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Julie Stayton

Trinity University, jstayton@trinity.edu

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL IN PLATO'S *PHAEDO*
JULIE STAYTON

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Julie Stayton

The Immortality of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedo*

In his dialogue, the *Phaedo*, Plato gives an account of the immortality of the soul. Plato does this through an argument commonly referred to as the "final argument." The title stems from the fact that the final argument occurs at the finale of Plato's dialogue and follows three less conclusive "arguments" for the immortality of the soul. My thesis is two-fold. First, I will give an interpretation of Plato's final argument in the *Phaedo*, outlining the ontological presuppositions that Plato relies on for the validity of his argument. Secondly, I will discuss some of the key features of the previous three arguments in the *Phaedo*.

It is my view that the final argument stands on its own as an analysis of the immortality of the soul. However, I believe it is useful to examine the previous three arguments in the dialogue in conjunction with the final argument, as several of the key concepts Plato uses in the final argument are introduced and expanded upon earlier. The first three arguments in the dialogue are not necessarily conclusive, but they provide the foundation and initial development of certain ideas used in the final argument.

It is not my intention to argue for the philosophical plausibility of Plato's argument. I will not discuss concerns that might arise regarding whether his argument gives a likely account of the immortality of the soul. Rather I will strictly be concerned with issues of interpretation. My view concerns an interpretive account of Plato's ontology as well as his development of concepts earlier in the dialogue that he uses in his final argument. It is my goal to develop an understanding of Plato's dialogue and some of

the motivations behind his style; it is not my goal to defend Plato's view of the soul's immortality.

Part I: The Final Argument

In the final argument of the *Phaedo*, Plato attempts to show that the soul is immortal. I will first explain some of Plato's ontological presuppositions. I will then walk through the argument, voiced by Plato's main character Socrates. During my account of the argument, I will discuss examples illuminating some details necessary to understand both the argument and Plato's ontology. Finally, I will end with a discussion of Plato's ultimate conclusion: that the soul is immortal.

I will first briefly outline the ontology Plato uses in the final argument, and then explain it in more detail as my discussion of the argument itself progresses. Plato presupposes that there exist two kinds of things: Forms and particulars (*Phd.* 103B). To explain, Plato's Forms are analogous to what we might think of as universals in the following way: there are a lot of hot things, cold things, beautiful things, etc. in the world. What every hot, cold, or beautiful thing has in common with other hot, cold, beautiful things, respectively, are that they share in the Forms of Hotness, Coldness, or Beauty, respectively. One difference between Plato's theory of Forms and the common theories of universals is that Plato does not introduce a Form for every kind of thing. It is not necessary to assume that there is a Form for every predicate; however, in the *Phaedo*, Plato introduces Forms that are shared in by particulars in several specific ways. By particulars, I mean the things that are hot, cold, beautiful, etc. A stove, a stone, and a flower, e.g., are particulars. These particulars share in a Form respectively, as I have said.

For example, we might have a hot stove, sharing in the Form of Hotness; a cold stone, sharing in the Form of Coldness, and a beautiful flower, sharing in the Form of Beauty.

Mann explains that Forms, for Plato, are uniform. When you define something like beauty, you define what the Form is. Forms are the objects of definitions. So this means you can define beauty, justice, tallness, hotness, etc. and whatever these definitions are, the objects of the definitions are the Forms of Beauty, Justice, Tallness, and Hotness respectively. Particulars, as such do not have a definition. So, when you say things about particulars, for example that a flower is beautiful, you are pointing to the specific Form the particular displays, namely the Form of Beauty. “The Beautiful is one in form, or is one Form, or is uniformly what it is” (Mann 81). The definition of beauty is all that the Form of Beauty consists of, nothing more and nothing less. The Form of Beauty does not contain, nor is it constituted of anything other than beauty, wholly and purely; it does not consist of anything that is not captured by the definition, whatever that might be, of beauty. Another way of saying this is that the content of the Form of Beauty is beauty completely, apart from anything else.

Tim Connolly, in his article in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, claims that four “different ontological items” are mentioned in Plato’s final argument, rather than two. According to Connolly, the ontology includes: “(a) a thing that participates in the Form [contingently]... (b) the Form... (c) the Form-in-the-thing... and (d) a kind of entity that... always [necessarily] participates in that Form” (Connolly 3. c. iv. 2). It seems to me that the additional category (c) is superfluous. Further, (a) and (d) should simply be combined as they create an unnecessary distinction between particulars that share in Forms in different ways. Connolly gives an example of Simmias, a particular,

sharing in the Form of Tallness in relation to Socrates. He then, when describing (d), says that “this new kind of entity” (Connolly 3. c. iv. 2) always shares in some specific Form whenever it exists. On my interpretation of Plato’s ontology, only one kind of particular needs to be posited. Differing relationships between particulars and Forms can accommodate the distinction Connolly is pointing to. Connolly’s more substantial addition to the ontology is his suggestion of an entity that he calls “the Form-in-the-thing.” It seems that Connolly is pointing to the display of the Form in the particular that shares in it. I am going to present a much more economical explanation that better fits the text of the dialogue, and renders this extra entity unnecessary. It is possible to explain Plato’s ontology through the use of only two—Forms and particulars—as well as the varying relationships between them; that is to say, the different ways in which particulars can share in Forms.

In order to explain the relation between Forms and particulars more completely, we can start with the observation that particulars display the content of the Form(s) in which they share. In other words, a beautiful flower displays the content of the Form of Beauty. The relation of the particular and the Form in which it shares makes this possible. So, a particular displays the content of a Form if and only if it shares in that Form. Plato points to this when he says, “There is something you call hot and something you call cold... the Hot is something other than fire, and the Cold is something other than snow” (*Phd.* 103C-D). So, when a particular, such as snow or fire shares in a Form, respectively, it follows that the particular displays the content of the Form, namely Hotness or Coldness respectively. For another example, something you call beautiful, a beautiful flower, displays beauty due to its sharing in the Form of Beauty. If I want to explain this

beauty, then I need to give a definition of it; by this definition, what I am defining is the Form in which the beautiful flower shares.

With these explanations in mind, let me briefly sketch the different ways in which particulars share in Forms. Following this sketch, I will explain in more detail how these relationships function, using the examples Plato uses in his argument. When particulars share in Forms, they do so in one of two ways: either necessarily or contingently. Sharing in a Form necessarily means that the particular could not exist if it did not share in that Form. On the other hand, a particular sharing in a Form contingently does so accidentally. Its sharing in this Form is not necessary for its existence; it could either share in it or not share in it without ceasing to be.

For ease of explanation, when I am talking about a particular insofar as it shares in some Form contingently, I will call it a particular_c; when I am talking about a particular insofar as it shares in some Form necessarily, I will call it a particular_n. Of course, I do not mean that the particular itself is contingent or necessary, just that it shares either contingently or necessarily in some Form. Further, it is not the case that a particular is restricted to sharing only in one Form, in one way (provided it does not share in two opposite Forms at the same time, as we will see later). So, when I refer to a particular_c or a particular_n, I am referring to the particular insofar as it shares specifically to a certain Form, independently of any other Forms the particular might also share in (in the same or other way).

When a particular shares in a Form contingently, there are typically two ways in which it does so: relationally or by virtue of possessing some particular_n. For example, a particular_c might share in the Form of Tallness; the particular is only contingently tall

when standing in relation to some other particular (*Phd.* 102C). The term “relationally” here is ambiguous in a sense, because there are two ways to understand it. On one hand, there is a sense in which all particulars are in some *relation*, namely to the corresponding Form in which they share. However, the way in which I intend to use the term “relationally” refers to the particular_c sharing in a Form only by virtue of standing in relation to some other *particular*.

As for the second case, a particular_c can share in a Form through the possession of some particular_n (*Phd.* 105C). At least many (though perhaps not all) particulars are composites, consisting in a number of things. Further, by “possession” here, I mean that a particular_c can be in part constituted by some particular_n and in this way share in the same Form as the particular_n but in a contingent way. In other words, if *x* consists of, among other things, *y*, then I say that *x* possesses *y*. An example that Plato uses in his dialogue is of particulars_c that share in the Form of Hotness. Plato believes that things that are contingently hot are this way by virtue of possessing fire, which is necessarily hot (*Phd.* 105C). This will be shown in more detail toward the end of the final argument in Plato’s dialogue.

At this point, one might wonder about particulars that share in Forms such as Beauty or Justice (*Phd.* 100C). These are clearly cases of Forms in which many particulars share contingently, rather than necessarily. However, neither Beauty nor Justice seems to be relational, nor does it seem plausible that there are some particulars_n that all beautiful or just things respectively possess. It is possible that Plato’s ontology leaves room for a category of Forms that are values, in which particulars share contingently. The particulars_c that share in such Forms do so in a third way. Plato does

not posit more than these three kinds of particulars_c in the *Phaedo*. Further, discussing a full theory of particulars sharing in Forms would take an entire book. Thus, for the purposes of Plato's final argument in the *Phaedo*, only the two ways of contingent sharing mentioned above are necessary to consider and only the three I have mentioned so far can be attributed to Plato's ontology. Therefore, I will focus my discussion on particulars insofar as they share in Forms contingently and in relation to some other particular (I will call these particulars_{cr}, standing for relational particulars_c) as well as particulars insofar as they share in Forms contingently by virtue of possessing some particular_n (I will call these particulars_{cnr} for non-relational particulars_c).

Now that I have given a sketch of Forms, particulars, and the various relations between them, I have the tools needed to dive into Plato's final argument in the *Phaedo*, explaining further the ontological presuppositions as we go along. Socrates, the main arguer in the dialogue, begins with an example, pointing to one of his companions in the scene, Simmias. Socrates and Simmias are both particulars. Now, as I have explained, there are two ways in which a particular can share in a Form contingently. This example illustrates the first of these two ways. Simmias is taller than Socrates. Because Simmias displays Tallness, there must be some Form of Tallness that Simmias shares in, in order to display its content. We know that Simmias is not a particular_n sharing in the Form of Tallness because it is not the case that Simmias would not exist if he were not tall. Simmias could have been short and would still exist. Thus, Simmias must be a particular_{cr} sharing in the Form of Tallness in relation to Socrates, as he is only tall insofar as he stands in a specific relation to Socrates, namely the relation of being taller than (*Phd.* 102BC).

It is important to note that Simmias can be both tall in relation to Socrates and short in relation to some other companion (*Phd.* 102B). However, Simmias cannot be both tall and short in relation to the same companion at the same time. This is known as the Principle of Opposites. More formally, it says that no particular can share in two opposite Forms in the same part of itself at the same time, in the same way, in relation to the same particular (*Republic* 436BC). One may wonder whether we are entitled to use the Principle of Opposites as it is formulated in the *Republic*, given various substantial differences between this dialogue and the *Phaedo*. It is my view, however, that the Principle of Opposites in the *Republic* is just a more sophisticated version of the principle spelled out in the so-called cyclical argument of the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 70E, which will be discussed in Part II) and then referred to in the final argument (*Phd.* 103BD).

The Principle of Opposites is basically the ontological version of the law of non-contradiction. When applied to Plato's ontology, we see that it applies restrictions to each of the different relationships between particulars and the Forms in which they share, especially in regards to particulars' ability to change. For particulars_{cr}, it is not possible to share in opposite Forms in relation to the same thing (at the same time, etc.). Instead, the particular_{cr} ceases to share in the original Form, e.g. the Form of Tallness in relation to Socrates, and comes to share in the opposite, the Form of Shortness in relation to Socrates (supposing, for example, Socrates grew) (*Phd.* 102D). In this way, particulars_c are able to change the Forms in which they share. When someone grows taller, they change from sharing in the Form of Shortness in relation to someone to sharing in the Form of Tallness in relation to them.

Now, particulars_{cnr} also have the ability to change the Forms in which they share. For particulars_{cnr}, the particular will lose its possession of, or cease to be constituted in part by, the original particular_n and come to possess the opposite particular_n. Let me explain: when a particular_{cnr} is approached by the opposite of the Form in which it shares contingently, it comes to possess the particular_n that shares in the opposite Form, thus coming to share contingently in the opposite Form. Here, when I say, “approached,” what I mean is the point at which the transition between losing the first particular_n and coming to possess the opposite particular_n is about to happen. In other words, the particular_{cnr} comes to possess the opposite particular_n, but it cannot possess two opposite particulars_n at the same time in the same part of itself. Thus, it must lose the first particular_n when it comes to possess the opposite.

It should be clarified that a particular_{cnr} can possess opposite particulars_n *in different* parts of itself. For example, you could place a stone on a hot stove and simultaneously set a piece of ice on top of the stone. In this case, the top of the stone would be cold, sharing contingently in the Form of Coldness, while the bottom would be hot, sharing in the Form of Hotness. It is only the case that the particular_{cnr} cannot possess opposing particulars_n at the same time, in the same way and *in the same part*.

Dorothea Frede makes the interesting observation that Plato uses military terms to describe the actions of particulars when it comes to dealing with the Forms in which they share and their opposites (Frede 28). Frede claims that Plato uses terms like “approach,” “retreat,” and “destroy” to evade the problem of explaining just how this process works (Frede 34-35). While I would hold that it is unfair to assume Plato purposefully evades explanation through his metaphor, it seems to me that the analogy can be a more

illuminating and helpful analogy than Frede provides. It is easy to imagine a scenario in which a weak army, greatly outnumbered, is about to be attacked. Its enemy is *approaching*. In this case, the weaker army must either *retreat* or be *destroyed* (these will be important for the discussion of particulars_n and the opposite of the Forms in which they share). Further, once the army has attacked, regardless of what happens to the weaker army, the territory that once possessed the weaker army will come to possess the stronger.

Finally, particulars_n when approached by their opposite, must either retreat or be destroyed (*Phd.* 103DE). This is a loose way of talking about the phenomena of what happens when a particular_n is approached by its opposite, but a clarifying explanation is to follow. As I have said before, when a particular shares in a Form necessarily, it is not possible for the particular_n to not share in this Form and still exist. Therefore, when the particular_{cnr} comes to share in the opposite Form, when the opposite Form approaches it, it changes. In this case, something must have happened to the original particular_n—it must have either retreated elsewhere, or been destroyed (*Phd.* 103D). As far as retreating goes, it is possible that the particular_n comes to be part of something else, or to help constitute some other particular_{cnr}, or simply become part of the surrounding air; otherwise it is just destroyed. It doesn't matter which of these things happen for most cases, it is just important to know that the particular_n cannot share in opposing Forms so it either retreats or is destroyed if its spot in its particular_{cnr} is taken by a particular_n sharing in the opposite Form.

Socrates illustrates these relationships by means of the following concrete example. Snow displays coldness. Again, when a particular displays the content of a

Form, it does so by virtue of sharing in that Form. Thus, there exists a Form of Coldness in which snow shares. Now, snow is not cold by virtue of being in relation to some other particular—snow is just cold. Further, it does not seem to be the case that snow is cold by virtue of possessing some other cold particular_n, rather it is the case that snow, were it not cold, would not be snow. So, snow must share in the Form of Coldness necessarily.

Finally, because hot and cold are opposites, snow will either retreat or be destroyed when approached by heat (*Phd.* 103D).

Now, let us, as Socrates does, switch gears to discuss the opposite—fire. Fire is necessarily hot. The same sort of argument that was used to show that snow is necessarily cold can also show that fire is necessarily hot. Now, we have also said earlier that some particulars_c are hot by virtue of possessing the particular_n fire. In other words, it was believed in Plato's time that fire was what came to be possessed by particulars to make them hot (*Phd.* 105C). Some might question why it is not the case that particulars_c that share in the Form of Hotness do so relationally, pointing out that some particulars may be more hot than others. In this sense, it might be argued that hotness is just a relational particular_c like tallness. However, unlike tallness, in the case of degrees of hotness, it seems to me that Plato would argue that the variation is simply due to one particular_c being partly composed of more particular_n fire than others.

Through the use of the ontology set up at the beginning and the examples above, we can now move on to the main project of the final argument of the *Phaedo*: to prove the immortality of the soul. A soul is a particular. Now, the soul displays life, in the same way fire displays heat. Though people in Plato's time did not commonly accept his view of Forms, it was a common belief that the soul is what makes human bodies alive (*Phd.*

105CD). So, according to Plato's ontology, there must be a Form of Life in which the soul shares to be able to display its content. Following the same line of argument I have been using, a soul does not display life by virtue of standing in relation to some other particular. So, a soul is not a particular_{cr}. Further, it is not the case that a soul shares in the Form of Life in the same way a stone might share in the Form of Hotness, namely through the possession of some particular_n. If this were the case, we would have to posit some particular_n that the soul possessed, giving it life, or else some particular_c that possessed another particular_n that shared in life. It is not clear where this regress would end, so the most economic option in this case is to postulate that the soul does not share in Life by possessing some particular_n. So the soul is not a particular_{cnr}. Finally, Life is not a value (like Justice). Thus, we have ruled out the possibility of the soul being any of our three kinds of particulars_c. Therefore, through the process of elimination, the soul must be a particular_n, necessarily sharing in the Form of Life, and thus necessarily displaying life. If a soul did not display life, it would not exist.

A central aspect of the argument I have just made is that a soul is a particular, like fire or snow or even Simmias. Further, a soul is a particular_n that comes to constitute human bodies, bringing life to them. Dorothea Frede described the soul in a slightly different way. Frede states that, "the crucial thing seems to be that Plato treats the soul as a substance... with attributes of its own and life among them" (Frede 33). Further, Frede claims that the soul as a substance "brings along qualities of its own" (Frede 33) While the differences in terminology might seem inconsequential at first, upon closer examination one can see that the simple use of the term "substance" is a substantial misinterpretation of Plato's ideas regarding the soul. First, substances and attributes are

Aristotelian terms, terms coined by Aristotle after Plato's time. Thus, we should not use these terms in an analysis of Plato's dialogue if we want to be historically accurate, as Plato would not have had the concepts of substances and attributes and how they relate to each other. Rather, we are trying to explain Plato within his own conceptual framework.

Further, similar to my concern with Connolly's analysis, it does not seem necessary to posit an extra entity that acts as a quality, property, or attribute. It seems as though, when Frede uses the term "attribute" it is equated with the Form in which the particular shares. Thus, one might argue that no extra entity is being established, rather that the Form is being referred to in more understandable language. However, this is a misinterpretation of the theory of Forms on my view. It would be more accurate, if one were to use the term quality or attribute, to use it in such a way that it refers to the phenomenon of the particular displaying the Form. On my view, there is no such thing as an intrinsic property that a particular possesses. There are only particulars that do not possess properties. Rather, particulars only display Forms in specific ways. Thus, it is misleading to speak of properties, or attributes, either as the Forms themselves, or of particulars possessing properties.

Now, in the same way that fire comes into a particular to make it contingently hot, a soul is what comes into a particular to make it contingently alive (*Phd.* 105C). In this case, we are talking about a specific kind of particular, namely a human body. So, human bodies come to be alive and lose life depending on their possession or lack of possession of a soul. This works in the same way a hot stone would lose its hotness if the fire in it were to retreat or be destroyed at the approach of coldness; if the opposite of life

approached a living human body, the soul must either retreat or be destroyed, either way leaving the human body, and the human body would then no longer be alive.

Now, death is the opposite of life, in the same way hot and cold are opposites. Therefore, because of the Principle of Opposites, when a soul is approached by death it must either flee or be destroyed. One might wonder whether one part of the soul could be dead and the other still be alive. This would be possible if the soul were composed of parts. However, as Christopher Shields argues, Plato's notion of the soul in the *Phaedo* is that it is simple (*Phd.* 78B-79B; Shields 142). What this means is that the soul is not composed of parts, it just is one thing, has no parts. Because of this, the soul cannot admit death in one part but remain alive.

The soul cannot admit death because it shares in the Form of Life necessarily and death is the opposite of life. So therefore, it must either retreat or be destroyed when approached by death. One can say that the soul is necessarily deathless. In this same way, fire can be said to be necessarily coldless—unable to admit cold; it must retreat or be destroyed when approached by cold. Now, death is the destruction specifically of living things. As Dr. Steven Luper puts it in his book, *The Philosophy of Death*, “death occurs anytime a living being ceases to exist” (Luper 48). Death is the specific kind of destruction that happens to living beings. Thus, only living beings can die and there is no other way for living beings to be destroyed, than by death. It is not possible for a living being to be destroyed and not die. If we take destruction to mean the end of the existence of something, then death is the only destruction of living things.

The fact that death is the only way living things are destroyed does not entail that all living things *can* die or be destroyed. Rather, when a living thing is destroyed, or

ceases to exist, it is precisely through death. Therefore, if a living being is *deathless*, it cannot be destroyed; *if a living being cannot die, it cannot be destroyed*. The soul is a living being. We have seen that the soul is deathless. Therefore, *because the soul cannot die, the soul cannot be destroyed*; it must be indestructible. So, when the soul is approached by death, it must either retreat or be destroyed; because it is indestructible, it must retreat, rather than being destroyed. It is in this way that Socrates proves the immortality of the soul.

Plato outlines his ontology through the examples that introduce his argument. He illustrates particulars sharing in Forms contingently and relationally through his example of the tallness of Simmias. He then demonstrates particulars_n through a discussion of snow and fire, following up with the statement that fire is what comes into a body to make it hot—allowing for the claim of particulars_c possessing particulars_n. Once the ontology has been laid out, Plato is able to demonstrate that the way the soul fits into the system forces one to accept that it must be deathless, indestructible, and thus immortal.

Part II: The So-called Cyclical Argument, Argument from Recollection, and Affinity Argument

Plato's final argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* is complete and could stand on its own. What I mean is that none of the premises or presuppositions of the argument are implausible or invalid within Plato's framework. In this way, if the dialogue only included the final argument, Plato would have achieved the goal he set forth: to give an account of the immortality of the soul. However, the dialogue consists of much more than that. Specifically, the *Phaedo* includes three so-called arguments for the immortality of the soul prior to the final argument. I refer to these as "so-called" because

these three arguments are much less sound and conclusive than the final argument, but are nevertheless presented as arguments. It is my belief that rather than being taken seriously as arguments by Plato, main purpose of these first three arguments is to introduce several of the key concepts that Plato uses in the final argument.

During the time in which Plato was writing the *Phaedo*, some of the concepts he uses, including the distinction between the body and the soul, were not part of everyday language. In other words, many of the concepts Plato discusses in his dialogue were technical ideas that had to be introduced and developed in a technical way. These concepts, introduced in the first three arguments, are not steps or parts of the final argument. Rather, the final argument utilizes the concepts that are introduced and developed in a more technical way in the first three arguments. Thus, in order to understand the final argument in the fullest sense, one must understand where Plato began in his development of these concepts.

The key concepts I am referring to are the Principle of Opposites and the positioning of the soul in Plato's ontology. The Principle of Opposites is a concept that is introduced early on in the dialogue, developed, and then used in a critical way in the final argument. It is important to understand how the concept began and was developed in order to better understand its use in the final argument (though admittedly, it can be understood through examination of the final argument alone, just not as well). As for the soul, it is clear the soul is a particular in Plato's ontology. It does not act in any way like a universal, it necessarily shares in the Form of Life, and it comes to be possessed by a human body, thus allowing the body to contingently share in the Form of Life. However, the soul is clearly different from other particulars and thus raises an interesting concern

regarding its positioning in Plato's ontology. Plato introduces the concepts of the Principle of Opposites and the positioning of the soul in the first three arguments of the dialogue, discussing and expanding upon them on a much deeper level than we see in the final argument. On my view, though the final argument is perfectly adequate on its own, in order to understand the final argument in the fullest sense, one must understand where Plato began in his development of these concepts, namely through the first three arguments in the dialogue.

I. The Principle of Opposites in the Cyclical Argument (*Phd.* 70C-72E)

The first notion introduced in a previous argument and used in the final argument is that of the Principle of Opposites. The notion of the Principle of Opposites was originally introduced in the so-called cyclical argument of the *Phaedo*. In the cyclical argument, Plato discusses particulars_c that share in one of a pair of opposite Forms (*Phd.* 70E). In this discussion, Plato outlines the requirements of the Principle of Opposites that is later refined in the *Republic*. In Part I, I referred to this refined version of the principle; here, I will outline Plato's initial claims regarding opposites and how the description of the Principle of Opposites in the cyclical argument contributes to Plato's final argument for the soul's immortality.

Some particulars_c share in one of a pair of opposite Forms. The cyclical argument focuses on the change from a particular_c sharing in one Form to sharing in the opposite Form (*Phd.* 71A-B). Barnes defines Plato's notion of opposite Forms in this way: "A pair of [Forms] will count as opposites if, first, no object that can [share in] both members of the pair simultaneously, and secondly, any object that can [share in] either member must at any time [share in] one member of the pair" (Barnes 402). In the argument, Socrates

claims that there is a certain kind of particular_c that comes to be a certain way, or share in certain Forms, from the opposite way, or sharing in the opposite Form (*Phd.* 70E). This means that if a particular_c shares in one of a pair of opposite Forms, it comes to share in that Form after having once shared in the opposite Form. For example, if a stone shares in the Form of Hotness, it does so after having once shared in the Form of Coldness.

Further, if a particular_c shares in one of a pair of opposite Forms, it must always share in precisely one or the other of these Forms (*Phd.* 71B-C). Take the hot stone again. When the stone is not sharing in the Form of Hotness, it must be sharing in the Form of Coldness and vice versa. The stone must always be one or the other, either hot or cold. This is Plato's original outline of the Principle of Opposites. It is important to note that, according to the Principle of Opposites, the stone cannot share in both Hotness and Coldness at the same time, in the same part of itself. This means that when the stone is sharing in Hotness, it cannot also be cold. Socrates states, "Between each of these pairs of opposites there are two processes: from one to the other and then again from the other to the first" (*Phd.* 71B). Through this explanation, we can infer that Plato believes that a particular_c cannot share in both of the pair of opposites at the same time, but is always changing from one to the other.

Jonathan Barnes points out: "The principle [of opposites described by Socrates in 103B of Plato's dialogue] is concerned with 'things', and not with the opposite properties themselves" (Barnes 403). Now, on the one hand, a similar complaint can be made with Barnes use of the word "properties" here as with Frede's use of the term "attributes" in Part I. Through the use of this term, it seems as though authors are either adding an additional kind of entity to the ontology, which would be unnecessary, or equating the

“properties” of the particular to the Forms themselves. Assuming the latter is the intention, this is also a misconception as if the term “properties” were to be used in the correct way, it would be equated with the phenomenon of the particular displaying the content of the Form in which it shares, rather than an indicator of the Form itself. This issue aside, Barnes makes a valuable point that the Principle of Opposites concerns particulars_c (what Barnes calls “things”) and the process particulars_c undergo when they change between sharing in one opposite Form and the other. Moreover, Barnes statement illuminates the fact that the restrictions the Principle of Opposites puts in place have to do with the particulars_c and their ability to share in opposite Forms, rather than with Forms.

In the cyclical argument, Plato uses the process of changing from sharing in one Form to sharing in the opposite Form to argue for the immortality of the soul (*Phd.* 72E). Now, at this point, Plato has not yet developed his theory of Forms as they pertain to the *Phaedo*. Further, Plato never argues that there is a Form for everything, as I mentioned in Part I; so it is reasonable to assume that there may or may not be an actual Form of Death, but for the sake of the cyclical argument, we will say there is. Taking this into consideration, you can think about life and death as opposites, namely the Form of Life and the Form of Death (*Phd.* 71D). According to the cyclical argument, in this case, the soul shares in the Form of Life after having once shared in the Form of Death and vice versa (*Phd.* 71D: “...living creatures and things come to be from the dead”).

According to the cyclical argument, it is possible for the soul to be dead, or share in the Form of Death, while still existing and then change to share in the Form of Life when it comes to be possessed by a body (*Phd.* 72E). At this point in the dialogue, Plato has not yet introduced the notion of what I call a particular_n. As we know from the final

argument, the soul being a particular_n, necessarily sharing in the Form of Life, prevents any possibility of the soul sharing in some Form of Death, because the soul would be deathless (*Phd.* 105E). In this way, the final argument will replace the cyclical argument as proof for the immortality of the soul.

The Principle of Opposites is the key component of the cyclical argument that Plato needed to introduce and develop for use in the final argument. Plato develops this principle in the cyclical argument, outlining the restrictions on particulars sharing in opposite Forms. The principle is then pruned and focused for use in the final argument. As we have seen, once he reaches the final argument, Plato no longer holds on to the idea that the soul could share in the Form of Life contingently. What we need in order to give up on this idea is the concept of a particular sharing necessarily in a Form. This concept is introduced in the final argument. Once we have this, Plato is able to use the Principle of Opposites in a different way: to show that the soul must either retreat or be destroyed when approached by death, as it cannot share in both Life and Death simultaneously and it necessarily shares in Life. This leads, as we have seen, to the conclusion that the soul is immortal due to its deathlessness and thus indestructibility.

II. The Argument from Recollection, the Affinity Argument, and the Soul

The two arguments given between the cyclical argument and the final argument address the question of what kind of thing the soul is, or where the soul belongs in terms of Plato's ontology. In Part I, I made the claim that there exist two kinds of things in Plato's ontology: Forms and particulars. The soul is a particular, namely a particular_n sharing in the Form of Life. Now, the soul is different from other particulars in a number

of ways. The so-called argument from recollection and affinity argument are set up to explain some of the ways in which the soul is different from other particulars.

II. A. The Argument from Recollection: The Soul's Possession of Concepts (*Phd.* 72E-77D)

The argument from recollection is intended to show that the soul exists before coming to be possessed by a human body (*Phd.* 76C). In the process of this explanation, and the point I am more concerned with, Plato wants to give an account of how the soul can know Forms. The relation of a particular knowing a Form is a different relation than the ones we have discussed so far—though it is still a relationship between a particular and the Form. The argument from recollection, in part, attempts to identify what sort of relationship this is and how it makes the soul different from other particulars.

In his explanation of how it is possible for the soul to know Forms, Plato gives a description of the phenomenon of recollection. When the soul is possessed by the body, it has a concept of what it would mean for two particulars to be equal in length, e.g. So, when we perceive with our senses that two objects are equal in length, we are able to judge them as equal because of the concept of equality already possessed by our soul (*Phd.* 74B). Equality itself is not something we are able to perceive with our senses. Equality is a Form that particulars_c share in, in relation to each other. However, because we cannot perceive this Form through our senses, we must have had some kind of prior knowledge of it in order to be able to judge two particulars as both sharing in the Form of equality in relation to each other (*Phd.* 75A). Plato argues that the phenomenon of being able to think about these concepts that are not perceivable through the senses and have never been taught to us is recollection (*Phd.* 73C). For Plato, the only explanation that

makes recollection possible is that the soul had knowledge of these Forms prior to coming to be possessed by the body (*Phd.* 74A-D).

Let's consider a more concrete example. Suppose you are in love with a man whom you knew to be a skilled player of the lyre. In this case, every time you saw a lyre, you would be reminded of your lover, as you recall something you already knew: that your lover plays the lyre (*Phd.* 73D). This phenomenon of recalling something previously known is what Plato points to in his argument for the soul's knowledge of the Forms. For Plato, the only way we can have knowledge of the Forms and recognize particulars as sharing in the Forms while not being able to perceive the Forms through our senses is if we somehow already possessed this knowledge. This possession comes through the possession of a soul that has knowledge of the Forms.

Plato presupposes the existence of the Forms in his argument from recollection. If the argument were interpreted as also claiming to prove the existence of Forms, this would be circular reasoning and clearly flawed (Dimas 178). However, on my view, Plato presupposes the existence of the Forms without attempting to prove their existence. At this point in the argument from recollection, the aim is to set the stage for proving that the soul exists. For the so-called argument from recollection, the existence of Forms is simply presupposed.

The argument from recollection works on the basis of the fact that we possess concepts. These concepts allow the soul to know what Forms are, prior to being possessed by the body. Further, when we perceive particulars and are able to recognize them as sharing in certain Forms, we are recollecting the knowledge that the soul already possessed of the Forms. This points to a relationship between the soul, a particular, and

the Forms that is distinctly different from the relationship of a particular sharing in a Form.

II. B. The Soul and the Forms in the Affinity Argument (*Phd.* 77E-84B)

The affinity argument expands even further on this notion we have been developing of the soul being a different sort of particular, or at least participating in different relationships with Forms than other particulars. As we have said before, there are only two kinds of things: Forms and particulars. According to the affinity argument, Forms are eternal and invisible, while particulars are mortal and visible (*Phd.* 80A-B). With this distinction in mind, it appears that Socrates holds that all Forms are immortal, while all particulars are mortal. The clear concern, for the so-called argument, here is the difficulty of showing that the soul, a particular, is immortal. Overall, the affinity argument is able to give a clearer picture of how the soul fits in to Plato's ontology.

In the argument, Socrates purports to show that the soul holds many similarities to the Forms, and, by contrast, many differences from other particulars. According to the affinity argument, particulars are composite, likely to split apart, and constantly changing. On the other hand, Forms are "noncomposite", not likely to split apart, uniform, and "remain the same and never in any way tolerate any change whatever" (*Phd.* 78C-D). Regarding this distinction, Socrates claims that the soul shares similarities with the Forms and differs from other particulars (*Phd.* 79B). Further, Socrates claims that the soul is similar to the Forms in that it is "divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, [and] always the same as itself" (*Phd.* 80B). This is contrasted with other particulars that are "mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble, and never consistently the same" (*Phd.* 80B).

According to the affinity argument, it is these similarities with the Forms that prove the soul's immortality. The argument suggests that the soul, being so similar to the Forms in the ways listed above, must also be similar in its being immortal (*Phd.* 81A). Thus, though most particulars are mortal, the soul is a special kind of particular that is immortal. If taken seriously as an argument for the immortality of the soul, the affinity argument clearly fails. Plato points to a correlation between the soul being similar to the Forms and also being immortal; but the similarities are in no way a valid proof of the soul's immortality. Plato must have been aware this flaw in his so-called argument. He states, "the soul [is] altogether indissoluble, or nearly so" (*Phd.* 80B). On my view, the phrase "or nearly so" here is an admission on Plato's part that the affinity argument doesn't work.

If the affinity argument is not thought of as a valid proof of the immortality of the soul, there must have been some other motivating factor for Plato's including it in his dialogue. I argue that Plato's underlying purpose was to present a notion of the soul that identifies it as a particular that is distinctly different from other particulars. It seems possible that the soul can interact with both the world of the Forms and the world of particulars, "at different times and under different conditions" (Apolloni 11). In other words, when the body possesses the soul, the soul acts as a particular_n, sharing in the Form of Life and interacts with another particular, namely the body, in bringing it life (the body being a particular_{enr} sharing in the Form of Life by virtue of possessing a soul). On the other hand, when the soul is approached by death, it retreats and rejoins the world of the Forms, with which it shares many similarities, and thus gains knowledge of the Forms that the body is able to recollect when later possessing a soul.

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