The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's Phaedo 102a – 107a

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Among the arguments presented by Socrates as proofs for the everlastingness of the human soul the last one has greatly puzzled philosophers because it seems that, in opposition to the earlier arguments,[1] Plato considered this last argument conclusive. For, whereas earlier in the discussion the partners of the dialogue, Simmias and Cebes, raise objections and Socrates tries to meet their criticism, at the end of the last argument he claims: "Then this is most certain that the soul is immortal and imperishable and that our souls will really exist in Hades" (106e). And at this point Socrates obtains his partners' final consent. For, though Simmias admits that he still entertains doubts, it seems that Plato wants to attribute this to the natural difficulties we encounter when *arguments* have to overcome *fears,* not to shortcomings of the argument itself (cf. 107 a/b). For with Socrates' calm reassurance that further scrutiny of its presuppositions would finally lead to a state of conviction as far as this is humanly possible, the argumentative part of the dialogue ends (107 b9).[2] What follows is Socrates' mythical description of the soul's afterlife and, finally, the narrative of Socrates' peaceful death among his friends.

Because of Socrates'/Plato's apparent confidence in this last argument it has always attracted special attention. And in recent years there have been various attempts to expose the flaw or flaws in the proof. For, ever since Kant pointed out the unavoidable difficulties that human reason encounters when it tries to transcend the boundaries of sense-experience, the interest of philosophers in arguments of this kind has been mainly a critical one. It is a challenge to a philosopher's skill to expose weaknesses of such arguments, steps which do not follow necessarily or assumptions which one does not have to accept. Furthermore, especially in the case of a philosopher as great as Plato, such a critical investigation promises to be a rewarding task, since one may hope that, if the argument under investigation turns out not to be clearly invalid, one may learn something about those philosophical presuppositions which are not explicitly stated in the argument but tacitly assumed (or argued for earlier in the dialogue), but which are, nevertheless, needed to make the argument go through. In this paper, then, I shall try to defend Plato's argument against those critics who claim that its conclusion is reached by invalid inference and point out

which assumptions Plato may have taken for granted.

The final argument is introduced after what may be considered as a long interlude dealing with the problem of the notion of cause or reason (cf. 95 e – 99 d). This interlude had been prompted by Socrates' admission that in order to meet Cebes' criticism he would have to go into an explanation of the causes of generation and destruction (95e/96a). This, however, Socrates felt himself unable to do because the notion of cause or reason presented such difficulties to him that he finally took refuge in what he calls a "δεύτερος πλοῦς", a second best way, i.e. the resort to the forms which at least allows him to explain why the things are the way they are.[3]

That Socrates is turning back to the question of the immortality of the soul after this interlude is ot immediately obvious, for what follows seems at first sight to be merely a restriction and clarification of the so called "law of opposites" (or – "alternation", a principle Socrates had used in his first argument for the immortality of the soul 70c – 72 a: Wherever there are opposite conditions and processes through which things pass from one to the other, there must always be exchange in both directions). This is here clarified and modified (102bff): not only do things pass from one state into its contrary but some things can even be in opposite states at the same time; as, e.g., Simmias is at the same time both taller and shorter – taller than Socrates and shorter than Phaedo.[4] Yet, although Simmias himself can participate in opposite forms at the same time, neither the form "tallness" itself nor the immanent forms or characters can do the same; they are incompatible with each other and therefore, as Plato expresses himself throughout the argument in terms of the military metaphor, they "either perish at the approach of their opposite or they withdraw" (102 d/e; 103 a1 et pass.; cf. Burnet's comment *ad loc.*). So, although Simmias himself can become taller or shorter while still remaining Simmias, his tallness or shortness cannot accept their respective opposites.

The bewilderment expressed at this point (103 a) by someone in the audience shows why Plato thought this clarification of the law of opposites necessary. There is an easy misunderstanding, especially since the Greek "τὸ μέγα" can be understood both as "tallness" and as "that which is tall"; to the ordinary listener it might have sounded as if the opposite states were supposed to turn into each other, while it is here explained that it is only something *in* such a state which can pass from one to the other (103 b-c).[5]

What follows is a further restruction of the law of alternation (103cff). In *some* cases it is not only the opposite states or qualities and their forms that cannot turn into their opposites but even their possessors – though not identical in nature with those characters – cannot accept the opposite of

the characters they possess; they either have to withdraw or to perish, too. Snow, while being snow, never admits heat; and fire while being in existence never admits cold. So, though these two things, snow and fire, are not identical with the properties in question, they still cannot adopt the qualities opposite to those they do in fact possess. Plato, as we would say it, distinguishes here between the possession of essential and accidental properties and modifies the law of opposites accordingly.[6]

The distinction between essential and accidental qualities allows Socrates to proceed one step further. Not only does the possessor of an essential quality not admit its opposite, but he can even be *called* after that incapability of admittance: "three" is incapable of admitting evenness and can therefore be called "uneven" (104 e5). So, whenever something has an essential property it can be called unqualifiedly after that property (and negatively after its opposite). And, in such a case, whenever someone wants to know *why* a thing is P one has only to point out that it is possessed by something which has P as its essential property. – "If you were to ask me what, when present in its body will always make a thing hot, I shall not give you that safe, foolish answer, "heat", but, after what we have just said, a more subtle answer, "fire"... and if you ask what, when present in a number will always make it odd, I shall not answer "oddness" but "oneness" and so on." (105 b/c).

The distinction between accidental and essential properties and the acceptance of the possibility that such properties can be "brought along" by their possessors to some third thing then leads over to the final steps in the argument for the immortality of the soul, which is now brought to its end in a very brief discussion (105 c/d – 107 a).

There are, roughly speaking, three steps in the final discussion:

I. Socrates obtains the agreement of his partners that the thing which always makes the body alive when it is present in it is the soul. Thus, soul always brings life with it when it approaches something (105 c9 – d5).

II. Since life is the opposite of death, the soul cannot admit death. And, in analogy to the other cases where there existed such an unqualified incapacity to accept a quality, we can call the soul after its incapacity to admit death "deathless" (105d6-e9).

III. If in the analogous cases the specific incapacity to accept something also implied the incapacity to accept destruction, then those things could never be destroyed. They would be unassailable to attack by their opposite principle (snow by heat, fire by coldness, three by evenness) but would withdraw intact. This, however, does not hold for the analogous cases. But since for the "deathless" it is accepted that it is at the same time also

indestructible, it follows that at the approach of death only what is mortal in man dies; the soul never perishes but withdraws safely to Hades (105 d6 – 107 a1).

These, without being unfair to Plato's more subtle and elaborate way of presenting his argument, seem to be the main steps, and all three of them have been attacked by Plato's critics. Let us, first, look ourselves at possible weak points before turning to other criticisms.

It may seem that Plato's claim that the soul always carries life with it is simply begging the question. For this very point seems to be what is at issue in the whole argument: whether the soul *always* carries life with it; and it is here not even argued for but simply granted at Socrates' suggestion by his partner (105 d1). What can be the justification for this assumption? – A justification is suggested by the fact that what is emphasized in step I is that the soul always quickens the *body* when it is there, and that therefore its possession of life cannot be an accidental one. For in that case it should at least be logically possible to say that there still is a soul in a certain body but that nevertheless the body is dead. This, however, seems an impossible assumption, just as it is impossible to maintain that something is possessed by fire but not hot or that something is a threesome but not odd.[7] So the first step does not rest on the assumption that dead souls are inconceivable,[8] but on the general rule given in 104d1-3 for finding entities possessing something as an essential property: whenever something always imparts something else it cannot possess this thing only as an accidental property. For if it were an accidental one it should at least be conceivable that it might not bring along the property in question. Thus, the first step in the argument has to be accepted if one accepts the general rule in 104d (certain difficulties about the text and the application of the rule will be discussed later), i.e. one has to accept that the soul always possesses life while in existence.

Let us, then, look at step II. If the soul has life as its essential attribute, then it can be called, after its incapacity to accept the opposite, "deathless". To be sure, the word "ἀθάνατος" is as ambiguous as the English word "immortal", which has been carefully avoided by the English translators since it designates not only deathlessness but also everlastingness. But it does not seem that Socrates is trying to win an easy game by way of this ambiguity here, even though his partners might have been willing enough to let him win it (cf. 105 e). Instead, he makes it quite clear that the validity of the argument depends on the condition that the deathless should also be indestructible, (105e10ff), i.e. that the soul cannot be destroyed in any other way. Therefore, if we agree that the soul can be called "deathless"

after its essential incapacity – just as other things are called after theirs – step II is legitimate and we would have to look at step III for possible criticism, at the thesis that the deathless is also indestructible, and that therefore the soul must be everlasting.

It is, unfortunately, not easy to elicit from the text (106b – e) how step III is established. Many commentators, starting as early as Strato of Lampsacus, have accused Plato of begging the question here, i.e. of simply assuming what needs to be proved, that the soul, being "deathless" cannot go out of existence in some other way. – Is Plato simply assuming that deathlessness = indestructibility = everlastingness?

There are at least some indications in the text that Plato did not commit this obvious mistake. What speaks against it is the fact that Socrates repeats three times that the validity of the last argument depends on the question whether "deathless" also implies "indestructible" (cf. 106 b2 "εἰ μὲν τὸ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν . . ."; 106 c8 ". . . περὶ τοῦ ἀθανάτου, εἰ μὲν ἡμῖν ὁμολογεῖται καὶ ἀνώλεθρον εἶναι . . . εἰ δὲ μή . . ." And even after his partner has given his final consent Socrates repeats: "ὁπότε δὴ τὸ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορόν ἐστιν. . . 106e1). Plato would hardly have repeated this important condition three times if he had simply taken if for granted that deathlessness also means indestructibility. And earlier Plato had stressed that all the entities only possess their essential attributes "ὅταν περ ᾖ" while they exist (103e),[9] a condition which is again stressed in the text for all the analogous cases in step III, that they would only survive the attack of the opposite of their essential attributes if they were also indestructible.

Something of a clue as to Plato's reasons for inferring indestructibility from deathlessness is given when in 106d Socrates not simply accepts Cebes' assent that the deathless is indestructible but adds a reference to "God, the form of life itself, and if there is anything else immortal": that it would be admitted by everybody that they could never perish. If this is not a rather pointless appeal, there must be something which God, the form of life and the unnamed "etceteras" have in common (especially in the case of the "καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο" in 106 d6 a mere commonsense-appeal would seem strange). This common characteristic must be that they are all *essentially alive.*[10] And in this case the law of opposites will find its legitimate application. This law had never been explicitly challenged in the dialogue (although this does not exclude the possibility that Plato had been aware of its weaknesses as a general law). It is explicitly referred to and its meaning and applicability are clarified at the beginning of our last argument (103 a4-c4), so it would not be excessive subtlety on Plato's part if he supposed that his readers would realize that it finds its correct application here.[11]

For, whatever is alive, whether it possesses life as an essential property or not, can only pass out of existence by accepting death, by dying. And whatever way a living being passes out of existence we call that its death, be it a "natural" one or, e.g., traceless elimination through an atomic bomb. So it is quite inconceivable that to the question "When did N.N. die?" one would receive the answer, "He did not die, he simply went out of existence".

It is easy to point out why the law of opposites does not hold as a general law. It is valid in the case of relative opposites, like "greater" and "smaller", the kind of cases from which Plato had set out (70 e7 – 71 a7), apparently without noticing that and why these are special cases. In the case of absolute opposites the law holds in some cases but not in others, as becomes clear when one looks at some examples. While someone who has fallen ill must have been healthy before and vice versa, not everybody who has become rich must have been poor (or vice versa). In some cases we will find that while one half of ty process is necessary the other is not. If someone becomes old he must have been young before but the young people do not come from the old ones. That is to say, the process may be reversible, as in the case of waking and sleeping, but it need not be so, as Plato seems to assume, relying heavily on the poetically much exploited analogy between waking and sleeping and life and death (71 c-d). For, even if creation *ex nihilo* is excluded there are still several other possible explanations of how people come to life, and hence there is no necessity to assume that they come from the dead. Soul may come, e.g., from other souls, just as fire comes from fire. This criticism of the law of opposites as a general law, however, does not apply to the usage Plato makes of it in the final argument. For in the case of life and death the reverse side is necessary, in other words, whenever something loses its life it *must* pass into death. And Plato seems to me to refer to this fact when he points out, as he does repeatedly, that the validity of his argument depends on the condition that that which cannot die cannot be destroyed. For if destruction for a living being is its loss of life (death), then deathlessness implies indestructibility. Thus the inference is justified that whatever possesses life as essential attribute cannot be destructible; for if it cannot admit death it cannot go out of existence at all, and must therefore be indestructible as well.[12]

So, if I am not mistaken in my reading, Plato's argument for the immortality of the soul is *formally* correct, i.e. Plato has neither drawn false inferences nor simply begged the question. People who nevertheless are not convinced that the soul is immortal or that its immortality can be

proved therefore will have to attack the premisses of the argument. Which of the premisses is it at least not necessary for everybody to accept?

The critical point should be obvious, since in my interpretation of the argument I had to use a fairly suggestive vocabulary. The crucial thing seems to be that Plato treats the soul as a substance (no such term is, of course, used) with attributes of its own and life among them. But this is a presupposition about the nature of the soul which one may or may not find acceptable. There are different accounts of the nature of the human soul and Plato's arguments in the Phaedo do not rule them out.

In other words, Plato's argument would be acceptable to people who believe with him that a human being is really a compound of two entities, the body which is the material vessel, and in it the incorporeal soul which has essential qualities of its own. The body, then, incidentally shares in the quality "life" just as a stove which is heated by the fire inside it shares in the quality "heat". So Plato's argument is valid as a proof only if everybody had to accept the hypothesis that the soul is an entity like fire, an entity bringing along properties of its own. But if the soul were not a being *with* qualities but a quality itself – the "energy of life" – like the heat in fire or the cold in snow, then soul, the principle of life in the body, could simply run out without "admitting" death itself at all. It is clear that in this case the soul would not be separable from the body nor possess qualities of its own. If the body's functions were so seriously disturbed that it stopped working it would just lose the quality of life, and there would be no entity left in this case except the lifeless body.

Admittedly, then, the defense of the formal correctness of Plato's final argument depends on the presupposition that he regards the soul as something like a substance. There are, however, passages in the argument which have given reason to doubt whether for Plato the soul is not rather an immanent form or character bringing along another form, just as threeness brings along oddness. Hackforth (p. 159; 161ff) and other commentators after him have tried to point out that Plato's position with respect to the nature of the soul is somehow undecided; that during the argument he treats it like an immanent form but concludes that it exists like a separable substance.[13] What speaks in favour of this interpretation is *a)* the context of the final argument in the dialogue: in the text immediately preceding our argument Socrates had obtained everybody's approval that the resort to the forms would be the best solution to the question why everything is the way it is, and at the end of the argument Socrates turns again to the forms: further scrutiny of the first hypotheses would lead to final satisfactory conviction (107 b); *b)* the fact that not only does Plato not keep his

examples very carefully apart, like that of snow possessing coldness and that of threeness bringing along oddness, but he also illustrates his conception of one thing "bringing along" and "imposing" one of two opposite characters on what it gets hold of (104 d1-3) by referring to the way in which the form three takes hold of something, imposing not only threeness but also oddness, on the latter (104 d5-e10). It should also be added that, perhaps, for the sake of clarity it would have been preferable if Plato had argued exclusively on the level of the forms and their mutual relations. But is seems clear that he is not doing this.

There are good reasons, in fact, to suspect that Plato quite deliberately chooses examples of kinds as different as that of fire bringing along heat and threeness bringing along oddness for they are placed side by side even within one and the same sentence (104 e/105 a, 105 c; and again 106b/c. – That fire and snow are not regarded as forms seems to me obvious. It is true, that in the Timaeus Plato does talk about the form of fire (cf. bff) – but only as long as its atomic structure is under discussion, the physical fire is then mentioned along with the other elements as "σώματα" (Tim. 53 c4; 57 c).[14] And of snow it is merely stated that it is a form of water, not a form *in* water. And the way Plato talks in our argument itself about snow immediately suggests that he is talking about the physical entity. For he explains (106 a) that if snow in addition to being essentially cold were also indestructible it would retreat at the attack of something hot "σῶς καὶ ἄτηκτος", – safe and unmelted. But, in whatever way an immanent form of snow may retreat, it would have to leave behind its "corpse" i.e. warm water.[15]

So it seems to me that Plato, who was, after all, completely at liberty to choose his own examples, easily could have avoided such doubtful cases as fire and snow if he had wanted to talk only about immanent forms. That he returns to the examples of fire and snow at all occasions therefore suggests that he thought that no more than an analogy between the various cases was necessary for his argumen. Or, to put it like Hartman (p. 218-20), he may have chosen these different kinds of examples quite intentionally in order to show that the applicability of his model did not depend on any specific case. This would also be a good explanation for the fact that throughout the argument Plato sticks to his military metaphors of "attacking", "occupying", or "retreating". For while this can be understood in an almost literal sense in the case of fire or snow, it is not easy to see what its exact meaning is in the case of the immanent characters which may differ from each other as widely as Socrates' size relative to Simmias' and threeness bringing along oddness. This metaphorical way of speaking

allows Plato to evade the question of how the immanent characters take over, possess and leave their occupied entities, and what it means in each case that they "withdraw or perish".[16]

Against this it has been argued that 104 d1-3, the passage in which Plato states his general rule for finding entities with essential attributes, in its most natural way of reading would refer to the fms, i.e. that they are what impose their own character along with some opposite on whatever they occupy: ἃ ὅτι ἂν κατάσχῃ μὴ μόνον ἀναγκάζει τὴν αὑτοῦ ἰδέαν αὐτὸ ἴσχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίου αὖ τῳ τινός)where I read "αὖ τῳ" with Bluck; cf. 105 a3/4). Gallop who does not want to regard the soul as an immanent form has therefore tried to defend a different reading of the passage (cf. translation, commentary and notes ad loc.), to the effect that the items Plato talks about in 104 d1-3 are the things occupied rather than their occupiers. (cf. esp. p. 203-207). This interpretation, though grammatically possible, has the disadvantage not only to destroy the correspondence between "ὅτι" in line 2 and "αὐτό" in line 3, but one has to accept a certain shift which the text does not seem to warrant: The "items" in questions according to G. are at first the things occupied, then those that "bring along" something – to something else, and finally those that occupy something else (as in the case of the soul in 105 d3-5). Against this, Plato's text suggests that it is the same kind of entity that "occupies" in 104 d1-3, "brings along" 104 e/105 a, and that the soul is just one of their kind.

In opposition to Gallop I think that one can read the text in 104 d1-3 in its most natural way and still maintain that the occupiers (including the soul) are not necessarily forms. For the formulation in 104 d1-2 seems to me to be quite neutral as to the kind of entities that are supposed to "κατέχειν" something else: it is merely stated that they impose their own form on the thing occupied without precluding that those entities should be forms or things *with* forms. That the example added is of the form three "ὅτι ἂν αὖ ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα κατάσχῃ"... (104d56) does not decide the matter, since, as said earlier, Plato sees no difficulty in switching back to entities like fire in the same context (105 a1).[17]

But, someone might object, if the text is at best neutral on the question, i.e. neither dealing exclusively with forms nor with substances, why, then, should the soul not be a form? That it cannot be an immanent form becomes clear when one reflects on the possible ontological status of immanent forms – they owe their existence to the fact that something participates in the form itself. But how can there be a free-floating immanent form which is neither "ἐν ἡμῖν" nor identical with the form as such "ἐν τῇ φύσει" (as Plato distinguishes them in 103 b)? That the soul cannot,

on the other hand be identical with the form as such can be derived from the affinity – argument, where Socrates had explained that the soul is more *like* and *closer* in kind (80 b) to the intelligible, invariable, and eternal forms (78 d) and therefore rather akin to them than to the earthly impure entities, but the soul is clearly not recognized as one of the forms.[18]

Furthermore, as some commentators on the last argument seem to neglect, Socrates can rely for it on certain presuppositions on which he and his partners had agreed as the result of the earlier arguments. Socrates had refuted Simmias' suggestion that the soul might be something like a "harmony" – invisible, incorporeal, divine, but yet depending for its existence on the body (instrument) which posseses it (cf. 85ff.). Also, both Simmias and Cebes had accepted the argument from recollection – that the soul must have had a prenatal life in which it has had access to the forms. (cf. 77 a ff.; 92 d-e). And all that Cebes demands in his criticism is, that the soul may not eventually be worn out after several reincarnations but is really everlasting. And, if the final argument contains Socrates' answer to Cebes, this is the only step that has to be filled in by our argument. Plato may therefore have relied on it that it is agreed that the soul is an independent entity with properties and capacities of its own, something which we would call a substance.

Before we turn to a further investigation of Plato's conception of the nature of the soul some further criticism of the final argument has to be dealt with. E. Hartman has pointed out that even if the soul is not regarded as a form but as a substance bringing along qualities, the argument fails because Plato wrongly assumes that whenever something "brings along" something else it should possess this as a quality itself. Hartman has no difficulty in showing that this is not true as a general principle. The hemlock brings death to man without being dead itself, fever brings sickness without being sick etc. (p. 221ff.). This seems, at first, a very serious reproach. For not only does Plato indeed argue that the soul never can take on death because it always brings along life to the body, without giving any justification for passing from "brings along" (ἐπιφέρει) to "does not accept the opposite" (οὐ δέχεται) in 105 d-e; but the difficulty seems also to hang together with the assumptin which Plato himself later realized to be troublesome for his theory of the forms, i.e. that they all are supposed to possess the character they stand for, in such a way that justice is just and tallness is tall, – the problem of self-predication.

Plato has been deluded in our argument, as Hartman explains, by what has been called by S. Peterson "Pauline Predication", the way in which St. Paul in Corinth. XIII, 4 talks of "charity as being patient, kind and long

enduring", where it is, of course, not charity itself which has all those virtues but the person who possesses charity.[19] Analogously, it seems clear that the soul need not possess life itself just because that which has a soul has life.

Sophisticated and suggestive as this criticism seems, I do not think that it does justice to Plato here. Fortunately, we do not have to rely only on general considerations such as the consideration that an argument for the immortality of the soul makes no sense if it is not at least assumed that the soul is alive before death. I think that, in fact, some of the conditions which Plato introduces in the final argument are quite sufficient to rule out cases of Pauline predication. For the inference against which Hartman directs his criticism, that "that which always brings a character on something else possesses this as an essential characteristic itself" (cf. 104 d1; 105 d3), is not the only criterion which Plato uses here but only supplementary to a criterion given earlier which rules out "Pauline" characteristics.

First, already the way in which Plato had demarcated the distinction between forms, immanent forms or characters, and the possessors of those characters in 103 b-c suggests that only those cases are under consideration in which the character in question is a genuine "ἐνόν", and not merely imposed on something else, (as in the case of the deathbringing hemlock). Secondly, he adds an even more important condition, namely, that the possessor should be *called* after the character he possesses – "ἐπονομάζοντες αὐτὰ τῇ ἐκείνων ἐπωνυμίᾳ" (103 b8/9). That Plato attributed some importance to this "eponymy"-criterion is confirmed by the fact that he uses it again when he makes the distinction between accidental and essential attributes: "Ἔστιν ἄρα περὶ ἔνια τῶν τοιούτων, ὥστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον, ἀλλα καὶ ἄλλο τι ὅ ἐστιν μὲν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο, ἔχει δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου μορφὴν ἀεί,
ὅταν ᾖ; (103e; the criterion is again used in the special case of "three" and "odd" in 104 a). Now, Hartman's examples clearly do not fulfil this criterion: neither the death-bringing hemlock nor the man-eating tiger can even accidentally be called after what they bring along to other things.[20]

The further condition "bringing along" is, then, not introduced as a means to find out whether a certain thing possesses a certain character in the first place, but merely as a further criterion to distinguish between accidental and essential possession. For this is how Socrates applies the rule: as a method to determine whether a certain thing *always* possesses a certain property (cf. 104 b6ff; d3).

It is clear why Plato needs this second criterion in the case of the soul. "Eponymy" as such is not sufficient, because, as Plato realized (cf. 103

b6ff; e2) all things can be called after all their properties, even if they are only accidental ones (as long as they possess them in a non-Pauline way); I can be called awake or asleep, healthy or ill, although these are clearly only accidental properties. The addition "can *always* be called. . ." (cf. 103 e) is only sufficient in fortunate cases like those of snow and cold, fire and heat, three and odd, where there is no doubt whether they can be called unqualifiedly ("always") after their properties. In the case of the soul it would be a blatant *petitio* simply to assume that it can always be called alive. So for this special case, where there is neither physical nor conceptual necessity that the soul always should possess life Plato introduced the extra criterion that it always imparts life to what it gets hold of. From the succession of the criteria, therefore, it seems clear, that only candidates which do satisfy the eponymy-criterion would be subjected to the further test whether it "ἀεὶ ἐπιφέρει . . .". For this is the way Plato proceeds; the question is nowhere whether the soul is alive because it brings life to the body, but only whether it is essentially alive because it always does that (cf. 105 d1; 3, 10).[21]

So it would seem that at least for our argument Plato can be acquitted of Hartman's reproach that he confused "Pauline" with attribute-predication.[22] But the question remains whether Plato is really entitled to assume that the soul is an entity which can be called "alive" in a non-metaphorical sense. That he assumes this is also attested by a passage in *Republic* X, 608 c ff. where Socrates offers another proof for the immortality of the soul and refers back to earlier arguments (611b/c) which can be only those of the Phaedo. In Rep. X Socrates argues that since everything can only be destroyed by its own congenital ("ἔμφυτον") evil, but clearly human soul is not destroyed by its specific evil, vice, and the evils of the body cannot affect it, it cannot be destroyed at all. – The weakness of this argument is apparent: there can be more than one specific evil (wood, e.g. can rot or be burnt etc.) and things can also be destroyed in an "unnatural" way. Furthermore, vice may stand in relation to the soul just as ugliness stands to the body: it may disfigure but not destroy it. Yet, this does not exclude the possibility that nothing else could assail it. – This passage confirms that Plato quite consciously conceived of the soul as of a substance with properties of its own, since he here compares it with other natural things such as wood, bronze, iron, grain, and the human body, which are all independent substances with properties and characteristic afflictions.

As to the exact nature of the soul we are left somehow in the dark by Plato in the *Phaedo* and also in *Republic X*.[23] The soul is sometimes treated

as the principle of life (as in the cyclical argument), and the mind (in the anamnesis-argument); in the affinity-argument it fulfills both functions. In the argument in Rep. X the question is again left open. And this is the point where I want to venture my own criticism of Plato's proof. So far, I have only pointed out that the proof, though formally correct, does not compel us to accept the immortality of the soul because one does not have to accept Plato's concept of the soul as a separable substance, though one may do so. That Plato leaves the nature of the soul undefined, however, is a reproach from which one cannot, in my opinion, so easily release him, for this violates a rule which Socrates himself in several Platonic dialogues imposes on himself and on his partners: not to try to argue that a certain thing possesses a quality as long as one has not grasped the nature of the thing itself (cf. *Meno* 100 b on "virtue"; *Rep.* I, 354 c-e on "justice"; implicitly the same criticism is made at the end of the *Euthyphro* 15 d and the *Laches* 199cff).

It seems that this "Socratic" rule has been violated by Plato both in the *Phaedo* and in *Republic* X, even though in the *Phaedo* Plato at the beginning of the affinity-argument seems to promise such a clarification (78 b), and in *Republic* X he even admits his uncertainty about the nature of the soul. For he explains there (611 a ff.) that in our present life our soul resembles the sea-god Glaucus who is so battered, mutilated, and overgrown by maritime life that one cannot easily guess his real nature; thus for our soul "if it were raised out of the depth of this sea in which it is now sunk, and were cleansed and scraped free of the rocks and barnacles which, because it now feasts on earth cling to it in wild profusion of earthy and stony accretions by reasons of these feastings that are accounted happy. And then one might see whether in its real nature it is manifold or single in its simplicity or what is the truth about it and how" (Shorey's translation). Since the soul's commerce with the earthly elements are so much stressed in the *Phaedo* too (cf. especially the affinity-argument 81 b ff.), one wonders how, according to Plato, we are to know whether it is manifold or simple, separable or inseparable, as long as we do not know precisely what the soul is.

This "Socratic" criticism can also be formulated in Kantian terms, for it is this very knowledge, which seems to transcend the realm of our experience, of which Plato tries to convince us in his proof: that there is something in us which is a unity in itself, an immaterial entity which can be separated from the body and survives this separation in integrity and preservation of its faculties, an immortal soul.

About this, I assume, one could only be reassured if the "πρῶτος πλοῦς"

were possible, i.e. if we had direct knowledge of the causes of our generation and destruction in the way desired by Socrates in his discussion of the notion of cause (95 e-99 d), namely if we possessed knowledge of the fate of our soul before and after death; but Plato himself was aware that of this he could not give us an exact account but only a mythical description, the "likely story" with which Socrates concludes his talk (cf. 108 d).

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[1] For a critical discussion of these arguments see Bluck p. 18ff. – Bibliographical references are given at the end of this article.

[2] If Plato seems to indicate some dissatisfaction here then it is not with the argument itself but with the fact that they had not pursued the "πρώτας ὑποθέσεις" as far up as possible. For the meaning of "ὑπόθεσις" here and in 101d3 see the article by F. Loriaux.

[3] For a detailed elucidation of these difficulties see the article by G. Vlastos "Reason and Cause in the Phaedo" esp. pp. 308.

[4] The vague meaning of "ἐναντίον" allows for quite different pairs of somehow opposed qualities. For the difficulties with relative opposites and their forms cf. Vlastos p. 315n64.

[5] As will be pointed out later, Plato may have had more important reasons for reminding the reader of the "law of opposites" at the beginning of the last argument.

[6] That this distinction is new here seems to be indicated by the vocabulary – "τὸ ἔχον" and "τὸ ἐνόν" (103 b) for the possessor and its quality; the term "quality" is only later introduced in *Theaetetus* (182 a). – As we shall see, however, not just the novelty may account for the loose terminology; Plato may have wanted to be able to apply the distinction to cases as different as fire-heat, three-odd etc.

[7] For a discussion of the problem presented by the disparity of the examples cf. Gallop p. 199ff.

[8] In fact, it is in 106 b3/4 presented as the *outcome* of the whole argument, not as a presupposition, that the soul will not be "τεθνηκυῖα".

[9] The condition "ὅταν περ ᾖ" is then not a meaningless condition in the case of the soul, as O'Brien claims (I, p. 231) but necessary as long as step III is not established.

[10] That Plato accepted self-predication for the forms in the Phaedo is suggested by 100 c4/5 and 102 d6ff.

[11] This would provide a more compelling reason for Socrates' recalling nd clarifying the law, especially since Socrates' main partner, Cebes, declares that he had not needed it (102c).

[12]Bluck often seems to put his finger on this very point (cf. p. 25; 119; 191ff.); his explanation, however, that Plato tries to make the distinction between contrary and contradictory opposition passes over the most important point. The same assumption seems to underlie Scarrow's interpretation (cf. p. 24)

[13] Cf. Keyt 169; O'Brien I, 216ff., although O'Brien is partly critical of Hackforth's overall interpretation (cf. 217).

[14] It seems significant that in Parm. (130 c) fire, like water and man is mentioned as one of the entities of which Socrates expresses doubt whether they *had* forms, not whether they *are* forms.

[15] It would also seem that the "ἄδικον" and the "ἄμουσον" in 105d/e are not the immanent forms but the *things* that cannot accept the respective properties.

[16] For a more thorough discussion the meaning of the metaphor cf. Gallop p. 195ff.

[17] To the question whether the numbers, and in consequence the soul, are to be considered as forms see the article by J. Schiller, esp. p. 57/58.

[18] I leave aside the difficult question whether there also *is* a form of soul. Since Plato does mention the form of life itself (106 d) it may well be that he also accepted a form of soul in which our individual souls participate.

[19] For further elucidation of this notion see Vlastos, An Ambiguity in the Sophist, *Platonic Studies,* 270ff; cf. also *ibid.*, The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras, 221ff; 152ff.

[20] Exceptions are, of course, the genuine cases of Pauline predications. Whether St. Paul was aware of the metaphorical character of his speech I do not know. For Plato it is only relevant that he did not infer "brings along → possesses".

[21] This point seems to have completely escaped the notice of D. Keyt who accuses Plato of the fallacy of equivocation, that "athanatos" is at first used simply in the sense of "not dead" but later in that of "immortal".

[22] It should be stressed, that this defense of Plato's argument does not affect the problem of self-predication of the forms.

[23] Plato himself may already have seen problems which he attacked again in the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus.* For a more profound discussion of the nature of the soul in the *Phaedo* cf. Gallop, 88ff.