

6. A Critical Analysis of the Arguments from Alternation and Recollection for the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedo*

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Abstract

*Soul has been conceived as an essential element of human composition. In Philosophy and other related discipline, its study and treatment have generated attentions and contributions from scholars in these various fields. Plato, in his own conception, affirms the reality of soul, its importance to human being and its transcendental works which he has shown in some of his dialogues. It is in line with this that Plato advances arguments for reincarnation, an aspect of the immortality of the soul. This paper, therefore, attempts a critical analysis of the arguments from alternation and recollection for the immortality of the soul in Plato's *Phaedo*. It argues that Plato fails to prove beyond reasonable doubt the reality of the soul. It also mentions that its proof for reincarnation which is hinged on the reality of the soul is not tenable. The paper, therefore, concludes, using the method of philosophical argumentation, that the arguments are neither plausible nor tenable enough to establish his claim.*

Keywords:

Reincarnation, argument from alternation; argument from recollection; *Phaedo*

Introduction

Vol 2 No 3 (2014)

ISSUE - SEPTEMBER

ISSN 2347-6869 (E) & ISSN 2347-2146 (P)

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Before and after Socrates/Plato¹, there have been various conceptions of the soul. In the history of Greek philosophy, different conceptions of the soul have been given, though not without problems.

In the pre-Homeric time, the soul was compared to a ghost. They believed that the ghost was active and not independent on the offerings of the surviving relatives to keep it up and away from disturbing survivors. In Homeric period, soul was meant in two distinguishable, probably related, ways. On the one hand, as something that human being risks in battle and loses in death; what departs from the person's limbs and travels to the underworld at death, where it has a more or less pitiful afterlife as a shade or image of the deceased person. It has however been observed by some scholars, Snell (1975: 19) for instance, that the meaning of soul in either case is, in fact, thought of as one and the same thing.

The pre-Homeric conception was a contrast to that of Homer and Hesiod. In Homeric time, the soul was not a ghost that would not appear to its survivors, even if it did, it was in dreams. The soul was conceived to be senseless, which had no strength, but weak. Homer failed to attribute any feeling or emotion to the soul. He was quoted to have said that

This is not because death has robbed the soul of anything it ever did. It had nothing to do with conscious life, when it was in the body and cannot therefore have any consciousness, when it is detached from it (Burnet, 1929: 142).

What this implies is that the self, for Homer, is the body. The human soul, therefore, cannot be thought of as immortal. This, for him, will be a wrong conception. His argument is premised on the ground that immortality can only be thought of in respect to the gods, they were jealous of their immortality (Guthrie, 1959: 126).

If, according to Homer, the body is the self, thereby, relegating the activity of the soul, what happens when the soul departs from the body? If the soul is irrelevant as Homer had wanted us to believe, the body should still continue to exist and perhaps live, even if the soul is not present. But it has been observed that the body becomes useless when apparently the soul is not there. So, one can say that the soul is that which activates the body. Though, the presence or absence of soul marks out a person's life, it is not, otherwise, associated with that life. Moreover, it is a striking feature of Homeric usage that to mention

¹ My mention of Socrates/Plato here is intentional. It is intended that the ideas are for both of them, since Plato wrote the dialogues and used Socrates as one of the Dramatis Personae. The reason, apparently, is that Plato would not want the ideas of his teacher to go into extinction. In the rest of the work, both will be used interchangeably.

soul is to suggest death: someone's soul comes to mind only when their life is thought, by themselves or others, to be at risk (Furley, 1956: 4; Claus, 1981: 75-83).

For Pythagoras and his followers, their explanation of the soul is religious.² Pythagoreanism was concerned with the continued existence of the person after death. The human soul is an aspect of the Universal soul. It is imprisoned in the human body. This is so to make it suffer its activities of the previous life. The Pythagoreans believe in the transmigration of the soul from one particular person to the other, or from one body to the other. This could be either that of animate or inanimate objects.

In summary, the soul is immortal, and it transmigrates into other kinds of living things. Whatever that exists has existed sometimes ago, and nothing is absolutely new. This is the reason for preaching to the animals (Russell, 1946: 52).

The above accounts show that there have been different conceptions of soul before Socrates/Plato; even after them, there are still different views as regards soul. This paper attempts critical analysis of Socrates'/Plato's arguments from alternation and recollection pertaining to the proof for the immortality of the soul. This is, in a sense, another conception of soul. The paper shall look at the possible objections against the two arguments to see if they are plausible or not. The essay shall conclude that the arguments are not plausible enough to justify the proof for the immortality of the soul.

Plato's Conception of the Soul

Soul is discussed not only in the *Phaedo* but also in some other dialogues of Plato. For instance, in *the Republic*, Plato conceives of justice as the excellent state of the soul, and so it is not surprising that *the Republic* sheds a great deal of light on Plato's conception of the soul. One way in which it does so is by explicitly integrating a number of central features of the ordinary notion of soul – its being and remaining alive as a human being, for cognitive and (especially) intellectual functions, and for moral virtues such as courage and justice.

In *Apology*, [40c], Socrates himself is presented as being noncommittal about what happens to the soul at death, and even about whether it survives at all. “Men find it very hard to believe”, Cebes says, “what you said about the soul. They think that after it has left the body it no longer exists anywhere, but that it is destroyed and dissolved on the day the man dies” (Plato, 1973: 70a). This view is restated by Simmias (Plato, 1973: 77b) as the opinion of the majority (Plato, 1973: 80d). It has to be noted that the view includes the idea that the soul is a material thing, which is destroyed by being dispersed, like breath or smoke. In the last part of *the Republic*, Glaucon is interrogated by Socrates “Haven't you

² Attempt is not made in this paper to explain the religious aspect of Pythagorean, it must, however, be emphasized that religion forms the motivation of Pythagoreanism as a philosophy.

realized that our soul is immortal and never destroyed?" (Plato, 1973: 608d). This question and some other assertions in Plato's dialogues have shown his interest for the theory of the soul. But in the *Phaedo*, the arguments for the immortality of the soul are what Plato present.

But my concern is the soul as it is portrayed in *the Phaedo*. The construction of Plato's *Phaedo* is compelling enough to present an argument for the immortality of the soul. In it, he recounts the final days of Socrates who has been condemned to death for corrupting youth in Athens. Plato ironically uses the Socratic Method for concluding that the human soul is immortal. Two of the arguments used by Socrates to argue for the immortality of the soul are *arguments from Alternation* and *Recollection*.

Argument from Alternation³ (70c-72e)

This argument, in a way, tends to prove the religious doctrine of reincarnation, the view that human souls exist in another world and reborn into this world. In the dialogue, *Phaedo*, Socrates is to defend himself as regards his contentment with his trial, which would lead to his execution.⁴

In his discussion with Simmias and Cebes, when the duo have perceived that he is not disturbed by the death hanging on him, he (Socrates) assures them that he is not afraid of death, and as a matter of fact, "true philosophers make dying their profession" (Plato, 1973: 67e). His reasons for being happy are that; first, he will join his dead lovers, just the way some have gone to meet their dead lovers and relations (wives and sons). Second, a true lover of wisdom will always be anxious to join true lovers of wisdom. This is also corroborated by saying wisdom, in the real sense of it, is in the next world. No one will ever find wisdom, in all its purity, in any other place except this next world, a true philosopher, who has known all these should not be afraid of death (Plato, 1973: 68a-c). These, for Socrates, are his reasons for being happy. The reasons also serve as the proofs for the immortality of the soul. This argument is based on principle and process of law of nature. It must be pointed out that is joining the dead a good option when people here need such person's wisdom for their welfare, development of the society etc?

To prove that the souls of the departed exist in another world, some premises must be present. The argument goes in this form.

Opposites, based on general rule, are generated from opposites.

Living and dead are opposites.

³ This argument is also referred to as Opposites Argument or the Cyclical Argument

⁴ This has started in the preceding dialogues, *Apology*, *Euthyphro* and *Crito*.

Based on the old legend, perhaps that of the Greek, that the souls of the dead exist in another world.

If granted that the souls exist in another world, then, one can infer that they can come back to this world, for if they had not existed at Time T_A , their existence would not have been possible at Time T_B . Also, if they had not existed at Place P_A , their existence would not have been possible at Place P_B . They would not have been able to come to this world. This means that the dead comes from its opposite, living, and living will come from the dead, its opposite (Plato, 1973: 70c-d).

To buttress this point, Socrates uses some other examples, that of qualities, actions: just and unjust; beautiful and ugly; bigger and smaller etc (Plato, 1973: 71a-b). It is in this way that opposites are generated from opposites, that will show that there are two contrary processes at work, growth and diminution, heating and cooling, falling asleep and waking up. If all these are accepted are true, then one of the opposites can be likened to current discourse, falling asleep and waking up. Life and death can perfectly be compared to falling asleep and waking experience. Now that it has been shown that falling asleep and waking experience can be likened to life and death and that they are familiar, just the same way waking experience succeeds falling asleep, that same way life succeeds death and vice versa.

If granted, therefore, that the living come from the dead and the dead from the living, one can reasonably conclude that the dead must continue to exist. It will, therefore, be meaningless if one can accept that one dies but that there is no rebirth. If compared to falling asleep but no waking experience, it means everybody will continue to sleep and no meaningful thing will be carried out. It can be interpreted to mean that the soul is the opposite of the body and while the body must die and decompose, the soul does not. In other words, as the body must inevitably perish, the soul does not because it is the body's exact opposite, for it will not make sense for both to perish.

Argument from Recollection [Anamnesis] (72e-77e)

In *Meno*, Socrates questions an ignorant young slave about a geometrical problem of doubling the square, drawing diagrams for him to follow, by asking him questions. He leads the young boy to the correct answers without apparently telling him anything at all. He thus, purportedly, shows that the boy has knowledge of geometry and must, therefore, have acquired the knowledge before birth. Socrates concludes that men must have existed before birth and, at that time, had full knowledge, which they lost in the process of being born and could now recall only with difficulty (Plato, 1973: 80e-82). The above argument is similar to the one in the *Phaedo* which is about to be discussed.

The argument from recollection is used to claim that learning is really recollection of things, which have been previously known. It is argued that when one is reminded of something by something else, because of a resemblance, e.g. a portrait of our President recalls our President to our mind, one is aware of any imperfections in the resemblance because one knows the original (Guthrie, 1959: 329).

The structure of the argument can be put in this form:

If one is skillfully questioned about some problems, say geometry/mathematics, it will lead to producing the right answers out of their own head.

Seeing something reminds of one of another thing.

Taking equality as a concept, taking two things will remind one of equality or otherwise. Equality exists, and the existence is not in its physical manifestations of the objects compared.

No one can think that equality is inequality; thinking in such way will make one run into contradiction.

From the physical objects, the conception of equality is acquired. If the objects are now compared, and during the process, a thing is seen to be 'struggling' to be like another thing, but its success is an imperfect one; it is, therefore, believed that one must have had the pre-knowledge of another thing, which was perfect. It is our physical experience with individual, two objects compared, that make us recover the concept of it. This, therefore, depends on the senses, which are active from birth. Hence, the pre-knowledge of the perfect equality is assumed to have been acquired before birth.

Summarily, if we see objects, which are physical, it is as a result of our senses, which have been there since we were born, but the concepts derived from the objects compared, is as a result of the knowledge we had prenatally. The meaning is that, the concepts exist prenatally, and it is as a result of our previous existence that makes us remember those concepts. It is from this point that Socrates says "it makes no difference, so long as the sight of one thing suggests another to you, it must be a cause of recollection whether the two things are alike or not" (Plato, 1973: 74e).

Analysis of the Arguments

Looking at the first argument, *Argument from Alternation*, one is likely going to agree with Plato. Take for instance, plants, say a grain of maize, when planted, germinates. This germinated grain turns to plant and produces grains and the cycle continues ad infinitum. Though the scientific explanation of the process of germination can be given, but it cannot be applicable to that of human being. Given Plato's conception of the human soul, no one can explain the processes that are involved in between the heavens and earth.

One will discover that it is possible to deconstruct this argument, as being less of provable hypothesis than wishful thinking on Plato's part, if substance dualism is considered, which Plato's conception of human personality can be likened with. According to Pakaluk (2004: 108), "since *SD (substantive dualism)* concludes merely that the soul *can* exist when the body is destroyed, it provides only a basis for *hope* that the soul continues to exist after the demise of the body." Pakaluk (2004) goes on to suggest that Plato's entire argument is also very much dependent on the first theory, that of *substantive dualism*. If there is no duality and there is no separation of soul and body, then, there is no chance for immortality of the soul. Therefore, he bases the crux of his own analysis on that particular aspect of Plato's argument. "It is clear that Plato intended the provisional conclusion of *SD* to serve as the context of the three initial arguments" (Pakaluk, 2004: 109).

For Swinburne (1986), things cease to exist when they have parts; and they cease to exist only when the parts are separated from each other. A house ceases to exist when the bricks are taken away from each other. But the soul has no parts, and so we know of nothing which in the normal course of things would cause it to cease to exist, barring divine intervention. So it is reasonable to suppose that it is naturally immortal (Swinburne, 1986: 1). He, nevertheless, proceeds to refute Plato's argument based on the theory of parts. His primary example is atoms which cease to exist when they are transformed into energy (Swinburne, 1986: 2).

Looking at the other argument, *Argument from Recollection*, it brings into itself issues still being debated in philosophy. It brings about innateness, which is one of the claims of the rationalists.⁵ Reincarnation, which is an aspect of the immortality of the soul, is also included. The argument suggests an answer to learning paradox, even right from the one raised in *Meno*. Learning Paradox is explained thus; if one does not understand something, then, he cannot set about learning that thing, since he has limited knowledge to know how to begin (Blackburn, 2005: 206). Innateness has been argued against by the empiricists, especially Locke.⁶ To refute innatism, Locke finds out that the instances of allegedly innate principles fall into two classes; self evident logical principles and moral rules.

⁵ They claim that some ideas are prenatally imprinted on the mind.

⁶ Locke uses this to reject the philosophy of Descartes. The question was whether the mind is equipped with highly general concepts – God, freedom, immortality-that can be known a priori to be applicable to the world, and that could therefore afford us clear and distinct knowledge unlike any that can be certified by experience.

Proponents of innate ideas have argued the principles and rules as true, because they are universally accepted (O'Connor, 1946: 206). For instance, it is universally true that P cannot be $\sim P$. but Locke argues that these principles, for instance, law of non-contradiction may be universal in that it cannot be denied. It, however, cannot be understood by infants, though it may be self evident to those who accept that it does not need any other justification (Locke, 1975).

On the moral rules, Locke rejects the notion that some moral rules are given universal assent. It is asked that do generally acceptable rules amount to innate rules? Locke's reply is that they would not, unless they can also be established that the supposedly innate principles cannot come to be known in any other way (O'Connor, 1946: 206), except via experience.

Another question that is to be asked is that, how can Plato explain the first cause of the soul? If soul comes and leaves after death, the soul should have a beginning, which Plato has not accounted for.

The argument serves as one of the contributions of Plato to the debate of the composition of man. In this regard, Plato has made us understand that man is composed of material and immaterial substances. While the material part can be proven scientifically, the immaterial cannot be proven scientifically. This constitutes a problem for Plato's argument.

There is also the problem of identity, which is also a problem in reincarnation. Personal identity has been viewed in, at least, two ways; the physical and the non-physical (memory) identities. Physical objects persist as individuals through time, and through change. (Though not through all changes; some change is radical enough to destroy the object.) The same is true of human beings. In virtue of what is person A, considered at time T_2 , one and the same person as B, considered at a previous time T_1 ? The philosophical concept of identity, in its intellectual insights, suggests the delineation of features which account for sameness of identity and dissimilar features which point to their opposites in general.

Classical views and treatment of the concept of identity show the historical import of the problem. Writers in the classical and medieval periods conceived of the problem as giving rise to meanings which are not without their problems. For them, identity could mean permanence (amid change) or unity (amid diversity) (Idowu, 2003: 238). According to Stroll (1967), this classical understanding and rendering gave rise to the problems of change and universals respectively. He says:

The problem of change ... gave rise to the problem of substance, problems about the relation between what seems to be so and what is so

(appearance and reality), and the problem of personal identity; and the problem of universals gave rise to the problem of individuation and the problem of abstract ideas (Stroll, 1967: 121).

The problem of identity has generated many questions. The questions may be who am I? This question is trying to see to what makes one unique as an individual different from others. The identity here may be property (Ludwig, 1997), that of personhood, what makes one a person. There is also the question of evidence, that is, how do we find out who is who, what proofs or justification do we use for one to know that the man of yesterday is the one of today.

Persistence is another question asked. This has to do with the necessary or sufficient criteria for a past, present or future being to be the same person. These, and of course some other questions of identity, have been answered with two theories of identity. They are the physical and the non-physical (memory).

The memory theory of identity is sometimes traced to Locke and Descartes. It is more explained in relation to psychological approach. This approach lays emphasis on the psychological relation as necessary or sufficient (or both) for one to persist. In this case one's belief, memories, capacity for rational thought are considered (Olson, 1997: 22-25; Mackie, 1999: 224-228).

Descartes affirms the existence of two substances as responsible for the composition of man; body and mind/soul. One is, however, superior to the other. In Descartes' view, the body exists as it can be felt, but it does not say much about man. Hence he establishes his celebrated thesis "*Cogito Ergo Sum*" (I think, therefore I exist). For this, Descartes believes that man is essentially a thinking being. For this reason, he believes that thought is what distinguishes man from another. To support this, Hospers is of the view that when a man wants to assert himself he does not say "I am a body" rather he says "I have a body" (Hospers, 1997: 171).

For Locke (1975: 335), a person is a "thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself the same thinking thing, in different times and places." According to Idowu (2003), Locke provided the intellectual foundation of the memory theory of identity. For Locke (1975, 44-45), this self-consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, constitutes the essence of personality. For him, therefore, the identity of a person is to be found in the identity of consciousness. Thus, the memory theory can be summarized as 'A of $P_1 \wedge T_1$ is identical with A of $P_2 \wedge T_2$ if and only if the latter remembers experiencing events from the former's life.'

However, there are objections to the Memory Theory of Identity (MTI) (of Locke and Descartes). Penelhum (1970) has raised some objections against this. If the theory is correct, then, it would “at best be a matter of happy accident that when we judge someone before us to be the same person as someone we knew before, we are right” (Penelhum, 1970: 383). And at the same time, Cartesian theory presupposes that Cartesian minds *themselves* persist through time and change. What makes Cartesian mind A at T_2 identical with Cartesian mind B at T_1 ?

Penelhum’s (1970: 384) against the Lockean memory theory is that continuity of memory is not strictly required for personal identity through time. I might be stricken with total amnesia, yet I am still I, WGL. (I would then have to relearn that I am in fact WGL).

The other objection is that looking at the concept memory itself, it is ambiguous; it can be interpreted in, at least, two senses – the weak and the strict. Memory in sense (i) is not sufficient for personal identity. I may think I am the Adéşuyì reincarnated, and have apparent memories of Èjì-Ọ̀bà High School, Ọ̀bà-Ilé, even very vivid ones-but that does not make me the Adéşuyì of Èjì-Ọ̀bà (Penelhum, 1970: 384).

Memory in sense (ii) is sufficient for personal identity, but for a trivial and unhelpful reason. To say that my memory of teaching our last class is accurate or correct just means that I really did teach that class and I then experienced it as the memory now depicts. But the latter already presupposes that I (A, now) am the same person that did and experienced the teaching. Memory in sense (ii) presupposes personal identity through time; so it can’t also be the ground of personal identity through time (Penelhum, 1970: 385).

The implication of these on the Socrates’ arguments for the immortality of the soul, especially the two arguments considered here, is that based on the problems associated with the memory theory, we cannot identify the soul now in a new body, even if he can relay all that happened in his previous life. How can a person, who had lost his memory as a result of old age, or sickness, while on earth, recall his knowledge of the past, when he is reborn?

Considering physical theory of identity, the material substance of the human component is used for identification purpose. According to Idowu (2003: 241), “an individual is identifiable with itself just in case that the bodily qualities of X are the same or appears to be the same.” He explains further that in asserting the identity of X, it is argued that apart from the physical appearance, other physical tests can be conducted in order to ascertain the identify of X. Such includes blood tests, finger prints, photographs, a given tribal mark, some natural mark or signs in the body etc. Given this, can the person in life L_1 have exactly the same qualities, as listed above in life L_2 ?

A person can be detected through the hair. For instance, it was reported that an eight year old girl was abducted from her father's house, raped and killed in the U.S.A. A combined search party of residents, police and FBI later found the body at a nearby stream. The FBI carried out a forensic investigation and identified a strand of hair on the girl that was not hers. The culprit was later apprehended. The comparison of the follicle matched and the man was sentenced to jail (Ebiri, 2007: 7). This means the hairs we grow differentiate us from one another. Can the old soul in a new body be identified via this method? If yes, how, because it is assumed that the hair is decayed already. If no, then, it further creates some problems.

There are other ways in which one can be identified, apart from the physical body. There are the name identity, cultural identity, blood identity etc. Can the old soul in the new body be recognized via any of these, given the fact that it is having other ones entirely? That is, can they have the same DNA, if blood is tested, same finger prints? In light of the scientific information we have today about how the brain functions, some might suggest it is a difficult leap to accept Plato's arguments.

Plato's conception of the soul can be likened to some other conceptions. I will make an attempt to compare it with another conception if there is any similarity and contrast. The one to be considered is the Yorùbá.

In Yorùbá view, immortality of the soul (reincarnation) is often proved by reference to *àbìjò* (family resemblance). But in most cases, the resemblance is by carrying both the physical and mental features of the deceased or either of the two. This rebirth is not limited to the old ones being reborn again, there are also some young ones who are said to have been reborn and these young ones are not *àbíkú*, but die of some circumstance beyond their control (Oladipupo, 2010: 301-317).

The first precondition for reincarnation is the death of a reincarnated person. The new born very often bears striking traits of the dead ancestor. Such child has been said to carry scars which occurred just before the death of an ancestor or even a relation. When the new soul is coming, it holds on to a tree, and forgets what he has known in his previous life. So through recollection, he remembers those things (Makinde, 2010: 140-168).

The problem with this is that there is a gap that has not been bridged between the birth of a child and the coming of the child from heaven to earth. What can be explained scientifically is that the sexual intercourse of man and woman produces spermatozoa and some eggs. When these meet together, they become fertile and from there, there is the development of the fetus in the womb. And it results finally to child birth. It has to be noted

that the same problem encountered by Plato's conception of the soul and his proof for the immortality of the soul is also confronted by these other conceptions.

Conclusion

For the Greeks, the soul is what gives life to the body. Socrates thinks of it as a something separate from the body. A human living on earth consists of two parts, soul and body. The soul is the essential part of the human – what makes me. It is the part to which the mental life of humans pertains – it is the soul which thinks and feels and chooses (Swinburne, 1986: 1). This is also evident in Cartesian dualism

Borrowing the language and idea of Swinburne (1986), Plato's arguments, while nicely written and a valid form of philosophical deduction, prove absolutely nothing. They are theoretical at best and at their worst, they are musings of someone, who dearly wanted to believe in immortality but never proved it. He points out the distinct pattern in philosophical thinking by noting that Aquinas came to the same conclusion as Plato because he wanted to. "Aquinas appealed to the fact that humans naturally desire to exist forever and that 'it is impossible that natural appetite should be in vain' (*Summa contra gentiles* II, 79.6). Yet it is far from obvious why that is impossible" (Swinburne, 1986: 3).

Plato's arguments come down to two irrevocable facts. First, there is absolutely no scientific proof that human beings have a soul. They have only assumed that that thing which activates the body to be lively is the soul. Is it not possible that it is something else and not the soul? For instance, when one is beaten, he may die instantly or later. Does it mean that it is the soul that evacuates the body? What can be established is that there are some vital parts of human body that perform the function attributed to the soul. For instance, the blood and heart are essential parts of the body. Once the heart fails to pump blood, human being ceases to exist, when man is short of blood or has none; he ceases to exist as well. Where is the place of soul? Another vital part is the brain. Once the brain no longer functions the very core of our existence likely dies with it. Plato, like many others in his own time, and like some in our time, desperately wanted to believe that humans have a soul. In a way, this makes us more human. The idea of a soul is a beautiful one. It somehow decreases the reality of all the negativity in our world. The fact that human beings could have a soul means we are not merely just another animal walking the earth in the long evolutionary history of this plant. It means we have purpose. There is perhaps nothing more compelling to us than our lives have real meaning and we are not simply an evolutionary mistake.

No matter how compelling and how beautiful this notion is, Plato does not prove it. He provides an interesting series of deductions. But, at the end of his arguments, Plato only proves what he already believes. He does not demonstrate any factual evidence for the existence of a soul. "In any case, none of the empirical evidence by itself gives any reason at all for supposing the subsequent existence to be everlasting" (Swinburne, 1986: 5).

In conclusion, on the one hand I agree that for many elements in this world, there is something that is its exact opposite. However, there are also many elements which do not have an opposite. May be Plato argues on the basis of the scientific discoveries of his time, and this makes him to use the *argument from alternation*. We never can tell that as at the time he lived, science was still very much in its infancy. We take this scientific knowledge for, most of the scientific discoveries of the past are taken for, granted today, but Plato could not. Therefore, one could perhaps easily assume that for everything that exists there is its exact opposite. For the *argument from recollection*, it has only proved the pre-existence of the soul, if there is any pre-existence at all; it has not proved how the immortality of the soul is possible.

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