

## THE CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL IN PLATO'S PHAEDO

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**Key concepts:** *pleasure, intellect, soul, body, death, wisdom, phronesis, life, the truth, knowledge, reason, immortality, mortal, harmony*

The problem of the irrational aspect of the soul is discussed by Plato relatively seriously in the first part of the dialogue *Phaedo*. Although the purpose and aim of the dialogue are different from our subject, it is worth describing the passage we are interested in in some detail.

The general topic of the dialogue *Phaedo* is death and the fate of the soul of the individual. Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue formulates the following (63d10): 'a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy feels confident when about to die, and is hopeful that, when he has died, he will win very great benefits in the other world'.<sup>1</sup> The question is about why philosophers do not regret that they will die but conversely are happy to die (63e8-64a3): as we can see from the introduction of the dialogue, Socrates was not resentful to die. The matter is how to understand death and this real life, and how the philosopher should live life and what he should do during his life time (63b8-64c).

Socrates without argument, and without being contradicted, presumes that death is separation of soul and body (64c-9). There are such things as food, drink, and sex which belong to the body, but genuine philosophers do not care about these things. In other words, bodily pleasures are not the matter of the philosophers. So it seems to be the case that, in the *Phaedo*, pleasures are in the realm of the body. The philosopher's concern is the soul (64e4-6). But the [reason of] soul's concern is gaining *phronesis*, 'understanding' or 'wisdom' (65a10). Body hinders the soul when it wants to gain wisdom. For example, our perceptions do not always give adequate information about an object (65b). Socrates paraphrases it as 'soul attains the truth' (65b9).

Thus it would not be wrong to say that the function of soul is reasoning or thinking (*logizesthai*). Reasoning can do its work better without hindrance from the body. Hence Plato in the *Phaedo* lets Socrates divide the human being into body and soul and, analogically, pleasures, which belong to body, and intellect (Hackforth's translation) or reasoning (Gallop's translation) to soul. So these are introduced by means of analogy. That is to say that the dual structure of being as material and immaterial correlate to the dual aspect of the human as body and soul. So the pleasures come from body and reasoning comes from the soul. The objects of the soul's attempt to understand are such things as just itself, good itself, beautiful itself etc. (65d7), or knowledge (65e4) and being (66a3). Soul or *dianoia* (Hackforth's translation: intellect) can attain its object (*alētheia* and *phronesis*) only alone by itself (66a3). Therefore Socrates concludes that it is possible to gain truth and wisdom only when the soul departs from the body, and during one's life time, the body will always require us to care for the body and hinder us in our attempts to gain the truth. So, the philosopher in his life should care for the soul, being as far away as possible from bodily matters. Then one of two things will possibly be true: 'either knowledge is nowhere to be gained, or else it is for the dead' (66e6).

1. Unless stated otherwise, quotations from the *Phaedo* are taken from Gallop 1990.



Now then the soul of the philosopher as a cognitive entity has only one aim: to gain truth, knowledge, or wisdom. Everything else is related to the body and bodily pleasures. Here we can see that Plato makes an equivalence between soul and intellect. It means that soul is understood only from the rational point of view. So, body and bodily pleasures and care for body lead to non-rationality.

But there is another bifurcated division. Plato not only lets Socrates posit a division between soul and body but also distinguishes between two types of human being, philosophers and ordinary people. Philosophers are lovers of wisdom, lovers of knowledge. Their aim is the truth, gaining the truth by intellect or by *phronesis*. Philosophers are not resentful to die, because they think that their soul will gain the truth after the parting of soul from body (67d4, 5). Other people are afraid of dying. For they are lovers of body, a category which includes the lovers of riches and of prestige (68c1-4). Death is a great evil for them (68d5). So the difference between the philosopher and the lovers of body is that the one has real bravery or temperance (68c-d) because these come through *phronesis*; the others have bravery because of abigger 'un-bravery', have temperance because of a bigger intemperance (68e-69a4).

Thus the vital principle in the *Phaedo* is that Plato puts forward the importance of the *phronesis* or intellect at the core of the human life or way of life, be it an ordinary person's life or be it the philosopher's life, and the ethical values would be real when filtered through intellect (69a-c); however, *phronesis* has a meaning not only of reasoning or calculative speculation; it does not just refer to pure intellect; it has also an element of human action, in that it includes an understanding of the meaning of virtue and excellence, or intellectual intuition, or what Socrates calls in the *Apology* his *daimonion* (128d-130e) that when Socrates going to do something bad his *daimonion* urges not to act and when action is good it allows with silence. Let us remember the The thirty tyrants decree to kill people.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that in the *Phaedo* the soul itself is not (yet) divided in parts. It is just distinguished from the body. The soul is considered as a whole or one (united) entity, distinct from the body which is material. The soul is treated as the spiritual aspect of a human being. The soul is immaterial and its core function is that it is the intellect. So Plato shows the soul in the *Phaedo* as a purely cognitive thing, and as all the pleasures and desires are related to bodily matters, they are therefore not worth considering. Therefore affective desires are originally from the body. Also all the intention of human action, except intellectual work, have got corporeal cause or physiological or human life concerned reason.

So although Plato did not divide the soul in parts in the *Phaedo* his dualistic conception allows us to infer that the corporeal and incorporeal aspects of the human life both have got their own affective intention. For instance, in the beginning of the dialogue Socrates superficially drops the idea that pleasure and pain always 'come to us at the same time' and allegorically depicts that 'they are like two creatures attached to a single head' (60c). All aspects of pleasure and pain belong or relate not to the soul; rather they come from the body.

The main division is made also on an ontological level. There are two distinct worlds: one is the world of becoming and the other is the world of being. This principle of ontological dualism will be accepted in all the further dialogues; where they are introduced, the two worlds are treated not as two independent worlds, but rather, hierarchically, as two levels of one single world: it is possible to transfer from one level to the other. One is the higher, more real and divine world, the other world is as it were the copy of this higher one, more wretched, a fluctuating, changing world, that has nothing real in it.

#### **Common criticisms of the arguments in the *Phaedo***

There are several interpretations of the problem we discuss in our thesis: Does body desire food, or does not rather the soul desire it? So Archer-Hind (1883) and Bostock (1989), who rationalize Plato's 'doctrine', and controversially Hackforth (1955) and Gallop (1975) who do not rationalize his



doctrine. Burnet, Rowe and Bluck do not give any interpretation of this aspect of the dialogue.

Archer-Hind in his introduction to 'The *Phaedo* of Plato' affirms that (1883, 30-31) 'bodily appetites [are] assigned to the body, because they only belong to soul in her bodily relation and through this affect her' or 'epithumiai are ascribed to *sōma*, as arising from conjunction of *psuchē* and *sōma*'. Archer-Hind thus holds an intermediate position; he does not want to say that passions are caused by body, but he cannot say that they are not caused by soul, in his words, 'because they depend for their continuance upon body'.

In his interpretation of the *Phaedo*, Archer-Hind compares the *Phaedo* and the *Philebus* and makes no difference in the model of soul presented in each dialogue. Soul in his interpretation has at least two parts which are *epithymetikon* and *logistikon*. And he says that (1883, 30)

'passions belong to body, because without the bodily environment they could not arise; to soul, because it is by soul alone that they can be felt'.

Explaining the model of soul in the *Phaedo*, Archer-Hind mixes it with the *Philebus*' doctrine of soul which is quite different from that of the *Phaedo*. Archer-Hind is going slightly too far, in that in the early part of the *Phaedo* Plato does not analyse much; so Plato just says desires belong to body. Indeed, in the *Phaedo*, Plato does not say that desires arise out of a conjunction with soul, and the reason is that Plato is using a dualistic principle of ontology to prove the immortality of soul. So Archer-Hind rationalizes the model of soul in *Phaedo* beyond what is warranted by the text.

David Bostock (1989, 26-27) says that

'it is the soul that actually does these things, but it does them when it is in a body, and because of the body, and will no longer see when it has no body to furnish eyes. Similarly when it wants food it does so because of the feeling which it gets from the body's empty stomach, which again is a feeling it will be free of when it has no body. Generally, while it is in a body it will be sensible of what happens in that body, and this sensibility will inevitably give rise to perceptions, desires, and emotions of all kinds.'

This is another type of rationalisation. As belonging wholly to the soul, the analysis of perception through the body but belonging to the soul is found in Plato, but not in the *Phaedo*; instead, the words of Bostock could be taken straight out of the *Lysis* – which is not to say that this is Bostock's source. At any rate, his interpretation constitutes another type of rationalisation.

David Gallop (1975, 9) does not give any interpretation of this question, but he refers to 65a7, where Socrates speaks of 'the pleasures that come by way of the body'. Gallop thus avoids falling into the trap Archer-Hind and Bostock have fallen into; he does not try to rationalise. Plato could have said about the pleasures more than what is stated if he had wanted to, but the logic of the dialogue itself does not allow it. Since the things are divided into two types, becoming and being, or visible or invisible, pleasures must belong to the body. Or we could say pleasures arise from the body.

R. Hackforth in his interpretation of Plato's *Phaedo* says (1955, 56):

'We have rather a bipartition, corresponding to the ruling antithesis in our dialogue of unitary soul on the one hand and body on the other. The *philochrematos* and the *philotimos* are merely aspects of the *philosomatos*, and the same man may combine all three characters.'

In the *Phaedo*, we have the bipartition body and soul. In the *Republic* we have a tripartition. In the *Phaedo*, Plato's ontological approach to the soul in the first part of the dialogue is part of his presentation of the world as determined by pairs of opposites. In the *Republic*, the three parts or elements of the soul are derived from the nature of the human soul and social classes or conditions. The tripartition in the *Republic* was a tripartition within the soul; the body in the *Republic* is yet a different matter. In fact the body is so much a different matter that Plato seems not to talk about it at all where tripartition is concerned. In reality, what we get in the *Phaedo* is not a bipartition but a unitary soul. The opposition of body and soul is part of, or a reflection of, an overarching principle of bipartition in this part of the dialogue.



So we must assume as a pair of opposites body and soul. Plato says desires are with the body not because he does not have theory of soul. He just assumes for the purpose of this dialogue that the whole world is made up of pairs of opposites. Thus Gallop and Hackforth go a long way in stating what Plato actually says, but they do not provide an interpretation of why he says what he says in the *Phaedo*.

If we see the soul from a purely gnoseological point of view as *logistikon* or *phronesis*, then there is no question about whether the soul does desire or the body. The *Logistikon* does not desire, it merely understands or reasons. As we see in other middle and late dialogues (*Republic* and *Philebus* etc.), however, both soul and body have got their own irrational or motivational aspects. When Socrates makes a contrast between the philosopher and the ordinary man – even if it is from a moral point of view, as Hackforth says – he distinguishes between *philosophos* 68b9 and *philosomatos* 68c1, which both have an intentional or motivational meaning in the element ‘philo-’. However, after death the soul ‘dwells alone’ (67c8) to attain the truth, or gain wisdom, getting knowledge etc. It becomes, one could say, pure rationality. Therefore the intentional or motivational aspect of the soul is discernible only in the ‘life’ time of the soul, here on earth.

In this passage in the *Phaedo*, not before, not necessarily after, but in this passage in particular, Plato lets Socrates talk as if soul were purely what we could call a gnoseological item. And again, as we said, as soon as we start to analyze even just the words *philosophos* and *philosomatos*, we get intention. Because the part of the words ‘philo’ or ‘love of’ is explicitly shows its affective elements. So we have, in English translation, ‘love of body’, and ‘love of wisdom’.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato presents a model where the world categorized in accordance with pairs of opposites, so the soul knows and is everything that, from the point of view of the *Republic*, has to do with the *logistikon* aspect, while the body has to do with the physical desires. But that does not allow for the soul to desire by way of the body, it does not allow for mental in addition to physical desires, it does not deal with motivation and intention. Contrasting that with the *Republic*, soul in the *Republic* has to do only with motivation and intention. And the tripartition of the soul in the *Republic* is a tripartition in terms of three different types of goal of one’s motivation or intention. The *Phaedo* reduces the soul too much, as if the soul were just *nous*, or *logistikon*. The soul in the *Republic* is too much separated into three parts, as if the three parts were completely separate.

The last important point that one must mention concerning the *Phaedo* is that there is a division of humankind into two categories: ordinary men on the one hand, and philosopher on the other. This principal distinction spreads on or expands in further dialogues that we analyze. So the main concern of Plato is clearly a philosopher. Plato tries to show us, not only to tell us, what is the philosopher’s nature, who he must be, and what is the nature of philosopher’s soul. **Plato’s aims in the *Phaedo***

The main problem of the dialogue is death and the fate of the individual soul. According to the principle or method of opposites, or bipartite thinking, he tries to show both for philosophers and for ordinary people that death is not the end of our life, but just the end of our bodily existing. So the soul keeps its power and intellect, and for philosophers there is an optimistic expectation in the afterlife, a continuum, if only he could tend his soul carefully enough, attempting to gain real knowledge. And only after life will the philosopher be able to gain the truth, purely by his soul alone. For the ordinary person, Plato shows that the soul is immortal and makes it more convincing by arguments so that it really seems to be immortal. Therefore ordinary people have some good and bad expectations for the time after death. For, as Socrates says in general, ordinary man has bravery because of the other bigger ‘un-bravery’, has temperance because of the other bigger intemperance (68e-69a4). So it is worth proving convincingly to the ordinary person that soul is immortal. And there will be more problems than here if they live the life not in a good, ethically good, way. In Hades they will have terrible suffering. Hence immortality of soul was important for Plato for both ordinary men and philosophers.



If soul were mortal, there would be nothing to relate to the world of ideas; therefore it would not be possible to attain the truth itself. The cognitive soul is the only thing that is able to get knowledge and understand the truth. Therefore, a mortal soul would destroy Plato's philosophical doctrine. That is why Plato tries to prove the immortality of soul.

Plato in his various dialogues says what the soul is like. In the *Republic*, the soul has three parts. One concerned with *epithumiai* (desire), one concerned with *thumos* (spirit), one concerned with *nous* or the *logistikon*. In the *Timaeus* Plato presents different models of soul also in 3 parts. But in the *Timaeus*, it is rather materialistic interpretation of soul: one part of the soul is connected with the liver, one part connected to the heart. And another part is connected to the brain. The three parts do more or less what the three parts do in *Republic*, but not exactly. So these are two different models of soul. In the *Phaedo* there is yet another model of soul. In *Phaedo* it is rather one unique soul than a bipartite or tripartite one. Plato divides the human being into body and soul, but he does not divide the soul itself into two parts. So it is a whole soul treated as a cognitive entity. So Archer-Hind mixes *Phaedo* with *Philebus* when he treats of the soul in the *Phaedo*.

Furthermore, Plato in the *Phaedo* invents the notion of the corporeal, and the contras corporeal – non-corporeal. Before Plato, nobody had conceptualised something that is but does not have body. Plato invents the idea of the bodily and non-bodily. on the introduction of these concepts in the *Phaedo* are a clear indication of the importance of the non-corporeal aspect of human kind and the world in the argumentation of this dialogue.

So Archer-Hind is right in talking about the *Philebus*, but not as what Plato really believed. But as what Plato refer to. And his readers would have understood they were educated readers. They would have read *Philolaos*. They would know the Pythagorean theories of soul. That is the one thing. The other thing is Archer-Hind also mixed other things into his model of soul.

Archer-Hind is going slightly too far, in that in the early part of the *Phaedo* Plato does not analyse much. Plato just says that desires belong to the body. Thought, *Nous*, belongs to the soul. If somebody had asked Plato: 'What do you mean? Is it the case that desires belong entirely to the body, so that when the soul is gone, the body will still desire?', of course Plato would have said: 'No, it is the body in conjunction with the soul.' But there is a very good reason why he does not say that in the *Phaedo*. It is not because he thinks otherwise; not because it had not occurred to him; but because it would spoil the picture, because for the purposes of the subsequent argumentation he wants to separate body and soul. All the bad things come to human beings from the body. All the good things come to human being from the soul. What Archer-Hind presents is a rationalisation.

When we ask what does Plato want to achieve in the *Phaedo*, this can be answered on different levels: On one level, Socrates wants to console his friends. He does not want them to cry when he dies. Thus, they must not fear death. On another level, Plato wants to introduce the distinction between corporeal and non-corporeal to the reader. And he wants to say that what the mind is concerned with, *ta nocta*, these things are of a completely different order from the body.

The question is, what do we do with this interpretation for an understanding of the *Phaedo* or for an understanding of the *Republic*? In the *Phaedo*, Plato presents a model of the soul and of the world which amounts to a challenge: 'If you see the world as black and white, then you must say the soul 'knows', and the physical desires are in the domain of the body.' – But that does not allow for, on the one hand, the soul's desiring by way of the body; it does not allow for mental and physical desires; it does not deal with motivation and intention.

Now contrasting that with the *Republic*, one reading of the *Republic* is that anything and everything said about soul in the *Republic* has to do only with motivation and intention. And the tripartition of the soul in the *Republic* is a tripartition purely in terms of three different types of goal or three different types of endpoint of one's motivation or intention. So, the *Phaedo* reduces the soul too much as if the soul were just *nous*, just *logistikon*. The danger with the *Republic*, on the other hand,



is that the soul is too much separated into three parts, as if the three parts were completely separated. The danger with the *Republic* is that because there is such emphasis on motivation and intention, the soul loses its unity. The danger with *Phaedo* is that because the soul is seen as a single, indivisible, non-composite thing, this does not allow for any motivation or intention other than the rational; just as in the *Republic* motivation and intentions are separated so much that the soul is in danger of losing its unity.

So, when Plato says in the *Republic* that the soul is a unity, what sort of unity could it be? For example, what sort of harmony could the soul be in the *Republic* if in the *Phaedo* already Plato had said that soul cannot be harmony. Now, in the *Republic* he does not say body is bad and the soul is good. He just says there are different types of aims of our desires. And one must be very careful because in later dialogues, like the *Philebus*, Plato can say that there is physical pleasure, or rather, soul can take pleasure in food and sex, just as soul can take pleasure in knowledge. So in that way as well, the *Philebus* combines the two radical models of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. And the *Philebus* has a picture of a soul that does everything, a soul that is one soul but has different types of considerations or desires. One will find more in the *Philebus* than in either the *Phaedo* or the *Republic*, especially with regard to non-rational aspects of soul. The *Phaedo* poses a problem in one respect. The *Republic* discusses the same problem from a different ideological angle. And the *Philebus*, probably written after the *Timaeus*, perhaps tries to give us Plato's latest answer.

Finally, Plato in the *Phaedo* tries to prove the immortality of soul for two reasons. One is because immortality of soul is necessary to prove the incorporeal world. The second is that there must be a justice or responsibility that the soul will be judged for its deeds after life, because for ordinary people who cannot have real *phronesis* there should be the notion of judgement of life's deeds in an afterlife so that they are temperate in this life. And Plato did make it after his proof of soul immortality by his allegorical story about after life journey.

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### ХУРААНГУЙ

Энэхүү эрдэм шинжилгээний өгүүлэл нь Эртний грекийн философич Платоны дунд үеийн диалогуудын нэг болох "Федон" диалогид дахь бие сэтгэлийн асуудлыг хондсон судалгаа бөгөөд судлаачын гол зорилго бол псюхэ буюу сэтгэл хэмээх ойлголтыг тухайн диалогид Платон хэрхэн ойлгож авч үзэж байсан хийгээд псюхэ буюу сэтгэлийн бусад аспект бүрэлдхүүн хэсгүүдийг хэрхэн тайлбарласныг задлан авч үзэхийг зорьсон болно. Судалгааны үр дүнд Платон өөрийн онтологийн дуализмд тулгуурлан хүнийг бие, сэтгэл гэсэн хоёр хэсгээс бүрдсэн бөгөөд сэтгэл буюу псюхэ гэдгийг дан оюуны ухаан (*logismos, reasoning*), ухаарал (*фронесис, understanding*) болон мэдлэг, үнэний төлөөх тэмүүлэл гэдэг үүднээс ойлгож байсан бөгөөд сэтгэлийн бусад аспектүүд тухайлбал хүсэл тачаал, нэр алдар зэрэг нь хүний бие махбодлог амьдралын хүчин зүйл мэтээр тайлбарласан бөгөөд хүн төрөлхтөнийг мөн философичид буюу мэдлэгт дурлагсад ба бие мах бодод дурлагсад буюу филосоматос гэж хувааж үзсэн байна.