualities already implying exercise of control in regard to pleasure and pain—are not genuine (83e–84a).

How does love of wisdom free the soul from the body? As was mentioned above, sense perception and pleasure and pain are key elements in the soul’s escape, or failure to escape, from body. Both sense perception and pleasure and pain are attacked on grounds of their deceptiveness. However, the ability of sense perception to deceive seems more to be a route through which our perceptions and opinions about pleasure and pain can be attacked. The greatest evil of all is believing that what causes the soul great pleasure or pain is true when it is not—and it is in this way that the human soul is put into bondage by the body and forced to share the body’s “opinions.”<sup>6</sup> (Cf. 83c–d.)

6. After the noncomposite soul argument, the status of *λόγος* becomes a central issue. In accord with this, the greatest evil a human being can suffer is changed to hatred of *λόγος* (89d).

Socrates asks if it is true that the things causing “the soul of each human being” the greatest pleasure and pain are mostly the visible ones (83c). Although Cebes answers affirmatively, this seems untrue. What causes human beings the greatest pleasure and pain are things that have a large measure of opinion, belief, and thought added in, things such as honor, the god(s), power, speeches, hope of salvation, foreknowledge and fear of death, beauty or nobility of soul, justice, and so on. All such things seemingly must be consigned to the realm of the deceptive and uncertain, since they exist outside of the realm of the “divine and pure, and monoform” (83e)—except that this category itself is quite dubious (cf. pp. 169–170 above).

Despite Socrates’ reiteration of the rigid body–soul dichotomy in the non-composite soul section, his analysis has disclosed a soul which always moves along a continuum of freedom. Even when the soul is originally bound to the body it is not absolutely enslaved but a willing partner. The imprisonment is through the soul’s own desire and the soul imprisoned is “very much an assistant in his imprisonment” (82e–83a). Indeed, if the soul were ever wholly tied to bodily pleasure and pain, it is hard to see how philosophy would get a chance to begin to loosen it from the body. However, even when the soul is free it is impossible to discuss its freedom without reference to its relationship to what is bodily in form (cf. myth, esp. 114c).

At the conclusion of the noncomposite soul section, the dialogue has reached a high point: Philosophy, love of wisdom, has been shown to be the love that offers the soul the greatest freedom from body. But the position that philosophy now occupies is precarious, both philosophically and politically. Philosophy extends the original realization, primary to all human beings, that sense perception can be deceptive, to human opinions regarding whatever should cause them “exceedingly much pleasure or fear or grief or desire” (83b). The noncomposite soul section presents a vivid picture of philosophy solidifying doubt in regard to all human opinions. The analysis could be a formula for what is now called relativism, which naturally takes hold once all human perceptions are shown to be susceptible to questioning. However, a basis is also delineated upon which love of wisdom can be valued, even if all the other loves in the soul are dubious.

This foundation has its weaknesses. Philosophy supposedly allows the soul the greatest possible freedom from the body as the soul is grasping toward the truth. Truth must be valuable in itself; truth must be attainable. In fact, most human beings seem to have a natural need for truth, at some level. Few are able to value something and aim at it once they sense that that objective is in some way false. Truth may be impossible for human beings to attain (cf. 66e, 85c–d, 91b). Truth’s absence creates a vacuum in the social and political sphere. Alternatively, truth if attained may be detrimental to that sphere. As a remedy, politic myths might be constructed to transform the truth, myths such as those found in the *Phaedo* (cf. 110a–114d, 77e, 61b), and in other Platonic dialogues. At this point in the *Phaedo* a separate noetic realm wherein the philosopher will attain a

divine and pure and monoform truth and will join the gods has been posited. The existence of this separate realm of changeless truth is quite problematic itself, as has been pointed out already.

In the second half of the *Phaedo*, all the diverse strains of the first part discussion of soul are pulled together. Everything is brought into focus around the issue of the nature of the truth grasped by philosophy. Philosophy's truth is openly admitted to involve knowledge of generation and decay and the inquiry becomes concentrated on the body–soul interaction, moving away from the rigid body–soul separation of the apology and noncomposite soul sections.

### PHILOSOPHY'S REALM

For a short time again at the center of the dialogue, the momentum comes directly from Simmias and Cebes. They insist on unraveling the Penelope-like fabric that Socrates has just woven for the soul (cf. 84a–b)—his nurture of belief in the monoform, changeless nature of the individual soul. Each suggests an alternative model of causal interrelationship between body and soul. In Cebes' image, soul is the weaver of body, soul's cloak; yet the individual soul can weaken and die (86e–88b). In Simmias' image, soul is like a harmony produced by the instrument of the body, necessarily dispersing as soon as the body dies (85e–86d). Simmias intimates that the body and soul might be produced by some demiurge(s) (86c).

Simmias has reopened a number of issues. The nature and recollection arguments taken together had offered a possible explanation of the generation of living beings without recourse to any sort of separate demiurge. However, the presentation of the body–soul dichotomy in the noncomposite soul section opened the way to new answers. Some ruling and invisible demiurge(s) is now available to account for the ordering in the whole—available not just as a mythic tool or playful conjecture, but as an actual philosophical explanation. Socrates describes this philosophic “attack” against his arguments in grand Homeric terms (89b–c, 95a–b), for philosophy and truth have replaced every other arena wherein battles of value might be played out.

Socrates pauses to make clear that if what Simmias says is true, virtue is not possible for human beings (cf. 92e–94a). Aspects of the arguments of Simmias and Cebes are then united and transposed into the language of Anaxagoras, the philosopher who gave definitive expression to the possibilities inherent in the body–soul division. As cause of generation and decay and origin of living beings, Anaxagoras posited *νοῦς*, which, he said, existed originally as a separate, all-alike, all-knowing or determining force that produced the order of the physical whole.<sup>7</sup> Later *νοῦς* came to be mixed in with some things—which explains why these things have life. Virtue and choice become just as problematic on

7. Simplicius *Phys.* Fragment 12, 164,24 and 156,13 or Kirk and Raven, pp. 372–73. Also, Simplicius, Fr. 17, *Phys.* 163,20, wherein Anaxagoras denies that qualitative change takes

Anaxagoras' account as on Simmias' for  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  is all-alike and changeless and living beings differ only by having more or less of it.

Anaxagoras' conception of  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  is similar in many respects to Socrates' description of soul in the noncomposite soul argument—soul as monoform, changeless, able to exist in complete separation from body. However, in the course of his discussion of Anaxagoras' thesis and of how  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  might order the whole, Socrates gives an analysis of what we mean by  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  (autobiographical section, 97b–99d). Because Anaxagoras did not pay attention to what  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  is, he finally reduced it to physical causation. But  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  is an individual deciding force, conscious choice of the best in the context of a political, nonunitary whole, dependent upon having a certain bodily form (cf. 98b–99c). It is not simply a unitary force. For there to be choice, the soul cannot be monoform, noncomposite, by itself, apart from any bodily form.

Philosophizing too involves choice: The philosopher gropes along many ways or possible routes of inquiry, and Socrates himself finally chose a *composite* way (cf. 96a–b, 97b). Upon the failure of first the minimal hypothesis that what is bodily in form alone can explain generation and decay (cf. 96a–97b), and second the failure, or insignificance,<sup>8</sup> at the other extreme, of  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  alone as an adequate explanation (cf. 97b–99d), Socrates took a new route. To him “it seemed necessary taking flight into  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  to examine in those the truth of the beings” (99e).<sup>9</sup>  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\iota$  become prominent as a sort of intermediary means by which the philosopher can grasp the truth. But this is a specifically human way of knowing as Socrates has pointed out in the recollection argument: When a human being

---

place—what is called generation and perishing is merely combining and separating of always existent things; (p. 369 in Kirk and Raven). See also *Simpl. Phys. Fr. 14, 157,7*, or p. 374 in Kirk and Raven.

8. There is some ambiguity as to whether the whole might not be arranged and caused by  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$ . This is because what “the best” means undergoes a change within the autobiographical section and the best is that according to which  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  would arrange things. Socrates first expected  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  would arrange and establish each thing as would be best for that particular thing (97c–d). Next he amends this to say that  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  would arrange things as is best for each and good for all in common (98b). The final statement—after Socrates' own choice of the best is itself shown to be in regard to the human whole, the  $\pi\acute{o}\lambda\iota\varsigma$ , and to involve self-sacrifice—is that when people search for causes they fail to think of “the good and necessity which constrains and holds together” (99c). The qualification that  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  should order things according to what is best for any particular thing by itself is tacitly dropped. Socrates says he could not find out about this sort of cause and he then seems to treat the possibility that the whole might be ordered in this way by  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  as inconsequential. Perhaps this is because nothing is added by this beyond what the nature argument had already shown to be necessary for the continual generation of new beings. The nature argument assumed the material of generation is limited; no individual good is able to be maintained since each generated being eventually must give back its substance if generation is to continue.  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  as an ordering principle is not distinguishable from this necessity which impinges upon each generated being and the good which is the good of the regenerating whole. Thus,  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  would no longer be differentiated from what is usually called nature, with its economic constraints. At any rate, knowledge of this separate, unitary, ordering  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$  is not accessible to philosophy since it can neither be taught and thus learned nor can it be discovered for oneself through inquiry (cf. 99c–d). So Socrates suggests in the *Phaedo*; the *Timaeus* is another matter.

9.  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  I shall leave untranslated since, as in the case of  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\zeta$ , the Greeks allowed  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  to retain such complexity of meaning—all centered around the human facility with language. It can mean

knows, he can give an account (*λόγος*) of what he knows (76b). He does not grasp the truth directly but through *λόγοι*, which are themselves images.

Socrates says that to examine the truth of the beings in *λόγοι* is no more of a study of images than is to study this truth in visible activities and their products (*ἔργα*) (99e–100a). Both *λόγοι* and *ἔργα* are evidence of the projective nature of soul hypothesized always to exist in the nature and recollection arguments. Soul's involvement with images has a vast range—from the nonconscious biological reproductive processes, to the retention of images in memory, to the conscious level of representation to the self of some “beauty itself by itself and good and magnitude and all the others” (100b)—the level at which *νοῦς* operates. These particular images—beauty and good—and the reaching toward these can only exist because *νοῦς* as a unitary ordering force is missing or “eclipsed” (cf. 99d–100a).<sup>10</sup> If it were not “eclipsed” they would not be able to appear to us and to be grasped as objects of choice.

In *λόγος*, soul attains its highest accomplishment for it re-presents the whole world to itself in a conscious way and it sees itself for the first time, as in a mirror.<sup>11</sup> Knowledge of the natural whole, of the causal interaction of body and soul, leads to self-knowledge: Socrates began with an investigation of nature (96a) and ended with the knowledge of soul as projective force, maker and user of images, and at its most primal level as the form of life (106d). Philosophy catches soul in its final act, soul struggling to grasp “itself by itself.”

The natural order and the human order are linked in the *Phaedo*. The freedom of soul seems to be a progressive freedom as it is reflected in the progressive movement of Socrates' nature, recollection, and noncomposite soul arguments.

---

just words, or an account or argument, thought or reason. In the statement quoted, the beings (*τὰ ὄντα*, and immediately above, *τὰ πράγματα*) of which the truth is sought are the visible and generally perceptible beings.

10. Examining in *λόγοι* the truth of the beings is first likened to looking at the image of the eclipsed sun in water or in some other such thing (99d–e). Socrates says he decided he must be careful not to suffer what those who look at the eclipsed sun suffer—their eyes are ruined. Likewise Socrates thought that his soul would be blinded if he looked at the things and tried to grasp them with each of the senses. What then does the sun itself and its eclipse stand for as an image? If people look at the sun when it is eclipsed they see only the corona, a phenomenon produced by the sun. They are not able to see what is causing this phenomenon. When people try to understand the beings through the senses alone, then, like those who look at the corona and are blinded, their souls are blinded. They too are able to see only the outermost phenomena and not what caused them. What does the sun represent? Not the *λόγοι* or the *ἔργα*, since they are likened to images of the eclipse of the sun. The eclipse of the sun seems to represent the absence of the all-determining, all-alike *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras' theory. The hidden sun, *νοῦς*, remains (of a different nature than Anaxagoras') as that which soul always unknowingly is drawn toward, as the potential it seeks to fulfill.

11. The soul with the aid of language imagines itself as a monadic unit with a changeless personal core—the selfsame I. This image of the self seems to have some truth in it and some falseness. To gather or collect is an essential characteristic of soul, including the gathering of itself into itself (67c, 80e, 83a; see also 105d). But while the gathering ability of soul (which occurs at many levels) is what allows it to form into particular generated beings, it is at the same time what ensures that the boundaries of each being will remain open and its form fluid. When one tries to discover a soul in separation from all its attachments extending outside itself, there seems to be nothing there.

The arguments suggest the soul always exists having a collecting and recollecting power. It preserves at both conscious and unconscious levels the form of what has been. Beyond this, soul is always reaching in a certain direction, toward life, toward intensification of its perceptions and toward consciousness and finally self-consciousness. Soul's potentials are what make both the larger natural whole and the smaller human social and political sphere evolutionary. To be evolutionary is to be both historical and transhistorical—historical in that it holds and incorporates something of the past forms in itself and transhistorical in that it moves beyond these boundaries.

What does this mean in the context of a more contemporary understanding of history, or more precisely perhaps, a fear of history? In modern times history (or the structure which has evolved through time) is often seen as an unchosen fixer of both events and values. The term “historical” is frequently used in a Nietzsche-style manner to designate an opaque historical horizon with the power to limit human thought and action. The *Phaedo* helps to show how history is both a producer of and a product of freedom. History is only naturally a producer of limit in so far as freedom and structure are always found together. The *Phaedo* shows soul to be evolutionary and transhistorical by disclosing soul's permanent capacity and striving to move beyond the limitations of any given structure. Living beings are bounded by their species forms and their specific potentials arise out of this. Human beings, in addition are bounded by their special social and political forms and their greater potentials and freedoms arise out of this. The many turns soul takes in its search for conscious knowledge are what give the natural whole its order. The freedom of soul, being invisible, tends to disappear from sight; it can only be proven to exist through the methods of philosophy.

Ethically speaking what does it mean to assert that soul is evolutionary? The *Phaedo*, which on the surface appears almost apolitical, turns out to be one of the ultimate Platonic political statements. Politics and metaphysics are joined—the order of the whole is shown to be produced, not originally by *voũç* alone, but by soul reaching in the direction of *voũç*. (*Noũç* seems to be that which Socrates means is in itself beautiful and good.) In the *Phaedo*, Plato collapses the political and natural spheres to reveal a whole that is value-saturated. There is no gaping chasm between natural history and mankind's history. Within this value-saturated whole, only philosophy (in its first wider signification, including all forms of inquiry) is the natural path for human beings to follow. Throughout the dialogue Socrates insists that philosophy provides the only real foundation for human activity, and his arguments attempt to show that this is so.

A modern political theorist might be tempted to complain that, like its impossible changeless counterpart regimes in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, this magnificent philosophy-centered regime is also quite impossible. Except that in this case historical evidence supports the *Phaedo*: Human knowledge advances, always wandering along a path that combines some mixture of belief in the controlling god(s) discovered by *voũç*, and technology, a debased form of philosophy.