

# Philosophy of human person

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## Philosophy of Human Person

Among the greatest dialogues of Plato in his middle period is *Phaedo*. The *Symposium* and the *Republic* go along with it. It is among the five dialogues of Plato with the others being; *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Meno*. *Phaedo* is the last dialogue. It is narrated from the perspective of the *Phaedo* of Elis who was one of Socrates' students. The student was present at the death-bed of Socrates' and he narrates the dialogue to a fellow philosopher *Echecrates*. In it, Socrates discusses the characteristics of the afterlife. Plato narrates this dialogue to both *Echecrates* and us through *Phaedo*. Socrates investigates a number of influences about immortality of the soul in a bid to show that there exists an afterlife with the soul dwelling after death. He does this through engaging his two friends, the *Simmias* and the *Cebes*, in a debate.

Among the major subjects in *Phaedo* is an idea that suggests the soul to be immortal. Socrates presents four arguments about the soul's immortality. The first being The Opposites Argument or Cyclical argument. This explains since the forms are external and unchanging, the soul is concerned with bringing life hence it is not supposed to die. It is also reported to be necessarily imperishable. The existence of the body as mortal through the subjection to physical death means the souls should be its opposite. Plato suggested the likeness of cold and fire with cold being imperishable and fire its exact opposite. He observed that everything came from its opposite. E. g. a tall man only becomes tall after being short before. Life being an opposite to death, our analogous reason gives the thought that as the living once become dead, so should dead become living. Death and life are in a continuous cycle in a way that death is not a permanent end.

The second argument is that of the theory of recollection. Humans have a non-theoretical knowledge at birth. This is to mean that the soul was in existence way before birth to help us in carrying that knowledge. The theory bears another account found in Plato's Meno though Socrates infers previous knowledge of everything. The argument is based majorly on the fact that learning is an act of recollection of the things we knew before birth but we forgot them. We are able to judge two sticks to be equal in length but differing in width because of the innate understanding we have about equality. This argument of recollection implies that we grasp the form of equality because our souls must have existed before birth, an implication that the life of the soul extends that of the body by far.

The third is the Argument from Affinity. It separates the things that are irrelevant, unseen, and immortal, from those relevant, seen, and perishable. The soul is categorized among the first items with the body on the latter. The immortality of the soul however comes in varying degrees. A soul that has not completely detached from the body becomes a ghost longing to return to flesh. The completely detached soul exists free dwelling in the heavens.

These arguments were objected by both Simmias and Cebes. Simmias stood on the grounds that the soul may be attunement just like instruments are. The attunement of the instrument exists only if the instrument is in existence. Cebes was in agreement with the possibility of the soul surviving death but suggested that Socrates only manage to prove the soul's ability to live longer than the body but not immortality. Socrates response to Simmias was that the objection conflicted the theory of recollection where the soul existed before the body hence cannot be equated to attunement of an instrument.

He responded to Cebes through a lengthy discussion involving his fourth argument; The Theory of Forms. Forms are perfectly themselves unlike qualities of this world. They do not acknowledge their opposites. An example is the form of beauty that does not have any form of ugliness at all. A beautiful person may however be beautiful compared to other people but to a god they might not seem to be such beautiful hence are no perfectly beautiful. Form of beauty is absolutely beautiful all the time.

#### Works Cited

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