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**AN EVALUATION OF PLATO'S CONCEPTION OF IMMORTALITY
OF THE SOUL IN *PHAEDO*****Bosede Adefiola Adebawale, PhD**

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Abstract

The concept of the soul as a subject of philosophical enquiry has been investigated from different thematic perceptions – immortality, invisibility, imperceptibility and rebirth. The universality of the doctrine of immortality of the soul shows that man has for long wondered of what becomes of him after death. This paper discusses the concept of immortality of the soul as conceived by Plato. In his dialogues, Plato uses interlocutors who were real persons to argue on different subjects to drive home his points. The issue of immortality of the soul is one of the various topics discussed in his various dialogues, raising different points to buttress his arguments for immortality of the soul. However, the *Phaedo* is a detailed discussion on the concept of immortality of the soul, in fact the subject can be said to be the central theme of the whole book. In *Phaedo*, Plato raises four different arguments to support his claim of immortality of the soul namely: The Cyclical Argument, the Theory of Collection (*anamnesis*), the Argument from Affinity, and the Formal Argument. In these various arguments, Plato tries to establish the existence of the soul before its earthly birth as well as its continuous existence after the death of the body. This paper argues against Plato's conception of immortality of the soul, establishing that his theories are not sufficient enough to prove that the soul is immortal. In order to achieve the aim of this study, synthetic content analysis and interpretative methods are employed to analyse the data collected from both primary and secondary sources for the study.

Keywords: Soul, immortality, *Phaedo*, Plato, Arguments**Introduction**

Soul, in many religious and philosophical beliefs, is the material element that, together with the material body, constitutes the human individual. In general, the soul is conceived as an inner, vital, and spiritual principle, the source of all bodily functions and particularly of mental activities. Plato's conception of the soul is not different from this only with additional information. The modern English word 'soul' derives from the old English term sawel, which comes from the Old

High German word ‘*seula*.’ This German word is a translation of the Greek word *ψυχή* (psyche). According to Janda (1998), The German word ‘*seula*’ is believed to have connection with the sea, thereby reflecting the early Germanic people’s belief that the soul of the dead rested at the bottom of the ocean. The Greek word for soul, ‘*ψυχή*’, is derived from a verb “to cool, to blow” and from the verb where it is derived, the meaning of the word ‘*ψυχή*’ appears perceptible. The ancient Greeks used the word for ‘alive’ as for ensouled, hence, the earliest surviving Western philosophical view might suggest that the term soul and aliveness are synonymous. In other words, the word *ψυχή*- psyche literarily means to bring body to life. The Greek word psyche translated into English to mean soul is relevant in meaning to the Hebrew expression ‘*nephesh*’. Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon (1968: 2026-7) refers to the Greek word *ψυχή* as “life” and “the conscious self or personality, as centre of emotions, desires and affections.” This is in line with the Hebrew expression *nephesh* which, according to classical rabbinic literatures, means the part of a person which constitutes physical desire, emotion and thought. Although, the root of the word translated as soul denotes life in general, however, the term soul in Classical and modern context carries of an undying, immaterial essence that continues in conscious existence after death.

Plato’s Theories of Immortality of the Soul

The notion of immortality of the soul is one of the most important subjects in metaphysics. Philosophers, both ancient and modern, have attempted to prove the mortality and immortality of the soul with divergent results. Plato contributed significantly to this important human metaphysical quest to want to discover the invisible beauty of our life. Plato explains the soul somewhat differently from all other western philosophers of his time. To Plato, the soul being divine, pure, and indestructible cannot but be immortal. Plato as a dualist believes that man is made up of soul and body. He is of the mind that the soul existed before its incarnation into the body. In order to prove that the soul is immortal, he expends all avenues, developing different theories to support his notion. His conceptions of the soul are reflected in his different dialogues. However, among his various dialogues, his arguments for immortality of the soul are more conspicuous in *Phaedo*. Oguejiofor rates *Phaedo* to have occupied a pivotal place in Plato’s philosophy ‘on account of the intimate link between the immortality of the soul and Plato’s philosophy in general (1995:29). According to Ladikos, Plato’s objective in *Phaedo* is to justify faith in immortality “as a rational faith by showing that it follows naturally from a fundamental metaphysical doctrine” (2008: 95). In this dialogue, *Phaedo*, Plato proffers four major theories to aid his argument in support of immortality of the soul.

In *Phaedo*, like in some of his other works, Plato uses dialogues as a literary device not only to present his own position, in the voice of Socrates, but also to consider, in the voice of other characters, significant objections that might

be raised against it. Socrates, faced with his own death, attempts to persuade his friends to believe that the soul will continue to live after the execution of its body. He tries as much as he can to deflate the despair of his friends with the hope in the afterlife by expressing a strong belief in immortality of the soul and guides the discussion towards revealing several reasons for this belief. The notion of the immortality of the soul is linked up with the definition of what death is. According to Socrates, death is the separation of the body and the soul (*Phaedo* 64b), Socrates tailored his arguments towards this direction. In the Platonic tradition, the body is regarded as the prison of the soul. Death emancipates the soul. This Platonic doctrine proposes a body-soul dualism that emphasise the highest worth of the soul as pure, divine and eternal. Thus the only way to make sense of immortality with the theory of dualism is to hold that we are distinct from our physical bodies, and so when our physical bodies die, we ourselves live on.

The first argument presented in *Phaedo* is known as the argument from the Opposite or Cyclical argument. This argument is introduced by Socrates to alleviate Cebes's worry on mortality of the soul. Cebes is of the opinion that the soul perishes at death. This theory is based on the cyclical interchange by means of which every quality comes into being from its own opposites. Socrates, before citing his examples of the opposites, first lays out the foundation for this theory of the opposites by using an old legend that supports his idea, here he says:

There is an old legend, which we still remember, to the effect that they do exist there, after leaving here; and that they return again to this world and come into being from the dead. If this is so- that the livings come into being again from the dead- does it not follow that our souls exist in the other world? They could not come into being again if they did not exist... It really becomes apparent that the living comes from the dead, and nowhere else (*Phaedo*, 70c-d).

Having laid the foundation, Socrates goes on to show that things that have opposites come to be from their opposites, using examples of relationships such as sleep and awake, hot and cold. According to this reasoning, one falls asleep after having been awake, and, after being asleep, he awakens. Things that are hot can become cold and vice versa. In other words, there is a cycle in which everything generates its opposite. The following premises can be drawn from the processes of the opposite:

1. Quality of things come to be from their opposite, hot-cold, asleep-awake
2. Being alive is the opposite of being dead, living-dead
3. So if something comes to be alive, then it comes to be alive from being dead

If the premises of Socrates' arguments are followed, the conclusion is that the dead are generated from the living, through death, and that the living are generated from the dead through birth, since death, as Plato puts it, is the opposite of life. From the argument of the opposite, Plato is able to show that the soul must retreat when death approaches or be destroyed since it cannot share in both life and death concurrently but must necessarily shares in life. This then follow that the soul is immortal due to its indestructibility. Though, with this argument, Plato is able to establish the possibility of generating life from the dead, however, the argument does not show the continuous existence of the soul after the death of the body. To fill up this deficiency, Plato tries to establish that the soul had existed prior its incarnation. With this in mind, he introduces the next argument.

There is every need for Plato to establish the fact more clearly that the soul exists before birth in order to be able to prove that the soul continues to exist even after the death of the body that hosts it. To do this effectively, Plato puts words in the mouth of Cebes who calls the attention of Socrates to the theory of *ἀνάμνησις* - *anamnesis*. Saying:

Besides, Socrates, there is that theory which you have often described to us that what we call learning is really just recollection. If that is true, then surely what we recollect now we have learned at some time before; which is impossible unless our souls existed somewhere before they entered this human shape. So in that way too it seems likely that the soul is immortal (*Phaedo*, 72e).

This theory runs basically that it is possible to draw a correct answer out of a person who seems not to have any previous knowledge of the subject prior to his questioning. This person, as the theory goes, must have gained the knowledge in his previous life, and now merely recalls it. The ability to give a correct answer presupposes that the answer arose from recollection of knowledge gained in the previous life. In the *Meno*, Socrates establishes this theory to show that there is no such thing as learning and that what is called learning is remembering (*Meno*, 81d). At the same time, he intends to use this theory to prove the soul's immortality. With this in mind, Plato, in *Phaedo*, tries to reconcile the theory of recollection with immortality, Socrates states it as follows:

We agreed, I suppose, that if anyone is to remember anything, he must know it at some previous time (*Phaedo*, 73C, Bluck's translation)

The same argument is presented in *Meno* and Socrates concludes as follows:

Then, since the soul is immortal and often born, having seen what is on earth and what is in the house of Hades, and everything, there is nothing it has to learn; so there is no

wonder it can remember about virtue, and other things, because it knew about these before (*Meno*, 81d).

The discussion that ensues among the trio (Cebes, Simmias, and Socrates), makes the theory of recollection the basis for the proof that the soul is fully intelligent before it is incarnated into the body. Thus the soul must have, at one time or the other, existed prior to its bodily incarnation. There is no other plausible explanation of the soul's knowledge of the forms.

However, it is from the equality that is perceived by the senses that the knowledge of the real equality comes from. Though this argument falls short of absolute equality as Socrates will have his interlocutors believe, he nevertheless goes on to argue it in the dialogue in order to convince them that acquisition of knowledge after birth is quite impossible. He begins his argument thus:

Then if we obtain it before our birth, and possess it when we were born, we had knowledge, both before and at the moment of birth, not only of equality and relative magnitudes, but of absolute standard... So we must have obtained knowledge of all these characteristics before our birth... And unless we invariably forget it after obtaining it, we must be born knowing and continue to know all through our lives (*Phaedo* 75d-e).

If Socrates' line of argument is followed, it means that souls did exist and possessed intelligence before their bodily incarnations. The soul absolute standards show that the soul had existed before coming into the world. Since, according to Plato, man really possesses knowledge of these supra-sensible realities, knowledge that he cannot possibly have obtained through any bodily experience, it then follows that this knowledge must be a form of recollection and that man's soul must have been acquainted with the forms prior to his birth. But in that case, the existence of man's mortal body cannot be essential to the existence of his soul before birth or after death. The conclusions that Plato wants Socrates' interlocutors to draw are:

- The soul knows the forms
- If the soul knows the forms through recollection then the soul existed before birth.
- If the soul exists before birth, then it exists after death.
- If the soul exists after death, the soul is therefore immortal

From the theory of recollection, Plato believes that all knowledge is mere recollection; in other words, one does not learn but remembers things from previous lives, which could be forgotten at death. He asserts that it is possible for one to recollect in this life what was known before this life. It is important to note that Plato does not simply make assumptions on his theory of forms; he believes that he has shown it empirically. He invited a slave boy and asked him a series of questions about geometry. He claims that since the slave boy had no formal

education, and so could not have been taught the principles of geometry in this current incarnation, he must therefore have remembered them from a previous incarnation.

Socrates proceeds to present his third proof called “Affinity Argument”. Since it has been accepted by Cebes that pre-existence of the soul has been proved, Plato, through Socrates, is now left with the question of whether the soul manages to survive this death. Socrates begins his third argument by asking:

Must we not ask ourselves some such question as this?

What kind of thing naturally suffers dispersion, and for what kind of thing might we naturally fear it, and again what kind of thing is not liable to it? And after this must we not inquire to which class the soul belongs and base our hopes or fears for our souls upon the answer to these questions? (*Phaedo*, 78b4-9).

The alternative Plato considers is that the soul is scattered. He then explores what that presupposes. For Plato, things that are composite are likely to break up; things that are simple are not. The Forms never show any variation; but things seen by the senses continually change. There is a body, which belongs to the visible type of things while the soul is invisible. The soul is “most like that which is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and ever self-consistent and invariable” (*Phaedo*, 80b). At death, the body will pretty quickly fall apart and decay while the soul will be “altogether indissoluble, or nearly so” (*Phaedo*, 80b). The “nearly so” as used by Plato, is spelled out in terms of those souls polluted by too great a concern for bodily pleasures who will spend time as ghosts and return to earth in suitably degraded forms, whereas pure philosophers are allowed to get off the wheel of re-incarnation and spend their time with the gods.

In presenting the affinity theory in support of immortality of the soul, Socrates tries to show that the soul resembles that which is invisible and divine, the body on the other hand, resembles that which is visible and mortal. From this, it can be said that while the body may be seen to exist after death in the form of a corpse, since the body is the mortal part and the soul more divine, the soul outlasts the body. The proof Socrates is trying to present here aims to put into consideration the nature of the soul in order to determine whether it is the kind of thing that does not pass away.

The last argument for immortality in *Phaedo* is introduced by the strong objections of the Pythagorean interlocutors of Socrates. The argument is introduced after a long interlude with Socrates’ admission that in order to meet his interlocutors’ criticism, he will have to venture into an explanation of the cause of generation and destruction (*Phaedo*, 95e-96a). Simmias raises the issue that the soul is an attunement. He suggests the relationship between the soul and the body to be like that between musical harmony and the strings of a lyre that produces it. Simmias tries to use his argument to refute the possible existence of the soul after the death of the body. Simmias reasons that even though the soul is significantly

different from the body, it could not reasonably be expected to survive the utter destruction of that physical thing- the body. Simmias presents his argument:

You might say the same thing about tuning the string of a musical instrument: that the attunement is something invisible and incorporeal and splendid and divine, and located in the tuned instrument, while the instrument itself and its strings are material and corporeal and composite and earthly and closely related to what is mortal. Now suppose that the instrument is broken, or its strings cut or snapped. According to your theory the attunement must still exist- it cannot have been destroyed; because it would be inconceivable that when the strings are broken the instrument and the strings themselves, which have a mortal nature, should still exist, and the attunement, which shares the nature and characteristics of the divine and immortal, should exist no longer, having predeceased its mortal counterparts. (*Phaedo*, 85e-86d)

With this presentation, Simmias argues against the survival of the soul after the death of the body. According to this argument, the soul resembles the harmony of the lyre, in its being invisible and divine but once the lyre has been destroyed the harmony too vanishes. This means that once the body dies the soul vanishes. And while the pieces of the broken lyre may be seen to continue to exist as one's mortal remains, as the harmony will have dissipated, it can be inferred that in the same way will the soul dissipate once the body has been broken, through death.

Cebes on his part offers a more difficult objection. According to him, even if all the theories offered by Socrates are granted, the concept of immortality is yet to be proven. To present his case he uses an analogy of a weaver. He explains that it is not possible for the weaver to outlive all the other clothes he weaves. He states that the soul may outlive bodies and continue to exist after certain deaths; it may eventually grow weak as to dissolve entirely at some point. He then concludes that the immortality of the soul is yet to be proven and that there are still doubts as to the existence of the soul after the death of the body since no one can ascertain whether the next death is the one under which the soul ultimately collapses and exist no more (*Phaedo*, 87d-88b).

In response to this criticism, Plato significantly revises the argument from the opposites and incorporates an additional concept of the Idea of Forms. Socrates argument here is that the soul is immortal since it is the cause of life. He begins by saying:

Whatever else is beautiful apart from absolute Beauty is beautiful because it partakes of that absolute Beauty (*Phaedo*, 100c).

In effect, this theory claims that, as absolute Beauty is a Form, so is the soul. Thus anything that has the property of being infused with a soul is so infused with the forms of the soul. He goes on to explain that forms will never become or admit

their opposites. In the same manner, as the soul is that which renders the body living and opposite of life is death, it then follows that “soul will never admit the opposite of that which accompanies it” (*Phaedo*, 105d). In this way, that which does not admit death is said to be immortal. Therefore the soul is immortal.

Socrates then treats the concepts of “bigness and smallness”. He suggests that if it is agreed that each of the ideas exist and that particular entities participate in them by possessing their name, then when he says that Simmias is greater than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, he is in effect saying that there is both bigness and smallness in Simmias. Socrates, however quickly indicates that it is quite not true to say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates. For it is not by virtue of being Simmias, that Simmias is bigger than Socrates, but rather by virtue or by nature of his happening to possess bigness in him. Likewise he is not greater than Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has the attribute of smallness relatively to his greatness in the same way, Simmias’ being smaller than Phaedo is due not to the fact that Phaedo is Phaedo, but to the fact that Phaedo has the attribute of bigness in comparison with Simmias smallness (*Phaedo*, 102a-c). Having established the fact that two ideas that are opposite in nature, such as bigness and smallness, cannot exist in the same thing or person at the same time thereby suggesting that to determine whether human beings continue to exist after death, one needs to determine what ideas are essential to the nature of human being and then what the opposite ideas are. And, ultimately to determine whether these ideas can drive out of human beings or destroy, when they die, the ideas without which they continue to be what they are. In this situation the one form is their essential property, or the participation in this form is essential, without which they cannot be what they are. Socrates argues that not only is the form entitled to its own name for all time, but there is something else too, which is not the form, but which has the character of that form, whenever it exists. For example, snow (*χιονα*) and fire (*πυρ*), though not the same as the form of “cold” (*ψυχρον*) or “heat” (*θερμον*), partake of these latter forms so essentially—snow is forever cold and fire forever hot - that when the opposite form like heat approaches one of them say snow, it either has to retreat secretly or disintegrate (*Phaedo*, 104c). Socrates further expounds the theory that there is also such relationship of essential participation between forms and the other forms. The form of snow so to speak, participates essentially in the form of cold. But more importantly, the form of 3 (“threeness” *η τριας*) participates also in the form of the “odd” (*περιττον*). Therefore, the soul, as far as Socrates is concerned, is immortal. Socrates then concludes:

So it appears that when death comes to a man, the mortal part of him dies, but the immortal part retires at the approach of death and escapes unharmed and indestructible... Then it is as certain as anything can be, Cebes, that soul is immortal and imperishable, and that our soul will really exist in the next world (*Phaedo*, 106d-107a).

From Socrates perspective, life is objectified into an independent existing thing. A living body is living not merely because it partakes of the form of “aliveness” but because it contains this thing called “soul” whose essential participation in the form ‘aliveness’ is in fact responsible for the body’s being alive. Now, as this final argument rests on the assumption that the soul is that which causes life, there are certain objections that may yet be made. Following the apparent proof that the soul is immortal, it yet remains to see how the soul will exist following death. He also holds that the philosopher is most likely to obtain truth in the underworld, during the afterlife, since true knowledge can only be attained there because death will release the soul from body’s influence and remove all corporeal distractions. Once dead, man’s soul will go to Hades and be in the company of, as Socrates says, “men departed, better than those whom I leave behind” (*Phaedo*, 63c). For he will dwell amongst those who were true philosophers, like himself.

From the web of this discourse, many arguments are put forward by Plato, through Socrates, to prove that the soul is immortal, but four major theories stand out from the dialogue in the *Phaedo*. The first theory is the cyclical argument, which supplies that whatever things come to be come from their opposites while the second argument is the theory of recollection (*anamnesis*), which implies the pre-existence of the soul before the person is born. The third theory is the argument from the affinity which signifies the nature of the soul as being: non-composite, eternal, unchanging, constant and unseen, and the final theory is referred to as the formal argument which suggests that the immortality of the soul is consequent upon the nature of its participation in the form essential to it.

In his theory of the cyclical or opposites, Plato refers to the Pythagoreans’ doctrine of transmigration of the souls, with the living coming to be from the dead, that is, those who had been alive, and the dead coming to be from the living. The suggestion is that this is a general pattern that must apply to all cases of changes; hence, everything that has an opposite is generated from that opposite and from no other source. This is defended by a couple of examples that have been mentioned before (*Phaedo*, 70a – 71a). There are pairs of processes going in each direction between such opposites. Plato offers a further consideration with respect to these opposites’ processes: if things only went on in one of the two directions, eventually everything would be in only one of the two states. So if all living things turned to dead things but no dead things made the return journey, everything would eventually be dead.

This theory can be compared with Plato’s theory of Specific Evils in the *Republic*. The evil, as explained by Socrates, can be equated with destruction and corruption. According to Socrates, to everything there is a specific evil, which impairs and destroys it in the end; and a thing can only be destroyed by the evil natural to it. The good, on the other hand, is what preserves and benefits. According to Socrates’ argument, each thing has its evil and good. In other words, the “natural evil” of each thing, which is its own vice, destroys it such as ophthalmia is the vice and the natural evil of the eye, disease for the whole body,

mildew for corn, rot for wood, and rust for iron and bronze. However, if there is anything that possesses a specific evil and this evil cannot destroy it, though harmful as it may, then, that thing must be indestructible. The argument Plato is trying to put forward here is that the vice or the evil of the body cannot affect the soul. And the soul, though with its own specific and natural evil, namely injustice, intemperance, cowardice and ignorance, cannot be destroyed by its vices. Thus, the soul is indestructible even though its home the body is destroyed at death by its natural evil.

The argument here is that “because wickedness does not cause death it cannot destroy the soul” (Guthrie; 1986: 556). Also, the vice of the body cannot affect the soul since the body can never be destroyed by the badness of the food, which are different from the body; thus if “badness of the body does not engender vice of the soul then, the soul can never be destroyed by the vice of anything else. Even if the body is ‘cut into the smallest possible pieces’, the soul will still remain intact and will never by reason of these things be liable to destruction as Socrates asserts:

... If the badness of the body does not produce in the soul the soul’s badness we shall never expect the soul to be destroyed by alien evil apart from its own defect - one thing that is, the evil of another... Then since it is not destroyed by any evil whatever, either its own or alien, it is evident that it must necessarily exist always, and that if it always exists it is immortal (*Republic* Book X, 610a-b).

Following from his attempt to show that justice is worth pursuing for its own sake, as well as its consequence, Plato tries to show that the greatest consequence is the rewards in the afterlife. In order to support this as a separate project, Plato tries to show that the soul is immortal. This argument has four premises:

- Everything has a specific evil
- Only something’s specific evil can destroy it, e.g. iron’s evil is rust
- Vice is the specific evil of the soul
- Vice cannot kill the soul; therefore the soul is immortal

One might interpret Plato’s argument, modifying it such that the first premises reads, “every mortal thing has a specific evil” while the second can read, “if the soul has a specific evil it is a vice”. In this way it would be easier for Plato to show that the soul is exceptional, without a specific evil and therefore indestructible. Further in this argument, Plato implies that the soul is so independent and separate of the body that a bodily evil might not be able to destroy it. Here, it seems that the only reason for Plato’s belief that the soul could survive the death of the body is that the soul is immortal. In other words, Plato simply begs the question.

With his cyclical argument, Plato is stating categorically that this circular process must be a continuous one; otherwise all things may eventually come to assume

the same form. Oguejiofor (1995:31-32) claims that such a possibility would give credence to Anaxagora's doctrine of the beginning where all things were together before the introduction of order by Mind (*νοῦς*). Universal death is the consequence of Anaxagora's doctrine. For this not to happen, the cycle of opposite must follow its due process indicating the survival of the soul at the death of corporeal.

Considering this theory of cyclical, Plato states that the opposite of life is death, but philosophically speaking, I will state that life can only be contrasted with death, that is, non-life and not existing. For instance we cannot speak of stone as being alive, nor as dead, does it not follow then that death cannot be the opposite of life? One of the synonyms of Life is existence; the opposite of existence is non-existence. Does this therefore not mean that at some point the soul must not have existed? This then suggests that while Plato's theory of the opposite may be sufficient to prove the pre-existence of the soul, the argument however does not show that the soul continues to exist once a person dies. The fact that the soul has existed previously does not mean it will continue to exist forever. It may be that the soul has existed for eternity, but that when man dies the soul dies with him.

Many scholars have come to the conclusion that this first proof of immortality in *Phaedo* does not in any way achieve its aim of proving that the soul does exist after death and possesses some powers and intelligence. Oguejiofor argues that "even if the argument is accepted, there is still no way of knowing in what state the soul is after the demise of the body". Rodier, as cited by Oguejiofor (1995:32) points out that Plato's conclusion that the living must come from the dead is unwarranted, unless it is supposed in advance that the soul is a substance that is distinct from the body. Rodier's argument here does not hold this is because from Platonic conception of the soul, the soul has always been said to be different from the body. The body is only viewed as the host or prison of the soul. Bostock (1986:75) on his part suggests three different ideas that may be at play:

- A relation and its converse: A loves B/B is loved by A
- Different ends of the same scale: hot/cold. These are contraries (nothing can have both properties at once) but not contradictories.
- Contradictory properties, often applied to particular sort of things: odd/even for the integers. Each item of the kind in question must have one of the pair.

From Bostock's suggestions, Plato's argument seems to invoke the second sort of case that nothing can have both contradictories properties at once. But the principle is only acceptable for the third type that is, contradictory properties often applied to particular sorts of things: odd/even for the integers and that each of the kind in question must have one of the pairs. From Plato's view point, something can get hot from having been neither cold nor hot. Philosophically speaking, from Bostock's stand point, alive and dead cannot be regarded as proper opposites of

any of the three types mentioned above since being dead carries with it the notion of having previously been alive. Perhaps alive/dead are treated as contradictory pair applicable only to living things since things like plastic cannot be called dead, it is simply not alive. The point Bostock is trying to make here is that Plato's argument requires the broader notion of "non-living" if the claim that life comes from non-living is to be accepted and believed. Bostock also notes that Plato's general argument requires that whatever is alive has to come to be alive, but from Plato's view this is not true.

Hackforth (1972:63-65) claims that Plato intends the argument to prove personal immortality, an eternal existence of individual souls eternally retaining their identity. However, this argument cannot be held to do so; that the soul persists through the cycle as individual souls is simply assumed: it is not a necessary part or corollary of the principle that "living" comes from "dead", or that the process of dying is balanced by the process of coming to life. As far as Hackforth is concerned, this argument does not necessarily hold. In a logical manner, if life is not regarded as the opposite of death but merely as one of the several contraries, then, does this not therefore mean that at some point the soul must not have existed? From all indications, Plato's argument only supports prior existence of the soul and not necessarily its immortality. The conclusion that can then be drawn as far as this theory is concerned is that, the fact that the soul has existed previously does not in any way suggest that it will continue to exist forever. Hence, the theory of the opposite has not proved the immortality of the soul.

The next theory introduced by Plato through Cebes is the theory of Recollection. Here, Plato seems to imply that everything that can be known has already occurred, and that the human mind, in any one embodied life, knows all that will happen in its life, only it is forgotten until it is recollected. But, then, one can ask what mechanism triggers this knowledge. Is it not conceivable that one might recollect his future or the destiny he has chosen according to the myth of Er as related by Plato in the *Republic* Book X.

Relating this theory to Platonic epistemology, some scholars see this as a loophole. In his epistemological theory, Plato sees humans before they acquire knowledge as prisoners in an underground cavern, chained so that they could only gaze ahead at a sequence of shadows, passing across the back-wall of the cave. The shadows are of certain images, made of stone and wood, carried above a raised platform in the cave. These shadows are cast by a fire on the other side of the platform, but still in the cave. The prisoners are able to see only the shadows of these images, and the shadows of themselves. The prisoners are insensitive to differences in color. However, when a prisoner escapes and sees the light of the sun and real images for the first time, he becomes knowledgeable of what he has perceived for a long time in the cave (*Republic*, Book X).

In this theory of knowledge, Plato attributes sight with knowledge. But, if by sight through the sun one becomes knowledgeable, it follows that one does not need a

previous knowledge for recollection. Some scholars, as reported by Oguejiofor (1995:34-38) try to interpret the seeming contradiction in such a manner that makes the role Plato assigns to the senses fall in line with his general theory. Gallop (1926:121) describes Plato's insistence that the knowledge of the Forms could be acquired with the help of the senses, "as surprising", whereas elsewhere the senses have been denounced "as nothing but a hindrance in the quest for Forms". The same critical stance is taken by Norman Gulley (1954:34). He states that "in the middle dialogues, Plato's moral Puritanism bedevils his theory of knowledge". Gulley then mentions four circumstances that could make distinct the role that has been assigned to the senses by Plato: "the Forms exist; the soul has at some time known them; the sensible world, in all relevant instances, is a sufficiently appropriate copy of the world of Forms to be able to give a correct suggestion of that world; the senses are always to be trusted" (Gulley, 1954:194). Gulley, in other words, agrees with Plato that since the soul knows the forms, the soul must have existed to be able to recollect the forms; if this is the case then the soul is immortal. Gulley's suggestions I believe is based on the Platonic division of the soul in which one of the parts is rational and seek truth and knowledge and tries to guide and regulate life as informed by wisdom. Thus, Gulley believes that sense cannot but be trusted in this form. Gulley's idea however does not go unnoticed or beyond criticism.

Dunlop criticizes Gulley's views. He, however, accepts the first two conditions that the Forms exist, and that the soul has at some time known them, as accurate. But disputes that the third supposition, that the sensible world in all relevant instances, is sufficiently appropriate copy of the world Forms to be able to give a correct suggestion of that world, is stronger than what Plato would like it to be. He insists that the last circumstance, that the senses are always to be trusted, is incompatible with the function assigned to the senses by Plato. Dunlop claims that sense-perception, is a necessary condition for knowledge but is seen by Plato as the "price, which a soul must pay for its incarnation. A disembodied soul would never require the senses for it can direct the knowledge of all truth unobscured" (Dunlop, 1975:61). Dunlop is not the only one that disagrees with Gulley's last assumption that the senses must always be trusted. Hackforth claims that it seems misleading, he states:

"to say, as Mr. Norman Gulley says in a recent valuable paper that one of the assumptions necessary to justify the role which Plato assigns to the senses is that the senses are to be always trusted. If we are to speak of trusting anything in this matter, it is not the senses but the judgment of deficiency aroused by sense-perception. Nor does Plato, I think, imply that any and every perception gives rise to that judgment, for down to 75c10 he is concerned with one Form only, that of Equality, and plainly it is only a very limited range of perceptions that

can have any bearing on our recollection of that” (1972:74-75).

Hackforth believes that the main concern of Plato is not to give a full account of how knowledge of the Forms can be attained, but to prove the pre-natal existence of the soul that knows them. Hackforth is of the mind that this argument comes nearer than the previous one to being a proof of individual immortality. He states:

It is my soul which recollects what I knew before birth in the body. But in default of recollection of personal experience it is difficult to see how there can be that consciousness of identity preserved through a series of incarnations without which we cannot properly speak of individual immortality (1972:76).

Cornford, on his part, is of the mind that the memory implied in the doctrine of *anamnesis* is an impersonal memory: its contents are the same in all human beings.

Plato’s argument, while it is sufficient to show that the soul had existed before, and so acquired what is now a priori knowledge, it does not necessarily prove that the soul will exist forever. For while the soul may have lived a number of lives prior to the one in question, that does not necessarily mean that it will continue to exist following its subsequent death. Socrates has not proved that the soul is immortal by means of this theory of recollection. For the soul, even if it had existed prior to birth, may still dissolve at death. As regards the worth of the argument, Oguejiofor (1995:36) says that commentators generally agreed, that this theory “like the first one, is inconclusive”.

Sensing the inadequacy of this theory, Plato puts an objection in the mouth of Cebes. Cebes doubts that Socrates has proven the soul to be immortal. Cebes takes it that the pre-natal existence of the soul has been proved but this does not necessarily suggest that it must exist after death. Socrates then links the theory of affinity with the other theories he has expounded in order to prove that the soul must continue to exist after death.

Going by Bailey’s analysis, the argument of affinity can be explained in this way: all of reality is divided into two and as used in *Timaeus* (28a-b) these can be called Being and Becoming. These terms as used in this analysis will only provide a convenient means of understanding the metaphysics and Plato’s logic of immortality. In *Timaeus*, Being is marked by immutability, permanence, eternity, unity, divinity, intelligibility, and the like. On the other hand, Becoming is fraught with constant change, mutability, and death. The Being can be seen as Plato’s heaven while Becoming is the home of sensory experience and material objects. The human soul has important features in common with entities in the realm of being; Socrates describes the soul thus:

The soul is most like that which is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble and ever self-consistent and invariable... (*Phaedo*, 80b).

From this description, the soul is best seen as itself being in Being. The most important claim here is that “the soul in every way more resemble the invisible, unchanging and eternal forms than it does the visible, changing and perishable objects that are perceived in this world” (Bostock,1986:422). The body, on the other hand, “is mortal, multiform, unintelligible, dissoluble, and never self-consistent (*Phaedo*, 80b). In framing the argument the way Plato does, he furnishes the conceptual framework needed for saying that body and soul differ in kind, one being perceptible and perishable, the other being intelligible and exempt from destruction. These two categories are obviously mutually exclusive. It is not clear whether or not they are meant to be exhaustive. Moreover, the category of imperishable, intelligible being is exemplified, but not exhausted by Platonic forms such as equality, beauty and the like. Intelligible being evidently includes what Socrates calls the divine whose nature it is to rule and to lead (*Phaedo*, 80b), and there is no indication that the forms exhaust the divine, or even include the divine. Thus, as Robinson (1995:29) puts it, the argument leaves room for the idea that souls are not forms, but are nevertheless intelligible, partless and imperishable. However, this argument does not support the conclusion that the soul is indestructible and Plato is aware of this.

The conclusion Plato infers is in fact that the soul is most like and most akin to intelligible being and that the body is most like perceptible and perishable being. To say this, of course, is plainly neither to assert nor to imply, as Robinson (1995: 30) appears to think, that the soul in some way or the other falls short of intelligible, imperishable being, any more than it is to assert or imply that the body in some way or the other falls short or rather rises above perceptible, perishable being. The argument thus opens the question of whether the soul is a perfect respectable member of intelligible reality the way human bodies are perfectly respectable members of sensible reality or whether, alternatively, the soul has some intermediate status in between intelligible and perceptible being, rising above the latter, but merely approximating to the former.

Here, Socrates does seem to take his conclusion to imply or at least strongly suggesting that it is natural for the soul either to be “altogether indissoluble, or nearly so” but in any case that the soul is less subject to dissolution and destruction than the body. If this position can be established Socrates is in a position to refute the popular view that the soul being composed of ethereal stuff is more liable to dispersion than the body. However, just as Cebes points out (*Phaedo*, 88b) unless Socrates can establish that the soul is altogether exempted from destruction; confidence of survival in the face of death is misplaced.

The affinity argument is supposed to show not only that the soul is most like intelligible, imperishable being, but also that it is most akin to it. Socrates argues that the soul is like the intelligible being on the grounds that it is not visible and in general not perceptible, anyhow to humans as Cebes adds in *Phaedo* (79b), and that it shares its natural function with the divine, namely, to rule and lead. There is a separate argument for the kinship of the soul with the intelligible being. When

the soul makes use of the senses and attends to perceptible things, “it strays and is confused and dizzy, as if it were drunk” (*Phaedo*, 79c). By contrast, when it remains “itself by itself” and investigates intelligible, its straying comes to an end and it achieves stability and wisdom. It is not just that the soul is in one state or the other depending on which kind of object it is attending to in such a way that its state somehow corresponds to the character of the object attended to. That would not by itself show that the soul is more akin to one domain rather than the other. This is the point of Bostock’s criticism (1986:119). In order to understand the argument properly, it is crucial to note that when the soul attends to perceptible things, it is negatively affected in such a way that its functioning is at least temporarily reduced or impaired. Does it not follow then, that the soul is destructible in this state?

Following Plato’s statement that the soul can “stray”, be “confused and dizzy as if it were drunk” (*Phaedo*, 79c), can these not be regarded as the vices of the soul? If these are vices of the soul, does it not follow then that these vices can destroy and eliminate the soul? Plato’s argument of specific evil in the Republic does not shed light on the reasons why the soul’s vices cannot destroy it. He only mentions that the vice of the body cannot affect the soul, this does not in any way prove the soul to be immortal. Looking at Plato’s claim critically, if rot is the vice of wood, when the wood becomes rotten, definitely, the wood is destroyed. Does it not follow then, that when the soul is strayed, it becomes confused and dizzy and liable to destruction? Is it not evident that these vices can destroy the soul? If this is so, then the soul is destructible and is mortal.

There is reason to be skeptical about Plato’s arguments just as Socrates’ interlocutors are but as Simmias admits, they do not wish to disturb Socrates during his final hours by unsettling his belief in the immortality of the soul. They are reluctant to voice their skepticism. Socrates grows aware of their doubts and assures them that he does indeed believe in the immortality and will not in any way be upset facing death, thereby assuring them that they could express their concerns regarding the argument. Plato once again sees the inadequacy of the argument to prove the soul’s immortality. Thus, following the assurance of Socrates that he will not be upset nor be caused any pain as a result of objections, Simmias presents his case that it may be such that the soul resembles the harmony of the lyre. This gives Socrates the opportunity to present his last argument for immortality which like others does not necessarily prove the immortality of the soul.

While Socrates hopes to converse with some great men of history, such as Orpheus, Hesiod and Homer, the possibility never occur to him that these men might not be in the underworld, as their souls may already have re-incarnated or transmigrated back to the world of the living. If Socrates’ belief in the theory of recollection as assumed, then these men who have already died within recorded history may also have already returned to the world of the living. For, while not necessarily contradictory with Socrates notion that the imperishable soul will

really exist in the next world (*Phaedo*, 106d-107a), as indeed all the dead will necessarily abide in the underworld, it has not been shown that those who have already died will yet remain in Hades. However, Socrates' idea, that those who are truly virtuous during life will be eternally free from the body once dead, allows a dogmatic assertion that the philosopher, once dead, will be forever immortal. As to be truly virtuous during life is the quality of a great man then each of the men mentioned above, so far as they are great, will perpetually dwell as souls in the underworld. On the other hand, the souls of those who were not virtuous during life, who allow the eros part of the soul to gain control of their life, according to Socrates, will not be freed from the body at death. According to Platonic conception of this part of the soul, when the passion controls us, it drives us to hedonism in all forms. As a result of this, these people will not have succeeded in freeing their souls from their body while alive. Of those souls that are not free, Socrates says that such a soul is:

...polluted, is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always and is in love with and bewitched by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a body form, which a man may touch and see, and drink and eat, and use for the purpose of his lusts, the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, but is the object of mind and can be attained by philosophy, do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed? (*Phaedo*, 81b).

Persons with such a constitution will be dragged back into corporeal life, according to Socrates. These individuals will even be punished while in Hades. Their punishment will be their own doing, as they will be unable to enjoy the singular existence of the soul after death because of their constant craving for life. For, these are the souls:

... of the evil, which are compelled to –in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life... until, they are imprisoned finally in another body (*Phaedo*, 81d-e).

The soul is immortal and the course of its passing into the underworld is determined by the way in which it last behaved while alive. The philosopher, then, and indeed any man similarly virtuous, in neither fearing death, nor cherishing corporeal life as something idyllic, will be eternally unperturbed in death, and his afterlife will be perfect. For this reason, the philosopher practices the disengagement from the soul during life, in order to attain the virtue that will provide him with eternal reward, while not committing suicide, as argued above. Such is the nature of the afterlife as espoused by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*.

Conclusion

The different theories used by Plato, from the theory of recollection to cycle of the opposite as found in *Phaedo* and others found in the *Republic*, *Laws*, *Phaedrus*, *Meno* just to mention a few, attest to the fact that Plato believes strongly in the doctrine of immortality of the soul. These problems, such as the issues of personal identity, the nature of the hereafter and what eventually becomes of the soul, are not clarified. Not only that, the nature of the soul, before birth and after the cycle of re-incarnations, is unknown, in this aspect Plato has not succeeded, he only speculates that the soul is immaterial and had existed before birth and as a result of this will continue to exist even after the death of the body which he considers to be material and mortal. The various theories of immortality of the soul examined have not been able to prove the continuous existence of the soul as well as the nature of the soul. Apart from this, nobody has ever returned from land of the dead to testify to the fact of continuous existence of the soul. From this study, I can categorically state that man is not a combination of the soul and body, and that the body does not house the soul only for the soul to regain its freedom after the death of the body. Rather man is a single being. Soul is man, man is soul. When man dies the soul dies, it does not continue living independent of the body. To suggest that the soul lives on after the death of the body is to say that the flame stays on after fire has been extinguished.

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