

Analyzing Socrates' Four Arguments for the Soul's Immortality in the Phaedo:
Uncovering Informal Fallacies, Clarifying Ambiguities, and Addressing Inconsistencies

In this paper, I contend that Socrates' four arguments for the soul's immortality fail to provide conclusive proof. Instead, these arguments can be seen as attempts to infer the most plausible explanation. However, a closer examination reveals that Socrates' best explanation relies on a sequence of informal fallacies and ambiguities, ultimately resulting in inconsistencies within his comprehensive argument. These fallacies, ambiguities, and inconsistencies will become evident as we delve into Socrates' four arguments for soul immortality in the Phaedo.

In the initial argument advocating for the immortality of the soul within the Phaedo, Plato employs Socrates to posit that things originate from their antitheses. In Socrates' words, he states, "It seems to be a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead must be somewhere whence they can come back again."¹ Consider the contrast between awake and asleep; we transition from wakefulness to sleep and vice versa. Socrates asserts the presence of two distinct processes in this phenomenon: one from wakefulness to slumber and another from slumber to wakefulness. Socrates extends this two-step pattern to the concept of life and death. Essentially, just as we move from being alive to being dead, there is a corresponding transition from being dead to being alive. Socrates argues that accepting the premise that things emerge from their opposites logically leads to the conclusion that we exist in a state of being alive after having experienced death. This, in turn, constitutes sufficient evidence for the existence of the soul in an afterlife. Socrates'

¹ Grube. *Five Dialogues*. 109

line of reasoning hinges on the notion that the soul, once separated from the body, enters a state of being dead, while its reintegration with the body signifies a state of being alive. Consequently, he concludes that the soul must be distinct from the body; if the body is mortal, then the soul must be immortal.

Socrates' initial argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* can be restructured as follows:

1. The emergence of things is linked to their opposites.
2. The process of emerging from opposites involves two facets: a. Transitioning from the state of wakefulness to sleep. b. Transitioning from the state of sleep to wakefulness. c. Transitioning from the state of being alive to being dead. d. Transitioning from the state of being dead to being alive.
3. It follows that a distinct substance, separate from the body, must exist in the afterlife to facilitate the transition from being dead to being alive (deduced from 1 and 2).
4. This life-bestowing substance is identified as the soul.
5. Conclusively, the soul is distinct from the body (inferred using modus ponens with 3 and 4).
6. Given the body's mortality, it can be reasoned that the soul is immortal.
7. Thus, the soul is ascribed immortality (again, employing modus ponens with 6 and 7).

The argument maintains deductive validity since it follows that if things originate from their opposites, this process inherently comprises two facets, each leading to the other.

Consequently, if we accept that things emerge from their opposites, then the transition from being alive to being dead must reciprocate with the transition from being dead to being alive. However, a potential objection arises due to an unstated assumption within the text. This assumption implies that something distinct from the body must exist in the afterlife and further assumes that this substance must be identified as the soul. While one might concede that an entity separate from the body is necessary for the afterlife to restore life to a body in the state of being dead, it would be hasty to conclude that this substance must necessarily be the soul. Socrates has not presented any concrete evidence to establish that this substance is unequivocally the soul; his argument only supports the notion that such a substance must exist.

Socrates employs a *reductio ad absurdum* argument to counter potential objections asserting a substance's necessity. He illustrates that in a scenario where all bodies were rendered lifeless with no intervening substance to facilitate the transition from the state of being dead to being alive, the outcome would be the perpetuation of lifelessness. In other words, without such a substance, all bodies would remain in a state of death, and no life would exist. However, it is crucial to emphasize that Socrates has not presented substantial evidence to identify this necessary substance as the soul. His argument compellingly underscores the requirement for an intervening substance but does not firmly establish that the soul is the sole or exclusive candidate to fulfill this role.

The initial implication of Socrates' first argument is that while things may originate from their opposites, it remains unclear whether the soul is the exclusive agent responsible for transitioning a body from a state of death to life. There exists a possibility that another

substance plays this crucial role. Consequently, in the context of the first argument for the soul's immortality in the *Phaedo*, Socrates falls short in persuading an opponent to accept the soul's immortality because the existence of a necessary soul is not definitively established. In such a scenario, Socrates' argument potentially becomes circular, as it hinges on the premise that (1) a soul must exist in the afterlife to bestow life upon a body in a state of death and (2) subsequently, to return it to a state of life, because (3) it is the soul existing in the afterlife that imparts life to the body in a state of death. While the process suggests the presence of a substance essential for this transition, Socrates has not provided independent evidence to conclusively affirm that this substance must unequivocally be identified as the soul.

In the second argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates contend that learning is fundamentally a process of recollection. In his words, he states, if those enduring realities we frequently discuss, such as the Beautiful and the Good, exist... and we align all our perceptions with these realities... then, just as these realities exist, so must our souls exist before our birth.² In simpler terms, our current knowledge is not acquired but rather recollected from a previous existence. We must have existed in a prior state to recollect what we now know. Building upon the premise established in the first argument that the soul exists in the afterlife before birth, Socrates suggests that the soul learns during this pre-birth existence and subsequently forgets this knowledge upon entering the physical world at birth. It implies immortality if the soul can learn in the afterlife and recollect this knowledge after birth. The soul exists before and

² *Five Dialogues*. 115

after birth, acquiring and recollecting knowledge. This logical sequence suggests that the soul persists beyond death.

In his second argument for the soul's immortality, Socrates builds upon an analogy that presupposes the validity of a foundational premise grounded in the theory of Forms. He states, "We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this."³ In essence, this argument rests on the notion that when we perceive multiple objects as being equal, it is because they partake in the Form of the Equal, denoted as "E." We recognize the existence of E because, when we contemplate these objects, we inherently consider the concept of equality, "e," which is a form of recollection of E. Socrates further argues that a distinction exists between instances of "e" and the higher Form, "E." If "e" falls short of "E" due to its inherent deficiency, it logically follows that we must have possessed prior knowledge of "E" to discern that "e" lacks the completeness of "E."

Socrates attributes this deficiency in our perception to sensory experiences. In other words, our senses lead us to acknowledge that all instances of "e" we perceive strive to embody "E" but ultimately fall short. Socrates contends that in order for us to recognize this distinction through sense perception, we must have possessed knowledge of "E" prior to engaging in sensory experiences; otherwise, we would lack the capacity to reference our sensory perceptions to "E" and understand that "e" is an imperfect reflection of "E." If our sensory experiences began only after birth, it logically follows that we must have

³ *Five Dialogues*. 113

acquired knowledge of "E" before our birth. Consequently, Socrates posits that the soul's existence predates our physical birth.

Furthermore, Socrates contends that the loss of knowledge of "E" equates to the act of forgetting "E." To clarify, gaining knowledge of "E" before birth implies that we forfeit this knowledge at birth. Subsequently, we reacquire this knowledge of "E" through our sensory perceptions of "e." Socrates defines this process of regaining knowledge as recollection. Socrates presents a dilemma: either we are born with an inherent knowledge of "E" and retain this knowledge throughout our lifetime, or as we acquire knowledge through sensory perception during our lives, we effectively recall "E." He addresses this dilemma by asserting that if a person genuinely possesses knowledge of "E," they would be able to provide a coherent account of "E." However, since not everyone possesses this innate knowledge of "E," they must engage in the act of recollection. Socrates' argument leads to two significant conclusions. First, our souls must have acquired knowledge of "E" before birth. Second, our souls existed independently from the body before birth and possessed intelligence. Given that "E" unquestionably exists, it logically follows that our souls must exist before our physical birth. Consequently, Socrates posits that the soul is immortal because it persists beyond death.

Plato's Socrates presents a second argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, which can be deconstructed into three sub-arguments: one advocating for the theory of the Forms, another asserting the necessity of pre-birth knowledge of a Form, and the last one positing the soul as the medium for apprehending this Form, ultimately

leading to the conclusion of the soul's immortality. The sub-argument advocating for the theory of the Forms can be outlined as follows:

1. x, y, and z possess equality because they partake in the Form of the Equal, denoted as "E."
2. Contemplating x, y, and z invokes thoughts of their inherent equality, "e," which constitutes a recollection of Form "E" (instantiation, 1, 2).
3. A person endowed with knowledge of Form "E" is expected to provide an account of "E."
4. However, not everyone possesses knowledge of Form "E."
5. Consequently, the individual must engage in the act of recollection to access this knowledge (modus tollens, 2, 3, 4).
6. The fact that the individual can recollect Form "E" implies the existence of Form "E" (modus ponens, 5, 6).

While some scholars argue that Plato never intended for Socrates to make a direct argument for the theory of Forms, it becomes apparent that there is indeed an implicit argument for the existence of the Form of the Equal, denoted as "E," within Socrates' second argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*. Nevertheless, a valid objection can still be raised against this argument, highlighting a potential circularity: it asserts that "E" exists because someone recollects "E," but it lacks an independent basis for affirming the reality of "E" beyond Socrates' inference to the best explanation, which suggests that the existence of "E" is inferred from observing equality in various instances of "e."

The sub-argument highlighting the imperative of possessing knowledge of a Form before birth can be delineated as follows:

1. Sensory perception guides us to the recognition that all instances of "e," which we apprehend through our senses, endeavor to emulate "E" but inherently lack its fullness.
2. The fact that "e" does not measure up to "E" implies that we must have possessed antecedent knowledge of "E" to discern this shortfall.
3. Given that our sensory perception commences only after birth, it logically follows that we must have acquired knowledge of "E" prior to our birth (established through hypothetical syllogism, combining 1, 2, and 3).

If, in the previous argument, "E" is merely an inference to the best explanation for our knowledge of "e," then the argument advocating for the necessity of knowing "E" before birth, at its strongest, remains inductive. Consequently, the conclusion drawn from this argument is, at best, probable rather than sure. In simpler terms, while we initiate sensory perception of "e" after birth, it is only a probability, and perhaps even less likely, that we acquired knowledge of "E" before birth. The argument's conclusion, therefore, lacks certainty and, at most, attains a level of probability.

The sub-argument supporting the idea of the soul as the medium for apprehending the Form can be structured as follows:

1. Given that our souls must have gained knowledge of "E" before our birth, it follows that our souls indeed possess knowledge of "E."
2. Consequently, the existence of the soul predates our physical birth.

3. The implication here is that the soul is immortal (inferred through modus ponens, combining premises 2 and 3).

If we entertain the notion that the probability for the conclusion of the previous argument lacks certainty, it logically follows that the likelihood of the conclusion asserting the soul as the medium for acquiring knowledge of "E" is even less certain. It has been previously argued that one cannot definitively infer from the premises of Socrates' first argument for the immortality of the soul that it is exclusively the soul that must exist in the afterlife. Therefore, the contention that the soul has acquired knowledge of a Form in the afterlife is, at most, inductively probable.

Even if, for the sake of argument, we entertain Socrates' inference to the best explanation, a critical concern persists: the argument continues to exhibit a circular structure. It proceeds as follows: (1) A soul is required to exist in the afterlife to bestow life upon a body in a state of death and (2) subsequently revive it into a state of life because (3) what imparts life to the body in the state of death, enabling its revival, is the soul that exists in the afterlife. Moreover, the contention that the soul is now immortal hinges on the assumption that it likely acquired knowledge of a Form before giving life to a body that is presently alive, under the condition that it probably acquired this knowledge before the birth of a body. However, it is vital to underscore that what is deemed probable cannot be unequivocally asserted as a "must." In other words, the argument relies heavily on probabilities rather than establishing a definitive necessity, leaving the conclusion less assured.

Another objection emerges within the text: while it has been contended that the soul must exist before birth, the argument falls short of establishing that it necessarily endures beyond death. Simmias articulates this skepticism by stating, "I do not think myself, however, that it has been proved that the soul continues to exist after death."⁴ To clarify, the second argument underscores a twofold process, emphasizing that the living must originate from the dead, thus providing a rationale for the soul's existence before birth. However, what remains unaddressed is the argument for the soul's persistence after death.

In response to the objection, Socrates counters with a sub-argument grounded in the premise that the nature of the soul must inherently be unchanging, compelling it to transition to the afterlife. He expresses this idea in the following manner: "If the soul exists before, it must, as it comes to life and birth, come from nowhere else than death and being dead."⁵ In simpler terms, Socrates argues that when an entity, represented as "x," is composite, it becomes more susceptible to fragmentation or division into its constituent parts. Consequently, anything that remains non-composite is less likely to undergo such separation. Socrates posits that if "x" remains constant and unchanging, it is highly probable that "x" is non-composite, whereas "y," characterized by variability over time, is likely composite. To illustrate this point, Socrates references the theory of Forms as an example: the "e" representing the equality of things may undergo change, but the Form "E" consistently maintains its unchanging nature.

⁴ *Five Dialogues*. 115

⁵ *Five Dialogues*. 116

Through analogy with the soul, Socrates argues that anything subject to change is perceptible by the senses, while that which remains constant cannot be sensed. From this premise, he deduces the existence of two distinct categories of existence: the visible and the invisible. Socrates prompts Simmias and Cebes to assume that "the invisible always remains the same, whereas the visible never does."⁶ Socrates posits that the soul must be considered invisible if the body is visible. This categorization is founded on the idea that the invisible soul is more inclined to remain unaltered while the body, as a visible entity, experiences change. Furthermore, Socrates argues that since the body is naturally prone to dissolution, while the soul is inherently indissoluble, even though the body may persist for a certain duration after death, it is ultimately the changeless and indissoluble soul that proceeds to the afterlife. Consequently, Socrates concludes that the soul must continue its existence after death.

Socrates' sub-argument, supporting the conclusion that the soul endures after death, can be systematically reconstructed as follows:

1. Any entity composed of multiple parts is inherently more susceptible to change.
2. Conversely, that which is non-composite is less inclined to undergo change.
3. Entities experiencing changes are generally perceptible by the senses, whereas those remaining unaltered cannot be sensed.
4. Consequently, we can identify two distinct modes of existence: the visible, characterized by change, and the invisible, marked by constancy (inferred through instantiation of premises 1, 2, and 3).

⁶ *Five Dialogues*. 117

5. The invisible, owing to its unchanging nature, remains perpetually the same, while the visible, subject to change, never maintains consistency.
6. In this context, the body is categorized as visible, while the soul is deemed invisible.
7. As a result, the body represents that which undergoes change, while the soul embodies the unchanging (deduced through modus ponens, combining premises 5 and 6).
8. Given that the body does undergo changes for a period after death, it logically follows that it is the unchanging soul that journeys to the afterlife.
9. Consequently, Socrates concludes that the soul must persist beyond death and into the afterlife (affirmed through modus ponens, integrating premises 8 and 9).

The primary objection to Socrates' sub-argument, nestled within his second argument for the soul's immortality, serves as a segue to his third argument for the soul's immortality. However, it is essential to scrutinize how this sub-argument is inductively probable but not conclusively cogent. Furthermore, it contains an informal fallacy of division. Secondly, we will briefly examine objections raised against this sub-argument. This sub-argument is not conclusively cogent because the premise that entities changing are more likely to be perceptible by the senses does not necessarily hold on its face.

As an illustrative example, consider the sun: when one gazes at it, it appears to be the size of a small marble. However, the sun's massive mass continually changes even as observed, yet it still seems to be the size of a marble. Consequently, the massive mass of the sun, undergoing changes while appearing the size of a marble, is not inherently more

likely to be perceived by one's senses. This objection highlights a potential flaw in the sub-argument's reasoning, as it challenges the assumption that entities changing are inevitably more perceptible.

While it may be argued that I am potentially committing the fallacy of composition by using the specific example of the sun to make a general claim about entities that do not change, it is crucial to clarify that I am employing this counterexample specifically to challenge the fallacy of division inherent in Socrates' premise. This premise suggests that what holds for the general category of entities not changing implies its truth for a particular example, such as the sun. However, I have previously argued that this fallacy does not apply to the example of the sun.

Within the sub-argument nestled within his second argument for the immortality of the soul – the notion that the soul must endure beyond death – there are two additional objections to consider. One of these objections brings up the comparison of the soul to harmony. Simmias presents it as follows: "If... the soul is a kind of harmony... when our body is relaxed... without due measure by diseases and other evils, the soul must immediately be destroyed...."⁷ This objection posits that when the body succumbs to death, it is essentially in a state of disharmony. Consequently, according to this line of thought, the soul must have been destroyed because it is likened to harmony within the body. The opponent contends that harmony, associated with the lyre, which produces harmonious sounds when played, is an invisible concept, whereas the lyre itself is a visible object.

⁷ *Five Dialogues*. 124

The opponent's objection to this sub-argument within Socrates' second argument for the immortality of the soul, which subsequently prompts Socrates to present a third argument, can be systematically reconstructed as follows:

1. Socrates asserts the existence of two categories of existence: the visible and the invisible.
2. The lyre is a visible entity.
3. Harmony, on the other hand, belongs to the category of the invisible.
4. When the lyre is rendered nonfunctional or destroyed, it is thrown into a state of disharmony.
5. Therefore, it logically follows that harmony must have been immediately destroyed upon the lyre's deterioration (deduced through hypothetical syllogism, combining premises 4 and 5).
6. By analogy, Socrates likens the soul to the harmony of the body.
7. When the body succumbs to death, it is left in a state of disharmony.
8. Consequently, it appears that the soul must have been instantaneously destroyed upon the body's death (established through hypothetical syllogism, combining premises 6 and 7).
9. The objection concludes by asserting the uncertainty surrounding the existence of the soul after death (affirmed through modus ponens, integrating premises 8 and 9).

The opponent anticipates a potential counter-argument from Socrates regarding the analogy presented. The opponent asserts that, according to Socrates, even when someone breaks a lyre, the harmony within it does not necessarily descend into disharmony.

Harmony is expected to persist because it would be logically impossible for the lyre, which is mortal and visible, to continue existing after being broken. In contrast, harmony, characterized as divine and invisible, can be destroyed before what is mortal and visible. This suggests that the mortal must cease to exist before the immortal. The opponent highlights that Socrates' objection, as framed by the opponent, stems from Socrates' reliance on his argument for the theory of the Forms.

Given that Socrates has presented an argument for the theory of the Forms, there are several issues with the objection as put forth by the opponent. Socrates has contended that what is composite is more likely to possess certain characteristics such as visibility, divisibility, and susceptibility to change. A lyre, being a composite object, indeed exhibits these traits. Therefore, when the lyre is destroyed, it undergoes a transformation where it remains visible but becomes divided and changed. As presented by the opponent, the problem in Socrates' objection lies in an equivocation of the term "harmony." Two distinct harmonies are at play in this context: one, denoted as "h1," exists within the assembled lyre and is referential because it emerges from the constituent parts. The other, referred to as "h2," also arises from the constituent parts of the lyre but is singled out beyond the aggregate of these parts. This dual usage of "harmony" introduces a lexical and referential ambiguity, complicating the argument. Both the opponent and Socrates employ this ambiguity in their respective positions.

This is why, according to Socrates, it would be a logical contradiction to argue that what is immortal must perish before what is mortal. If what is immortal is what imparts life to the body, then the mortal must cease to exist before what is immortal. Socrates

interprets "harmony" as "h2" – the harmony produced when the lyre is played. In this context, asserting that this harmony must cease before the lyre, as playing the lyre brings harmony, would be contradictory. The harmony only ceases after the lyre has been broken or destroyed. Conversely, the opponent's interpretation revolves around "harmony" in the sense of "h1." In this scenario, it is not contradictory to argue that the harmony generated by the constituent parts of the lyre ceases to exist when the lyre is shattered because the individual components of the lyre, which collectively form harmony, become discordant upon breaking. This distinction allows the opponent to contend that whether the soul must endure after death remains uncertain. The harmony that exists when the lyre is played becomes nonexistent due to the disharmony resulting from the disintegration of the lyre's constituent parts.

The second objection to Socrates' sub-argument, embedded within his second argument for the soul's immortality, is succinct and revolves around the potential duration of the soul's existence after the death of multiple bodies. In Socrates' rephrasing of his opponent's viewpoint, "Cebes... agrees with me that the soul lasts much longer than the body, but that no one knows whether the soul often wears out many bodies and then, on leaving its last body, is now itself destroyed."⁸ In simpler terms, the objection posits that while the soul may endure longer than the body, there exists the possibility that, after a series of rebirths, the soul could become exhausted. It might be destroyed upon departing from its most recent body at a certain juncture.

⁸ *Five Dialogues*. 129

The second key upshot is that the existence of a form is not definitively established. As previously presented, Socrates' argument for the theory of forms appears circular. In light of the uncertainty surrounding forms, it remains unclear whether it is necessary to possess knowledge of a form before birth. Without this necessity, the assertion that the soul must serve as the conduit for acquiring knowledge of a form, ultimately leading to the conclusion of the soul's immortality, becomes less certain. Since Socrates' sub-argument, which argues for the soul's continued existence after death, propels him to present his third argument for the soul's immortality, we shall now focus on this third argument.

In Socrates' third argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Plato presents the idea that the soul cannot be in harmony with the body, as that would imply the presence of parts within the soul. Socrates raises this question, asking, "Can this be true about the soul, that one soul is more and more fully a soul than another, or is less and less fully a soul, even to the smallest extent?"⁹ In simpler terms, Socrates draws an analogy to illustrate his point. Just as the harmony of a lyre is produced by its parts, making it a composite entity, Socrates contends that the soul, as depicted in the *Phaedo*, is non-composite. A non-composite entity is a single substance that does not rely on any additional components. Consequently, Socrates argues that the soul cannot be in a state of harmony with the body, for such a relationship would imply that the soul is comprised of parts, which contradicts its non-composite nature.

Additionally, Socrates argues that because the individual parts of the lyre generate harmony, these parts govern the direction of this harmony. By extension, if a soul were

⁹ *Five Dialogues*. 131

akin to the body's harmony, it would be subject to the control of the body in which it resides and could become either virtuous or flawed. However, according to Socrates' portrayal of the soul in the *Phaedo*, it lacks distinct parts and cannot be subdivided into virtuous or flawed components. The soul simply exists as a unified entity. Consequently, it is untenable to posit that the soul functions in harmony with the body, as this would imply the presence of parts within it.

Furthermore, Socrates contends that since the parts of the lyre give rise to its harmony, this harmony is susceptible to the influence of the elements from which it is composed. In contrast, Socrates maintains that the non-composite soul is impervious to the influence of its constituent parts, mainly because it lacks such parts in the first place. Therefore, the soul must exercise control over the body in which it resides rather than being subjected to the dominion of the body. This underscores the argument that the soul cannot be likened to harmony with the body, as such a characterization would imply subjugation to the body rather than dominion over it.

Socrates' third argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* exhibits a series of four sets of inconsistencies, which can be delineated as follows:

1. Harmony is a composite thing.
2. A composite thing cannot exist before the elements from which it is composed.
3. The soul is a non-composite thing.
4. The soul can exist apart from the body in which it dwells.
5. The harmony argument is thus inconsistent (absorption, 1, 2, 3, 4).
6. Harmony does not direct its components but is directed by them.

7. Each harmony then depends on the way its components have harmonized it.
8. The soul, as harmony, can be either good or bad depending on how it has been harmonized.
9. However, one soul is not more or less a soul than another.
10. The harmony argument is thus inconsistent (absorption, 6, 7, 8, 9).
11. Harmony does not share in disharmony.
12. No soul in harmony will share in disharmony.
13. The soul has no greater share of disharmony or of harmony.
14. Thus, it is not the case that there are good and bad souls.
15. The harmony argument is thus inconsistent (absorption, 11, 12, 13, 14).
16. Harmony does not rule over the elements of which it is composed.
17. Harmony is a thing affected by the elements of which it is composed.
18. The soul is not a thing to be directed by the affections of the body.
19. The soul rules over the body and masters it.
20. It is quite wrong to say that the soul is a harmony (absorption, 5, 10, 15).
21. The harmony argument is inconsistent (absorption, 16, 17, 18, 19).

These inconsistencies within Socrates' third argument cast doubt on its overall coherence and validity.

The presence of lexical and referential ambiguities related to the term "harmony" is a recurring theme throughout this argument, leading to confusion between Socrates and his opponents. An illustrative instance of this ambiguity is found in the phrase "before those elements from which it had to be composed." Socrates contends that if the opponent

asserts that harmony, as in h2, is a composite entity, he is guilty of equivocation because the opponent might be referring to harmony as a composite entity in the sense of h1. Consequently, the opponent could argue that this composite harmony exists in the context of h2.

The opponent's argument may not necessarily be that h cannot exist before H. Instead, the opponent may suggest that h exists within the combination of the parts, allowing h to relate to H. Although the opponent may not explicitly argue that h predates H, this is the basis of Socrates' objection to the opponent's position. Consequently, Socrates concludes that the harmony argument is inconsistent. However, this inconsistency primarily arises due to Socrates' reliance on equivocating lexical and referential ambiguities within the argument.

Socrates' subsequent steps in the argument become increasingly ambiguous following his charge of inconsistency due to equivocation. For instance, he asserts that harmony, or any composite entity, is not in a different state from its composed elements. If he is referring to h1 in this context, he is essentially arguing that the combined elements of the lyre cannot identify a harmony that can relate to H. However, this stance contradicts his earlier argument for the theory of forms. Given that the sensory perception of h, created by the aggregate of the parts, must have the capacity to relate to H, if the aggregate of the parts distinguishes no h, it becomes unclear what, if anything, is referring back to H.

The third vital upshot to consider is that it is not necessarily incorrect to argue that the soul may be a harmony to the body, and that the supposed inconsistencies in the

harmony argument arise primarily from Socrates' ongoing use of the ambiguous term "harmony."

In the fourth and final argument for the soul's immortality in the *Phaedo*, Plato presents Socrates' contention that the soul cannot be annihilated upon death because it fundamentally resists its demise. Socrates illustrates this by drawing an analogy: "It is impossible for the soul to be destroyed... for it follows... that it will not admit death or be dead, just as three... will not be even nor will the odd..."¹⁰ In essence, Socrates grounds this argument in his broader theory of forms: the existence of any particular entity "f" alongside the abstract concept "F" is attributed to "f" partaking in the essence of "F." Building on this premise, Socrates employs an analogy to elucidate that everything comes into existence by inheriting attributes from the underlying reality it derives from.

Now, Socrates presents a thought experiment wherein he suggests that a particular entity, denoted as "x," can simultaneously partake in both the quality "F" and its negation "~F," akin to a person being taller than one individual and shorter than another.

Nevertheless, Socrates contends that this scenario does not necessarily imply that "F" and "~F" share qualities with each other, nor does it mean that the entity represented by "f" willingly accepts "~f." Socrates further argues that when "~f" appears, "f" either retreats or is annihilated in its presence, displaying an unwillingness to coexist with "~f" and deviate from its original state. In essence, even though "x" can partake in both "f" and "~f" while remaining the same entity, "f" itself cannot transform into "~f." Drawing an analogy from

¹⁰ *Five Dialogues*. 143

this, Socrates concludes that the opposite of something, referred to as "O," can never transition into its opposite, " \sim O," despite "o" being able to partake in " \sim o."

Socrates provides a more concise argument by analogy, employing the number three example. He asserts that "t," which represents the number three, is known not only because it participates in the form of "T" but also because it participates in "odd," represented as "O." As a result, "t" can be considered odd. However, it is not the Form of oddness, "O." From this premise, Socrates concludes that not only do opposites fail to admit each other, but also things that, although not opposites, contain opposite qualities within themselves, do not admit each other. They do not allow for an "F" opposite to their inherent "f." Consequently, Socrates argues that "t" will either cease to exist or undergo any other transformation before, while remaining "t," it participates in "E," such as being even, for instance.

Furthermore, Socrates argues that it is not just "F" that refuses to admit its opposite, " \sim F." Anything that carries some opposite characteristic into the space it occupies also rejects the opposite of that characteristic it brings. To illustrate this, Socrates uses the example of the Form of "t," which occupies "t" but also "o," representing oddness. Consequently, the coexistence of "F" and " \sim F" in this scenario is impossible. This is primarily due to the presence of "O," whose opposite is "E." Socrates further contends that the Form of "E" can never come into contact with "t" because "t" participates in "O." Similarly, "f," representing the number five, does not accommodate the Form of "E." Similarly, "t," which is ten and the double of "f," resists accepting the Form of "O."

Although the double of a number is its kind of opposite, it still refuses to admit the Form of "O."

Socrates skillfully returns the argument to the analogy of the soul. He contends that in the same way that fire, not heat itself, makes a body hot, the soul makes a body alive. The opposite of being alive is being dead. Since the soul refuses to admit the opposite of what it imparts, it does not accept death. Therefore, the soul is inherently deathless. Anything that is deathless cannot undergo destruction. Consequently, the soul, being deathless, cannot be destroyed upon death, and therefore, it is immortal.

Socrates' fourth argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* can be presented in a structured manner as follows:

1. F exists because there is f, and f exists by participating in F.
2. Sense perception suggests that x is taller than y due to height.
3. x's height is explained by its participation in the concept of tallness (T).
4. However, sense perception can be deceptive (inference from 2 and 3).
5. F can only come into existence through participation in the particular reality of F.
6. x may simultaneously participate in both F and \sim F.
7. F never willingly accepts being both F and \sim F at the same time.
8. As a result, f never becomes \sim f (conclusion from 7 and 8).
9. Consequently, O never transforms into \sim O, even though x may participate in both O and \sim O.
10. Things that consistently encompass opposites, without being opposites themselves, do not admit each other.

11. These things, while not being opposites themselves, also do not admit the opposite concept F, which opposes the concept f present within them (derivative from 10).
12. So, not only does F not admit $\sim F$, but also any instance of f that carries $\sim f$ within it does not accept $\sim f$ within itself (consequence from 10 and 11).
13. The soul is what gives a body life.
14. The soul inherently refuses to accept its opposite, which is death.
15. Death stands as the opposite of life.
16. The soul does not admit death (conclusion drawn from 14 and 15).
17. Hence, the soul is immortal (resulting from 16 and 17).

The first part of the argument hinges on the conclusion drawn from the theory of forms, which is debatable due to its circular nature. Therefore, it would be premature to assert that there is life within the body because life connects with the soul, especially since the existence of the soul's form has not been firmly established. The argument concerning the deceptive nature of sense perception is also somewhat irrelevant because it does not provide direct insights into the nature of the soul's form. Instead, it merely suggests that if the form of the soul exists, it likely imparts life to the body, given that sense perception can lead us to believe that life resides within the body mistakenly.

Another objection raised by an opponent questions what prevents the odd, without becoming even, from being destroyed, and the even from coming into existence instead. In essence, this objection queries why the soul, while the opposite of the body, does not get destroyed, potentially after numerous deaths of the body, and allows the emergence of

the death of both the soul and body instead. Socrates argues that when we die, our bodies perish, but our indestructible souls do not die; they relinquish the body to death.

However, this response appears unsatisfactory because it does not adequately explain why the immortal soul has to yield to the mortal body, its opposite. Consequently, Socrates concludes that the soul is deathless and resides in the afterlife, but he fails to provide an independent reason for the soul's deathlessness other than the argument concerning opposites arising from each other. As previously discussed, this argument relies on the inconclusive conclusion of his theory of forms argument. Consequently, the validity of Socrates' conclusion in his final argument for the soul's immortality remains unclear.

Socrates' fourth argument for the immortality of the soul remains questionable due to its reliance on the uncertain conclusion of the argument for the theory of forms and the unestablished assertion that it is solely the soul, without any substantiated argumentation, that must exist in the afterlife and provide life to the body. Consequently, the overall argument can be seen as only inductively probable. As a result, it concludes that the soul must be immortal because it does not admit what is opposite to it is, at best, a probability far from being a compelling and cogent argument.

Therefore, upon closer examination, none of Socrates' arguments in the *Phaedo* convincingly demonstrate the soul's immortality. These arguments fail to provide a strong case even for the existence of the soul itself, let alone its potential role as a harmony to the body, the necessity of pre-birth knowledge, or its resistance to the opposite concept of

death. In essence, Socrates' arguments do not withstand logical scrutiny and leave the question of the soul's immortality unresolved.

It is essential to clarify what I am not contending: I am not asserting that the soul definitively does not have a role in an afterlife that revives the deceased body, or that it does or does not operate as a harmony to the body, or that one should or should not possess knowledge of the soul before birth. My argument centers on the nature of the four arguments presented by Socrates in the *Phaedo* for the soul's immortality. None of these arguments can conclusively establish the existence of the soul as Socrates conceives it, and it remains possible that there is no inherent necessity for such a soul in the first place.

This uncertainty arises because these arguments rely on a series of informal fallacies. They begin with the unproven assumption of the existence of a soul and Socrates' circular argument for the theory of forms. Consequently, the conclusion that the soul must be immortal is, at best, a matter of probability, and at worst, it becomes highly uncertain and inconsistent. While some may argue that Socrates has offered an inference to the best explanation, the presence of these informal fallacies within his reasoning casts doubts on the reliability of his inference to the best explanation.

Works Cited

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