Characters of the Dialogue

Phaedo Apollodorus

The Narrator Cebes
Echecrates Crito
Socrates Simmias

The Servant of the Eleven

Scene—The Prison of Socrates

Echecrates
Were you with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, on that day when he drank the poison in the prison, or did you hear the story from someone else?

Phaedo
I was there myself, Echecrates.

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Echecrates
[T]ell me about his death, Phaedo.

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Phaedo

I will try to relate the whole story to you from the beginning.

...  

Cebes asked him, What do you mean, Socrates, by saying that it is wrong for a man to lay violent hands on himself, but that the philosopher will wish to follow the dying man?

...  

The reason which the secret teaching* gives, that man is in a kind of prison, and that he may not set himself free, nor escape from it, seems to me rather profound and not easy to fathom. But I do think, Cebes, that it is true that the gods are our guardians, and that we men are a part of their property. Do you not think so?

I do, said Cebes. . . .

Then in this way perhaps it is not unreasonable to hold that no man has a right to take his own life, but that he must wait until God sends some necessity upon him, as has now been sent upon me.

Yes, said Cebes, that does seem natural. But you were saying just now that the philosopher will desire to die. Is not that a paradox, Socrates, if what we have just been saying, that God is our guardian and that we are his property, be true? . . .

I thought Socrates was pleased with Cebes’ insistence. He looked at us, and said, Cebes is always examining arguments. He will not be convinced at once by anything that one says. . . .

Well then, he replied, let me try to make a more successful defense to you than I did to the judges at my trial. I should be wrong, Cebes and Simmias, he went on, not to grieve at death, if I did not think that I was going to live both with other gods who are good and wise, and with men who have died and who are better than the men of this world. But you must know that I hope that I am going to live among good men, though I am not quite sure of that. But I am as sure as I can be in such matters that I am going to live with gods who are very good masters. And therefore I am not so much grieved at death; I am confident that the dead have some kind of existence, and, as has been said of old, an existence that is far better for the good than for the wicked.

*The Esoteric System of the Pythagoreans.
Well, Socrates, said Simmias, do you mean to go away and keep this belief to yourself, or will you let us share it with you? It seems to me that we have an interest in this good. And it will also serve as your defense, if you can convince us of what you say.

I will try, he replied.

But I wish now to explain to you, my judges, why it seems to me that a man who has really spent his life in philosophy has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and may well hope after death to gain in the other world the greatest good. I will try to show you, Simmias and Cebes, how this may be.

The world, perhaps, does not see that those who rightly engage in philosophy study only dying and death. And, if this is true, it would be surely strange for a man all through his life to desire only death, and then, when death comes to him, to be vexed at it, when it has been his study and his desire for so long.

Do we believe death to be anything?

We do, replied Simmias.

And do we not believe it to be the separation of the soul from the body?

It is that, he said.

Do you think that a philosopher will care very much about what are called pleasures, such as the pleasures of eating and drinking?

Certainly not, Socrates, said Simmias.

Or about the pleasures of sexual passion?

Indeed, no.

And, do you think that he holds the remaining cares of the body in high esteem?

The real philosopher, I think will despise them, he replied.

In short, said he, you think that his studies are not concerned with the body? He stands aloof from it, as far as he can, and turns toward the soul?

I do.

Well then, in these matters, first, it is clear that the philosopher releases his souls from communion with the body, so far as he can, beyond all other men?

It is. . . .

But what about the actual acquisition of wisdom? If the body is taken as a companion in the search for wisdom, is it a hindrance or not? For example, do sight and hearing convey any real truth to men? . . . But if these senses of
the body are not accurate or clear, the others will hardly be so, for they are all less perfect than these, are they not?

Yes, I think so, certainly, he said.

Then when does the soul attain truth? he asked. We see that, as often as she seeks to investigate anything in company with the body, the body leads her astray.

True.

Is it not by reasoning, if at all, that any real truth becomes manifest to her?

Yes.

And she reasons best, I suppose, when none of the senses, whether hearing, or sight, or pain, or pleasure, harasses her; when she has dismissed the body, and released herself as far as she can from all intercourse or contact with it, and so, coming to be as much alone with herself as is possible, strives after real truth.

That is so . . .

And what do you say to the next point, Simmias? Do we say that there is such a thing as absolute justice, or not?

Indeed we do.

And absolute beauty, and absolute good?

Of course.

Have you ever seen any of them with your eyes?

Indeed I have not, he replied . . .

And will not a man attain to this pure thought most completely if he goes to each thing, as far as he can, with his mind alone, taking neither sight nor any other sense along with his reason in the process of thought, to be an encumbrance? . . . Is it not he who will attain the knowledge of real being, if any man will?

Your words are admirably true, Socrates, said Simmias . . .

Verily we have learned that if we are to have any pure knowledge at all, we must be freed from the body; the soul by herself must behold things as they are. Then, it seems, after we are dead, we shall gain the wisdom which we desire, and for which we say we have a passion, but not while we are alive, as the argument shows. For if it be not possible to have pure knowledge while the body is with us, one of two things must be true; either we cannot gain knowledge at all, or we can gain it only after death. For then, and not till then, will the soul exist by herself, separate from the body. And while we live, we shall come nearest to knowledge, if we have no communion or intercourse with the body beyond what is absolutely necessary, and if we are not defiled with its nature . . . Do you not agree with me?
Most assuredly I do, Socrates.

Is not what we call death a release and separation of the soul from the body?

Undoubtedly, he replied.

And the true philosopher, we hold, is alone in his constant desire to set his soul free? His study is simply the release and separation of the soul from the body, is it not?

Clearly. . . .

In truth, then, Simmias, he said, the true philosopher studies to die, and to him of all men is death least terrible.

When Socrates had finished, Cebes replied to him, and said, I think that for the most part you are right, Socrates. But men are very incredulous of what you have said of the soul. They fear that she will no longer exist anywhere when she has left the body, but that she will be destroyed and perish on the very day of death. . . . But it will need no little persuasion and assurance to show that the soul exists after death, and continues to possess any power or wisdom.

True, Cebes, said Socrates; but what are we to do? Do you wish to converse about these matters and see if what I say is probable?

I for one, said Cebes, should gladly hear your opinion about them. . . .

Let us consider whether or not the souls of men exist in the next world after death, thus. There is an ancient belief, which we remember, that on leaving this world they exist there, and that they return hither and are born again from the dead. But if it be true that the living are born from the dead, our souls must exist in the other world; otherwise they could not be born again. It will be a sufficient proof that this is so if we can really prove that the living are born only from the dead. But if this is not so, we shall have to find some other argument.

Exactly, said Cebes. . . .

Is it the case that everything which has an opposite is generated only from its opposite? By opposites I mean the honorable and the base, the just and the unjust, and so on in a thousand other instances. Let us consider then whether it is necessary for everything that has an opposite to be generated only from its own opposite. For instance, when anything becomes greater, I suppose it must first have been less and then become greater?
Yes. . . .

In fact, is it not a universal law, even though we do not always express it in so many words, that opposites are generated always from one another, and that there is a process of generation from one to the other?

It is, he replied.

Well, said he, is there an opposite to life, in the same way that sleep is the opposite of being awake?

Certainly, he answered.

What is it?

Death, he replied.

Then if life and death are opposites, they are generated the one from the other. . . . Is it not so?

Of course.

Then our souls exist in the other world? he said.

Apparently. . . .

Then we are agreed on this point: namely, that the living are generated from the dead no less than the dead from the living. But we agreed that, if this be so, it is a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead must exist somewhere, whence they come into being again.

I think, Socrates, that that is the necessary result of our premises.

And besides, Socrates, rejoined Cebes, if the doctrine which you are fond of stating, that our learning is only a process of recollection, be true, then I suppose we must have learned at some former time what we recollect now. And that would be impossible unless our souls had existed somewhere before they came into this human form. So that is another reason for believing the soul immortal.

But, Cebes, interrupted Simmias, what are the proofs of that? Recall them to me; I am not very clear about them at present.

One argument, answered Cebes, and the strongest of all, is that if you question men about anything in the right way, they will answer you correctly of themselves. But they would not have been able to do that unless they had had within themselves knowledge and right reason. Again, show them such things as geometrical diagrams, and the proof of the doctrine is complete.*

*For an example of this see *Meno* 82 a ff.
And if that does not convince you, Simmias, said Socrates, look at the matter in another way and see if you agree then . . . We are agreed, I suppose, that if a man remembers anything, he must have known it at some previous time.

Certainly, he said.

And are we agreed that when knowledge comes in the following way, it is recollection? When a man has seen or heard anything, or has perceived it by some other sense, and then knows not that thing only, but has also in his mind an impression of some other thing, of which the knowledge is quite different, are we not right in saying that he remembers the thing of which he has an impression in his mind?

What do you mean?

I mean this. The knowledge of a man is different from the knowledge of a lyre, is it not?

Certainly.

And you know that when lovers see a lyre, or a garment, or anything that their favorites are wont to use, they have this feeling. They know the lyre, and in their mind they receive the image of the youth whose the lyre was. That is recollection. For instance, someone seeing Simmias often is reminded of Cebes; and there are endless examples of the same thing.

Indeed there are, said Simmias.

Is not that a kind of recollection, he said; and more especially when a man has this feeling with reference to things which the lapse of time and inattention have made him forget?

Yes, certainly, he replied.

Now see if this is true, he went on. Do we not believe in the existence of equality—not the equality of pieces of wood or of stones, but something beyond that—equality in the abstract? Shall we say that there is such a thing, or not?

Yes indeed, said Simmias, most emphatically we will.

And do we know what this abstract equality is?

Certainly, he replied.

Where did we get the knowledge of it? . . . Do not equal pieces of wood and stones appear to us sometimes equal and sometimes unequal, though in fact they remain the same all the time?

Certainly they do.
But did absolute equals ever seem to you to be unequal, or abstract equality to be inequality?
No, never, Socrates.
Then equal things, he said, are not the same as abstract equality?
No, certainly not, Socrates.
Yet it was from these equal things, he said, which are different from abstract equality, that you have conceived and got your knowledge of abstract equality?
That is quite true, he replied. . .
But that makes no difference, he said. As long as the sight of one thing brings another thing to your mind, there must be recollection, whether or no the two things are like.
That is so. . .
Are we agreed about this? A man sees something and thinks to himself, “This thing that I see aims at being like some other thing, but it comes short and cannot be like that other thing; it is inferior”; must not the man who thinks that have known at some previous time that other thing, which he says that it resembles, and to which it is inferior?
He must.
Well, have we ourselves had the same sort of feeling with reference to equal things, and to abstract equality?
Yes, certainly.
Then we must have had knowledge of equality before we first saw equal things, and perceived that they all strive to be like equality, and all come short of it.
That is so. . .
Then before we began to see, and to hear, and to use the other senses, we must have received the knowledge of the nature of abstract and real equality; otherwise we could not have compared equal sensible objects with abstract equality, and seen that the former in all cases strive to be like the latter, though they are always inferior to it?
That is the necessary consequence of what we have been saying, Socrates. . .
Then, it seems, we must have received that knowledge before we were born?
It does.
Now if we received this knowledge before our birth, and were born with it, we knew, both before and at the moment of our birth, not only the equal, and the greater, and the less, but also everything of the same kind, did we
not? Our present reasoning does not refer only to equality. It refers just as much to absolute good, and absolute beauty, and absolute justice, and absolute holiness; in short, I repeat, to everything which we mark with the name of the real, in the questions and answers of our dialectic. So we must have received our knowledge of all realities before we were born.

That is so. . . .

But, I suppose, if it be the case that we lost at birth the knowledge which we received before we were born, and then afterward, by using our senses on the objects of sense, recovered the knowledge which we had previously possessed, then what we call learning is the recovering of knowledge which is already ours. And are we not right in calling that recollection?

Certainly.

And when did our souls gain this knowledge? It cannot have been after we were born men.

No, certainly not.

Then it was before?

Yes.

Then, Simmias, our souls existed formerly, apart from our bodies, and possessed intelligence before they came into man’s shape. . . .

If, as we are forever repeating, beauty, and good, and the other ideas really exist, and if we refer all the objects of sensible perception to these ideas which were formerly ours, and which we find to be ours still, and compare sensible objects with them, then, just as they exist, our souls must have existed before ever we were born. But if they do not exist, then our reasoning will have been thrown away. Is it so? If these ideas exist, does it not at once follow that our souls must have existed before we were born, and if they do not exist, then neither did our souls?

Admirably put, Socrates, said Simmias. . . .

But what of Cebeś? said Socrates. I must convince Cebeś too.

I think that he is satisfied, said Simmias, though he is the most skeptical of men in argument. But I think that he is perfectly convinced that our souls existed before we were born.

But I do not think myself, Socrates, he continued, that you have proved that the soul will continue to exist when we are dead. The common fear which Cebeś spoke of, that she may be scattered to the winds at death, and that death may be the end of her existence, still stands in the way. Assuming that the soul is generated and comes together from some other elements, and exists before
she ever enters the human body, why should she not come to an end and be destroyed, after she has entered into the body, when she is released from it?

You are right, Simmias, said Celes. I think that only half the required proof has been given. It has been shown that our souls existed before we were born; but it must also be shown that our souls will continue to exist after we are dead, no less than that they existed before we were born, if the proof is to be complete.

That has been shown already, Simmias and Celes, said Socrates, if you will combine this reasoning with our previous conclusion, that all life is generated from death. For if the soul exists in a previous state and if, when she comes into life and is born, she can only be born from death, and from a state of death, must she not exist after death too, since she has to be born again? So the point which you speak of has been already proved.

Still I think that you and Simmias would be glad to discuss this question further. . . .

Cebes laughed and said, Try and convince us.

Well, said Socrates, must we not ask ourselves this question? What kind of thing is liable to suffer dispersion, and for what kind of thing have we to fear dispersion? And then we must see whether the soul belongs to that kind or not, and be confident or afraid about our own souls accordingly.

That is true, he answered.

Now is it not the compound and composite which is naturally liable to be dissolved in the same way in which it was compounded? And is not what is uncompounded alone not liable to dissolution, if anything is not?

I think that that is so, said Cebes.

And what always remains in the same state and unchanging is most likely to be uncompounded, and what is always changing and never the same is most likely to be compounded, I suppose?

Yes, I think so.

Now let us return to what we were speaking of before in the discussion, he said. Does the being, which in our dialectic we define as meaning absolute existence, remain always in exactly the same state, or does it change? Do absolute equality, absolute beauty, and every other absolute existence, admit of any change at all? Or does absolute existence admit of any change at all? Or does absolute existence in each case, being essentially uniform, remain the same and unchanging, and never in any case admit of any sort or kind of change whatsoever?
It must remain the same and unchanging, Socrates, said Cebes.

And what of the many beautiful things, such as men, and horses, and garments, and the like, and of all which bears the names of the ideas, whether equal, or beautiful, or anything else? Do they remain the same or is it exactly the opposite with them? In short, do they never remain the same at all, either in themselves or in their relations?

These things, said Cebes, never remain the same.

You can touch them, and see them, and perceive them with the other senses, while you can grasp the unchanging only by the reasoning of the intellect. These latter are invisible and not seen. Is it not so?

That is perfectly true, he said.

Let us assume then, he said, if you will, that there are two kinds of existence, the one visible, the other invisible.

Yes, he said.

And the invisible is unchanging, while the visible is always changing.

Yes, he said again.

Are not we men made up of body and soul?

There is nothing else, he replied.

And which of these kinds of existence should we say that the body is most like, and most akin to?

The visible, he replied; that is quite obvious.

And the soul? Is that visible or invisible?

It is invisible, Socrates, he said. . .

Then the soul is more like the invisible than the body; and the body is like the visible.

That is necessarily so, Socrates.

Consider the matter in yet another way. When the soul and the body are united, nature ordains the one to be a slave and to be ruled, and the other to be master and to rule. Tell me once again, which do you think is like the divine, and which is like the mortal? Do you not think that the divine naturally rules and has authority, and that the mortal naturally is ruled and is a slave?

I do.

Then which is the soul like?

That is quite plain, Socrates. The soul is like the divine, and the body is like the mortal.

Now tell me, Cebes, is the result of all that we have said that the soul is most like the divine, and the immortal, and the intelligible, and the uniform,
and the indissoluble, and the unchangeable; while the body is most like the human, and the mortal, and the unintelligible, and the multiform, and the dissoluble, and the changeable? Have we any other argument to show that this is not so, my dear Cebes?

We have not.

Then if this is so, is it not the nature of the body to be dissolved quickly, and of the soul to be wholly or very nearly indissoluble?

Certainly.

... Does not the soul, then, which is in that state, go away to the invisible that is like herself, and to the divine, and the immortal, and the wise, where she is released from error, and folly, and fear, and fierce passions, and all the other evils that fall to the lot of men, and is happy, and for the rest of time lives in very truth with the gods, as they say that the initiated do? Shall we affirm this, Cebes?

Yes, certainly, said Cebes.

But if she defiled and impure when she leaves the body, from being ever with it, and serving it and loving it, and from being besotted by it and by its desires and pleasures, so that she thinks nothing true but what is bodily and can be touched, and seen, and eaten, and drunk, and used for men’s lusts; if she has learned to hate, and tremble at, and fly from what is dark and invisible to the eye, and intelligible and apprehended by philosophy—do you think that a soul which is in that state will be pure and without alloy at her departure?

No, indeed, he replied. . . .

And, he continued, they are imprisoned, probably, in the bodies of animals with habits similar to the habits which were theirs in their lifetime.

... But none but the philosopher or the lover of knowledge, who is wholly pure when he goes hence, is permitted to go to the race of the gods; and therefore, my friends, Simmias and Cebes, the true philosopher is temperate and refrains from all the pleasures of the body, and does not give himself up to them.

... That is very true, Socrates, said Cebes.

It is for these reasons then, Cebes, that the real lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave. . . .
A soul, Simmias and Cebe, that has been so nurtured and so trained will never fear lest she should be torn in pieces at her departure from the body, and blown away by the winds, and vanish, and utterly cease to exist.

At these words there was a long silence. Socrates himself seemed to be absorbed in his argument, and so were most of us. Cebe and Simmias conversed for a little by themselves. When Socrates observed them, he said: What? Do you think that our reasoning is incomplete? . . .

Simmias replied: Well, Socrates, I will tell you the truth. Each of us has a difficulty, and each has been pushing on the other and urging him to ask you about it. . . .

Socrates smiled at this answer and said, Dear me! Simmias; I shall find it hard to convince other people that I do not consider my fate a misfortune when I cannot convince even you of it.

... So, you may talk to me and ask questions as you please. . . .

Good, said Simmias; I will tell you my difficulty, and Cebe will tell you why he is dissatisfied with your statement. . . .

To me it is insufficient, he replied, because the very same argument might be used of a harmony, and a lyre, and its strings. It might be said that the harmony in a tuned lyre is something unseen, and incorporeal, and perfectly beautiful, and divine, while the lyre and its strings are corporeal, and with the nature of bodies, and compounded, and earthly, and akin to the mortal. Now suppose that, when the lyre is broken and the strings are cut or snapped, a man were to press the same argument that you have used, and were to say that the harmony cannot have perished and that it must still exist, for it cannot possibly be that the lyre and the strings, with their mortal nature, continue to exist, though those strings have been broken, while the harmony, which is of the same nature as the divine and the immortal, and akin to them, has perished, and perished before the mortal lyre. He would say that the harmony itself must still exist somewhere, and that the wood and the strings will rot away before anything happens to it. And I think, Socrates, that you too must be aware that many of us believe the soul to be most probably a mixture and harmony of the elements by which our body is, as it were, strung and held together, such as heat and cold, and dry and wet, and the like, when they are mixed together well and in due proportion. Now if the soul is a harmony, it is clear that, when the body is relaxed out of proportion, or overstrung by disease or other evils, the soul, though most divine, must perish at once, like other harmonies of sound and of all works of art, while what remains of each
body must remain for a long time, until it be burned or rotted away. What then shall we say to a man who asserts that the soul, being a mixture of the elements of the body, perishes first at what is called death?

Socrates looked keenly at us, as he often used to do, and smiled. Simmias’ objection is a fair one, he said. . . . But before we answer him, I think that we had better hear what fault Cebes has to find with my reasoning, and so gain time to consider our reply. . . . Come, Cebes, what is it that troubles you and makes you doubt?

I will tell you, replied Cebes. I think that the argument is just where it was, and still open to our former objection. You have shown very cleverly and, if it is not arrogant to say so, quite conclusively that our souls existed before they entered the human form. I don’t retract my admission on that point. But I am not convinced that they will continue to exist after we are dead. I do not agree with Simmias’ objection, that the soul is not stronger and more lasting than the body: I think that it is very much superior in those respects. . . . I think that I, like Simmias, shall best express my meaning in a figure. It seems to me that a man might use an argument similar to yours to prove that a weaver, who had died in old age, had not in fact perished, but was still alive somewhere, on the ground that the garment which the weaver has woven for himself and used to wear had not perished or been destroyed. And if anyone were incredulous, he might ask whether a human being, or a garment constantly in use and wear, lasts the longest; and on being told that a human being lasts much the longest, he might think that he had shown beyond all doubt that the man was safe, because what lasts a shorter time than the man had not perished. But that, I suppose, is not so, Simmias; for you too must examine what I say. Everyone would understand that such an argument was simple nonsense. This weaver wove himself many such garments and wore them out; he outlived them all but the last, but he perished before that one. Yet a man is in no wise inferior to his cloak, or weaker than it, on that account. And I think that the soul’s relation to the body may be expressed in a similar figure. Why should not a man very reasonably say in just the same way that the soul lasts a long time, while the body is weaker and lasts a shorter time? . . . So as yet we have no right to be confident, on the strength of this argument, that our souls continue to exist after we are dead.

Simmias and Cebes, he said, I come to the argument. And you, if you take my advice, will think not of Socrates, but of the truth; and you will agree with me if you think that what I say is true; otherwise you will oppose me

...
with every argument that you have; and be careful that, in my anxiety to con-
vince you, I do not deceive both you and myself, and go away, leaving my
sting behind me, like a bee.

Now let us proceed, he said. And first, if you find I have forgotten your
arguments, repeat them. Simmias, I think, has fears and misgivings that the
soul, being of the nature of a harmony, may perish before the body, though she
is more divine and nobler than the body. Cebes, if I am not mistaken, con-
ceded that the soul is more enduring than the body; but he said that no one
could tell whether the soul, after wearing out many bodies many times, did not
herself perish on leaving her last body, and whether death be not precisely
this—the destruction of the soul; for the destruction of the body is unceasing.
Is there anything else, Simmias and Cebes, which we have to examine?

They both agreed that these were the questions.

Do you reject all our previous conclusions, he asked, or only some of
them?

Only some of them, they replied.

Well, said he, what do you say of our doctrine that knowledge is recol-
lection, and that therefore our souls must necessarily have existed some-
where else, before they were imprisoned in our bodies?

I, replied Cebes, was convinced by it at the time in a wonderful way; and
now there is no doctrine to which I adhere more firmly.

And I am of that mind too, said Simmias; and I shall be very much sur-
prised if I ever change it.

But, my Theban friend, you will have to change it, said Socrates, if this
opinion of yours, that a harmony is a composite thing, and that the soul is a
harmony composed of the elements of the body at the right tension, is to
stand. You will hardly allow yourself to assert that the harmony was in exis-
tence before the things from which it was to be composed? Will you do that?

Certainly not, Socrates.

But you see that that is what your assertion comes to when you say that
the soul existed before she came into the form and body of man, and yet that
she is composed of elements which did not yet exist? Your harmony is not
like what you compare it to: the lyre and the strings and the sounds, as yet
untuned, come into existence first; and the harmony is composed last of all,
and perishes first. How will this belief of yours accord with the other?

It will not, replied Simmias. . . .

Well, there is a discord in your argument, he said. You must choose
which doctrine you will retain—that knowledge is recollection or that the
soul is a harmony.
The former, Socrates, certainly, he replied. The latter has never been demonstrated to me; it rests only on probable and plausible grounds, which make it a popular opinion. . . . But the doctrine about recollection and knowledge rests upon a foundation which claims belief. . . .

And, consider the question in another way, Simmias, said Socrates. . . . Is not every harmony by nature a harmony according as it is adjusted? I don’t understand you, he replied.

If it is tuned more, and to a greater extent, he said, supposing that to be possible, will it not be more a harmony, and to a greater extent, while if it is tuned less, and to a smaller extent, will it not be less a harmony, and to a smaller extent?

Certainly.

Well, is this true of the soul? Can one soul be more a soul, and to a greater extent, or less a soul, and to a smaller extent, than another, even in the smallest degree?

Certainly not, he replied.

And, therefore, can one soul contain more vice or virtue than another, if vice be discord and virtue harmony?

By no means.

Or rather, Simmias, to speak quite accurately, I suppose that there will be no vice in any soul if the soul is a harmony. I take it there can never be any discord in a harmony which is a perfect harmony.

Certainly not.

Neither can a soul, if it be a perfect soul, have any vice in it?

No; that follows necessarily from what has been said.

Then the result of this reasoning is that all the souls of all living creatures will be equally good if the nature of all souls is to be equally souls.

Yes, I think so, Socrates, he said.

And do you think that this is true, he asked, and that this would have been the fate of our argument, if the hypothesis that the soul is a harmony had been correct?

No, certainly not, he replied.

Well, said he, of all the parts of a man, should you not say that it was the soul, and particularly the wise soul, which rules?

I should.

Does she yield to the passions of the body or does she oppose them? I mean this. When the body is hot and thirsty, does not the soul drag it away
and prevent it from drinking, and when it is hungry does she not prevent it from eating? And do we not see her opposing the passions of the body in a thousand other ways?

Yes, certainly.

But we have also agreed that, if she is a harmony, she can never give a sound contrary to the tensions, and relaxations, and vibrations, and other changes of the elements of which she is composed; that she must follow them, and can never lead them?

Yes, he replied, we certainly have.

Then, my excellent friend, it is quite wrong to say that the soul is a harmony. For then, you see, we should not be in agreement either with the divine poet Homer or with ourselves.

That is true, he replied.

Very good, said Socrates; I think that we have contrived to appease our Theban Harmonia with tolerable success. But how about Cadmus, Cebes? he said. How shall we appease him, and with what reasoning?

I daresay that you will find out how to do it, said Cebes. . . .

My good friend, said Socrates, do not be overconfident. . . . You require me to prove to you that the soul is indestructible and immortal. . . . You say that to show that the soul is strong and godlike, and that she existed before we were born men, is not enough; for that does not necessarily prove her immortality, but only that she lasts a long time, and has existed an enormous while, and has known and done many things in a previous state. Yet she is not any the more immortal for that; her very entrance into man’s body was, like a disease, the beginning of her destruction. . . .

Cebes replied: That is my meaning. . . .

Socrates paused for some time and thought. Then he said, It is not an easy question that you are raising, Cebes. We must examine fully the whole subject of the causes of generation and decay. If you like, I will give you my own experiences, and if you think that you can make use of anything that I say, you may employ it to satisfy your misgivings.

Indeed, said Cebes, I should like to hear your experiences.

Listen, then, and I will tell you, Cebes, he replied. When I was a young man, I had a passionate desire for the wisdom which is called Physical Science. I thought it a splendid thing to know the causes of everything; why a thing comes into being, and why it perishes, and why it exists. . . . I used to examine the destruction of these things, and the changes of the heaven and
the earth, until at last I concluded that I was wholly and absolutely unfitted for these studies.

... I think that I am very far from believing that I know the cause of any of these things.

... But one day I listened to a man who said that he was reading from a book of Anaxagoras, which affirmed that it is Mind which orders and is the cause of all things. I was delighted with this theory; it seemed to me to be right that Mind should be the cause of all things, and I thought to myself, If this is so, then Mind will order and arrange each thing in the best possible way. So if we wish to discover the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of a thing, we must discover how it is best for that thing to exist, or to act, or to be acted on. Man therefore has only to consider what is best and fittest for himself, or for other things, and then it follows necessarily that he will know what is bad; for both are included in the same science. These reflections made me very happy: I thought that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the cause of existence after my own heart, and I expected that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round, and that he would then go on to explain to me the cause and the necessity, and tell me what is best, and that it is best for the earth to be of that shape.

All my splendid hopes were dashed to the ground, my friend, for as I went on reading I found that the writer made no use of Mind at all, and that he assigned no causes for the order of things. His causes were air, and ether, and water, and many other strange things. I thought that he was exactly like a man who should begin by saying that Socrates does all that he does by Mind, and who, when he tried to give a reason for each of my actions, should say, first, that I am sitting here now, because my body is composed of bones and muscles, and that the bones are hard and separated by joints, while the muscles can be tightened and loosened, and, together with the flesh and the skin which holds them together, cover the bones; and that therefore, when the bones are raised in their sockets, the relaxation and contraction of the muscles make it possible for me now to bend my limbs, and that that is the cause of my sitting here with my legs bent. If it were said that without bones and muscles and the other parts of my body I could not have carried my resolutions into effect, that would be true. But to say that they are the
cause of what I do, and that in this way I am acting by Mind, and not from
choice of what is best, would be a very loose and careless way of talking. It
simply means that a man cannot distinguish the real cause from that without
which the cause cannot be the cause, and this it is, I think, which the multi-tude,
groping about in the dark, speaks of as the cause; giving it a name
which does not belong to it. . . . I would most gladly learn the nature of that
kind of cause from any man, but I wholly failed either to discover it myself
or to learn it from anyone else. However, I had a second string to my bow,
and perhaps, Cebes, you would like me to describe to you how I proceeded
in my search for the cause.

I should like to hear very much indeed, he replied. . . .

I began in this way. I assumed in each case whatever principle I judged
to be strongest; and then I held as true whatever seemed to agree with it,
whether in the case of the cause or of anything else, and as untrue whatever
seemed not to agree with it. I should like to explain my meaning more
clearly: I don’t think you understand me yet.

Indeed I do not very well, said Cebes. . . .

Then do you agree with me in what follows? he asked. It appears to me
that if anything besides absolute beauty is beautiful, it is so simply because
it partakes of absolute beauty, and I say the same of all phenomena. Do you
allow that kind of cause?

I do, he answered.

Well then, he said, I do no longer recognize nor can I understand these
other wise causes: if I am told that anything is beautiful because it has a rich
color, or a goodly form, or the like, I pay no attention, for such language only
confuses me; and in a simple and plain, and perhaps a foolish way, I hold to
the doctrine that the thing is only made beautiful by the presence or commu-
nication, or whatever you please to call it, of absolute beauty—I do not wish
to insist on the nature of the communication, but what I am sure of is, that it
is absolute beauty which makes all beautiful things beautiful. This seems to
me to be the safest answer that I can give myself or others. . . . Don’t you
think so?

I do.

And it is size that makes large things large, and larger things larger, and
smallness that makes smaller things smaller?

Yes.

* * *
If you say this, do you not, in saying that Simmias is taller than Socrates and shorter than Phaedo, say that Simmias possesses both the attribute of tallness and the attribute of shortness?

I do.

But you admit, he said, that the proposition that Simmias is taller than Socrates is not exactly true, as it is stated; Simmias is not really taller because he is Simmias, but because of his height. Nor again is he taller than Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because of Socrates’ shortness compared with Simmias’ tallness.

True.

Nor is Simmias shorter than Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because of Phaedo’s tallness compared with Simmias’ shortness.

That is so.

Then in this way Simmias is called both short and tall, when he is between the two; he exceeds the shortness of one by the excess of his height, and gives the other a tallness exceeding his own shortness. . . .

He agreed. . . .

It seems to me not only that absolute greatness will never be great and small at once, but also that greatness in us never admits smallness, and will not be exceeded. One of two things must happen: either the greater will give way and fly at the approach of its opposite, the less, or it will perish. It will not stand its ground, and receive smallness, and be other than it was, just as I stand my ground, and receive smallness, and remain the very same small man that I was. But greatness cannot endure to be small, being great. Just in the same way again smallness in us will never become nor be great; nor will any opposite, while it remains what it was, become or be at the same time the opposite of what it was. Either it goes away or it perishes in the change.

That is exactly what I think, said Cebes. . . .

[Earlier in the argument we said . . . that a concrete thing is generated from its opposite; what we say now is that the absolute opposite can never become opposite to itself, either when it is in us, or when it is in nature. We were speaking then of things in which the opposites are, and we named them after those opposites; but now we are speaking of the opposites themselves, whose inherence gives the things their names; and they, we say, will never be generated from each other. . . .

No, replied Cebes. . . .

Now tell me again, he said; do you agree with me in this? Are there not things which you call heat and cold?
Yes.
Are they the same as snow and fire?
No, certainly not.
Heat is different from fire, and cold from snow?
Yes.
But I suppose, as we have said, that you do not think that snow can ever receive heat, and yet remains what it was, snow and hot: it will either retire or perish at the approach of heat.
Certainly.
And fire, again, will either retire or perish at the approach of cold. It will never endure to receive the cold and still remain what it was, fire and cold.
True, he said.
Then, it is true of some of these things that not only the idea itself has a right to its name for all time, but that something else too, which is not the idea, but which has the form of the idea wherever it exists, shares the name. Perhaps my meaning will be clearer by an example. The odd ought always to have the name of odd, ought it not?
Yes, certainly.
Well, my question is this. Is the odd the only thing with this name, or is there something else which is not the same as the odd? . . . There are many examples of what I mean: let us take one of them, the number three, and consider it. Do you not think that we must always call it by the name of the odd, as well as by its own name, although the odd is not the same as the number three? Yet the nature of the number three, and of the number five, and of half the whole series of numbers, is such that each of them is odd, though none of them is the same as the odd. . . . Do you agree or not?
Yes, of course, he replied.
Then see what I want to show you. It is not only opposite ideas which appear not to admit their opposites; things also which are not opposites, but which always contain opposites, seem as if they would not admit the idea which is opposite to the idea that they contain: they either perish or retire at its approach. . . .
Yes, indeed, said Cebes.

Do you agree with me in saying that not only does the opposite not admit the opposite, but also that whatever brings with it an opposite of anything to which it goes never admits the opposite of that which it brings? . . .
I follow you and entirely agree with you, he said.

Now begin again, and answer me, he said. . . . If you ask me, what is that which must be in the body to make it hot, I shall not give our old safe and stupid answer, and say that it is heat; I shall make a more refined answer, drawn from what we have been saying, and reply, fire. If you ask me, what is that which must be in the body to make it sick, I shall not say sickness, but fever; and again to the question what is that which must be in number to make it odd, I shall not reply oddness, but unity, and so on. Do you understand my meaning clearly yet?

Yes, quite, he said.

Then, he went on, tell me, what is that which must be in a body to make it alive?

A soul, he replied.

And is this always so?

Of course, he said.

Then the soul always brings life to whatever contains her?

No doubt, he answered.

And is there an opposite to life, or not?

Yes.

What is it?

Death.

And we have already agreed that the soul cannot ever receive the opposite of what she brings?

Yes, certainly we have, said Cebes. . . .

Good; and what do we call that which does not admit death?

The immortal, he said.

And the soul does not admit death?

No.

Then the soul is immortal?

It is.

Good, he said. Shall we say that this is proved? What do you think?

Yes, Socrates, and very sufficiently.

• • •

But then, my friends, said he, we must think of this. If it be true that the soul is immortal, we have to take care of her, not merely on account of the time which we call life, but also on account of all time. Now we can see how terrible is the danger of neglect. For if death had been a release from all
things, it would have been a godsend to the wicked; for when they died they
would have been released with their souls from the body and from their own
wickedness. But now we have found that the soul is immortal, and so her
only refuge and salvation from evil is to become as perfect and wise as
possible. For she takes nothing with her to the other world but her education
and culture; and these, it is said, are of the greatest service or of the greatest
injury to the dead man at the very beginning of his journey thither.

...But have
you any commands for your friends or for me about your children, or about
other things? How shall we serve you best?

Simply by doing what I always tell you, Crito. Take care of your own
selves, and you will serve me and mine and yourselves in all that you do,
even though you make no promises now. But if you are careless of your own
selves, and will not follow the path of life which we have pointed out in our
discussions both today and at other times, all your promises now, however
profuse and earnest they are, will be of no avail.

We will do our best, said Crito. But how shall we bury you?

As you please, he answered; only you must catch me first and not let me
escape you. And then he looked at us with a smile and said, My friends, I
cannot convince Crito that I am the Socrates who has been conversing with
you and arranging his arguments in order. He thinks that I am the body which
he will presently see a corpse, and he asks how he is to bury me. All the argu-
ments which I have used to prove that I shall not remain with you after I have
drunk the poison, but that I shall go away to the happiness of the blessed,
with which I tried to comfort you and myself, have been thrown away on
him. . . . You must be of good cheer, and say that you are burying my body;
and you may bury it as you please and as you think right.

With these words he rose and went into another room to bathe. Crito
went with him and told us to wait.

...Then Crito made a sign to his slave who was standing by; and the slave
got out, and after some delay returned with the man who was to give the
poison, carrying it prepared in a cup.

You have only to drink this, replied, and to walk about until your legs
feel heavy, and then lie down; and it will act of itself. With that he handed
the cup to Socrates, who took it quite cheerfully, Echecrates. . . . Is there any-
thing else that you wish? He made no answer to this question; but after a
short interval there was a movement, and the man uncovered him, and his
eyes were fixed. Then Crito closed his mouth and his eyes.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, a man, I think, who was the
wisest and justest, and the best man I have ever known.