Plato's *Phaedo* and the Frailty of Human Nature

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I

"Death," Socrates says in the *Apology*, "is one of two things. Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything, or, as we are told, it is really a change — a migration of the soul from this place to another" (40c). At this point in the dialogue, Socrates rhapsodizes on the possibility of a future life in which he could meet Orpheus, Homer, and others. Then he adds: "I am willing to die ten times over if this account is true" (εἰ ταυτ' ἔστιν ἀληθῆ, 41a).[1] Referring to this passage, Taylor remarks that here "contrary to the absurd opinion of many nineteenth-century writers, Socrates makes his own belief in a blessed life to come for the good perfectly plain."[2] But Socrates' phrase — "if this account is true" — cannot be passed over so easily.[3] Indeed, the *Apology* shows Socrates unwilling to assert a firm belief in immortality, for it is a subject on which no formal knowledge claims can be made. In this paper, we shall see that the same skeptical notes are sounded in the *Phaedo*. This is particularly significant because the *Phaedo* (more than any other dialogue) has been seen as containing Plato's conclusive proof for the immortality of the soul.[4]

Even though Plato was not present at the death of Socrates,[5] the events relating to Socrates' last hours had a powerful effect on the young man.[6] The *Phaedo*, which depicts those events, holds a unique position within the Platonic corpus. Cato is said to have re-read the *Phaedo* the evening before his suicide.[7] Yet ancient authors are not unanimous regarding the main theme of the work. The Thirteenth Letter, which in all likelihood was written by a contemporary if not an intimate of Plato,[8] refers to the *Phaedo*

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1. H. Tredennick's translation of Plato's *Apology* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns; New York, 1963). The Greek text cited here is that of J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera* (Oxford, 1905).
2. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and his Work* (Cleveland, 1956), p. 167.
3. R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Phaedo* (London, 1955), p. 5, esp. n. 2.
4. Passages such as *Phaedo* 106e-107a, taken out of the context of the dialogue as a whole, certainly, foster this belief.
5. Cf. *Phaedo* 59b.
6. Cf. J. H. Lavely, "The Turning Point in Plato's Life," *Boston University Journal* 22 (1974), 32-36.
7. See E. Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 99.
8. Cf. G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 38 and 82ff. Ryle argues, p. 38, that "no matter who wrote it, [the Thirteenth Letter] is

simply as "the dialogue on the soul" (363a). Cicero, on the other hand, in expounding on his own belief in personal immortality, refers to "the discourse delivered by Socrates on the last day of his life upon the immortality of the soul" (*De Senectute* 21, 78).[9] These two passages are at the core of the following debate.

Is the purpose of the *Phaedo* "to prove the soul's endless survival, and *nothing* more," or is the object of the conversation to demonstrate something about the "tendance of the soul?"[10] Taylor, in making this distinction, opted for the second of these alternatives (and with good reason). But several basic questions have not been adequately probed either by Taylor or by more recent commentators on the *Phaedo:* what constitutes a Platonic *proof* for immortality; to what end does Plato offer his proofs; and what can be inferred about Plato's view of immortality?

At the outset, I should stress that the protagonist of this inquiry is Plato, the author of the *Phaedo.* Even Burnet, who thought it would have been "an outrage on all natural piety" if Plato "falsified the story of his master's last hours,"[11] had to admit that not every detail could be taken as historically exact.[12] Where the historical Socrates is present in fact and where he is present in spirit only is very difficult to determine. This paper, then, proceeds from the assumption that the views expressed in the *Phaedo* "belong" only to a literary and philosophical character named Socrates. On the intriguing issue as to whether the *Phaedo* speaks for the historical Socrates, for a Platonized Socrates, or for Plato himself, we must suspend judgment.[13]

II

Socrates' last conversation, as reported in the *Phaedo,* had already reached its midpoint when Simmias expressed certain basic reservations:

I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do too, that in these matters

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internally datable to the winter-spring of 366-365." Also see G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Epistles* (Indianapolis, 1962), pp. 100-109.

9. E. S. Shuckburgh's translation in the *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero* for the Harvard Classics Series (New York, 1909).

10. Taylor, *Plato,* pp. 176-77. Also see R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, n.d.), p. 3.

11. J. Burnet, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford, 1924), pp. xi-xii.

12. *Ibid.,* p. x. The approach taken in this paper on the issue of historical fact is similar to that taken by D. J. Stewart, "Socrates' Last Bath," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 10 (1972), 253: "The question is *not,* Is this true? but, Why does Plato mention it?"

13. N. Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London, 1968), pp. 198-200,

> certain knowledge (τὸ μὲν σαφὲς εἰδέναι) is impossible, or very difficult, to attain during life, but that nevertheless to fail to test the theories concerning them in every possible way, or to give up doing so before you have made a thorough and exhaustive examination, shows a very poor spirit. You must do one or other of these things — either learn from another or discover for yourself how things are (ἢ μαθεῖν ὅπῃ ἔχει ἢ εὑρεῖν), or, if this is impossible, accept the best of human arguments. . .(βέλτιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων λαβόντα) (85c).[14]

In Simmias' speech, the acquisition of knowledge concerning the immortality of the soul is represented as being very difficult, if not impossible. This is not simply the view of Simmias. It also reflects an awareness on the part of Socrates, who asserts in a more general vein that as long as we are associated with the body we cannot have true knowledge of anything (*Phaedo* 65a-d). If this principle is applied to any particular area of human inquiry — immortality included — true knowledge becomes problematic.

But let us return to Simmias' remarks in 85c in an effort to determine the grounds of his particular reservations. Because of the special nature of the inquiry, Simmias indicates that he is willing to accept "the best of human arguments." Knowing that a true argument cannot be forthcoming, Simmias says he would be content with a plausible one. As the dialogue progresses, Simmias formulates one major objection: the soul is like the attunement of a lyre (84c-86d). Socrates meets this objection, and in 107b Simmias admits that he is satisfied "so far as the argument goes."[15] Nevertheless, he adds, "in view of the weightiness of the subject, and my poor opinion of human frailty (τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν 'ατιμάζων), I am bound still to have doubts inside me about what has been said."

By this juncture in the dialogue (107b), Simmias has heard several plausible arguments. Cebes' objections and his own have been met, at least to the satisfaction of the interlocutors. Simmias is

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argues that Plato takes "the Socratic concept of soul" in the *Phaedo* and presents it "on much more elaborate theoretical grounds than Socrates seems to have done." J. R. Baron argues that the historical Socrates is only crystal clear in *Phaedo* 118; see his article "On Separating the Socratic from the Platonic in *Phaedo* 118," *Classical Philology* 70 (1975), 268-69. Also see D. Gallop, *Plato: Phaedo* (Oxford, 1975), p. 74.

14. Translations of the *Phaedo* in this paper are taken from Bluck's edition cited above, n. 3. Where the Greek text is added for clarity I have relied on Burnet's edition cited above, n. 11.

15. Even the unqualified agreement of an interlocutor in a Platonic dialogue does not signify that the protagonist (much less the author) also agrees.

not simply being a misologist. He understands fully what level of certainty he can expect; yet he still expresses doubts. What is the nature of his doubt now?

While Simmias does not find fault with the instrument (rational argument) whereby conclusions are reached, he is at the very least unsure of the *use* to which that instrument may be put in particular instances. The frailty of human nature is such that even with the best intentions, rational argument may yield misguided results. Socrates himself is aware of this and asks his associates to remain vigilant, bidding them to take care lest "in my eagerness I. . .deceive you as well as myself, and depart like a bee, leaving my sting behind me" (91c). Simmias takes Socrates' warning seriously. Consequently the theme of skepticism is heard like a leitmotif throughout the dialogue; Plato never allows it to lapse.

Simmias has his modern counterparts in the form of scholars who have doubted the validity of each of Plato's proofs. Often these scholars have been met by staunch defenders of the proof in question.[16] *Phaedo*'s arguments for the immortality of the soul have also been examined collectively. Some commentators who take the latter approach are interested in showing that one proof may supplement an earlier proof.[17] Other commentators who look at the proofs collectively prefer to see a dialectic progression culminating in the so-called final proof (102a-107b).[18] Virtually

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16. In his preface to a new examination of the final argument D. O'Brien mentions three adverse judgments; see "The Last Argument of Plato's *Phaedo* (I)" in the *Classical Quarterly* 17 (1967), 198. D. Frede takes up the same proof about a decade later in "The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedo* 102a-107a," *Phronesis* 23 (1978), 27-41. Other individual arguments have had their defenders as well as their detractors; cf. J. Barnes' review of Gallop's edition of the *Phaedo* in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 8 (1978), 398: "*Phaedo* 69E-72E contains what Gallop calls the Cyclical Argument. . . . Scholars have been harsh on that Argument, and Gallop asserts that 'it deserves more credit for ingenuity and subtlety than it is usually given.' He thinks, however, that it has fatal defects. . . ." When Barnes sets out to give the second argument its due, he confronts Burnet, Bluck, and others — each with his own nuanced interpretation. On the third argument, see K. Dorter, "Plato's Image of Immortality," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1976), 295-304.

17. For instance, Bluck, *Phaedo,* p. 62, argues that the theory of Recollection "forms the second half of the first proof."

18. Taylor, *Plato,* p. 177, holds this view. He holds that the various arguments for immortality should not be seen "as so many independent substantive 'proofs,' given by the author or the speaker as all having the same inherent value. Any careful study will show that they are meant to form a series of 'aggressions' to the solution of a problem, each requiring and leading up to the completer answer which follows it." Also see R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato* (London, 1894), pp. xxi ff. More recently,

every proof (or combination thereof) has spawned a secondary literature, and there are no signs of these controversies ebbing.

Instead of trying to legislate between those who defend a certain argument and those who attack it, I should like to investigate the grounds of the disputes. Immortality as a subject for dialectical inquiry is in some respects *sui generis*. In this area, even the most carefully chosen analogy would not produce "verifiable deductions."[19] In discussing the ideal constitution of a polis, Plato could plausibly evoke the captain of a ship. But what analogy could similarly be pressed into service in a discussion about the immortality of the soul? If Socrates really was depending on an argument by analogy based on the incompatibility of snow (an instance of Cold) and the Form Heat, he may not have been so wise as the Delphic oracle claimed.[20] It is more likely that neither Socrates nor Plato had any such illusions. Plato deliberately allowed Simmias to play the skeptic to the very end because, as the author of the *Phaedo,* he knew that these particular arguments were, of necessity, inconclusive, hypothetical, and weaker than results attained by dialectical investigations of other subjects.

To state that Simmias plays the skeptic in the *Phaedo* raises an issue which is both more general and more problematic. Are there sufficient grounds for seeing Plato himself as a skeptic? Traditionally this question could be answered in the affirmative by an appeal to the Seventh Letter (341b-344c) in which Plato appears as a

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Gallop has argued along the same lines. In his edition of the *Phaedo,* p. 103, Gallop argues that "Plato does not offer a set of discrete, self-contained proofs of immortality, but a developing sequence of arguments, objections, and counter-arguments. As the dialogue unfolds, the earlier arguments are criticized, refined, or superseded, until Socrates' belief in immortality is finally vindicated." This optimistic view (a fairy-tale ending) should be contrasted with Bluck's remarks. Instead of finding an orderly movement through the proofs to a philosophical climax, Bluck found disappointment (p. 189): "What a lame ending [*Phaedo* 105ff.] to an argument expounded at elaborate length, carefully placed so as to form the climax of the discussion, and presented with every promise that it will provide a reliable demonstration!"

19. In the use of this term, I am following the discussion by I. T. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (London, 1964), pp. 15-16.

20. This argument ostensibly proves by analogy that soul (an instance of Life) is incompatible with Death. The case for considering soul as an instance of Life is not argued and may involve assuming that which is to be proved. Cf. D. Keyt, "The Fallacies in *Phaedo* 102a-107b," *Phronesis* 8 (1963), 167-72, and J. Schiller, "*Phaedo* 104-105: Is the Soul a Form?" *Phronesis* 12 (1967), 50-58. Also see G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (Boston, 1961), p. 129; Gallop, *Phaedo,* pp. 215ff., esp. p. 218 (c) and p. 220; and Hackforth, *Phaedo,* p. 157.

philosopher who did not commit his deepest thoughts to writing. In recent years, however, both Edelstein and Ryle have argued convincingly that the Seventh Letter is a forgery.[21] Yet we may appeal to the very form of Plato's dialogues to the same end. That is, the dialectic form which Plato adopts does not include a character by the name of Plato.[22] As Sinaiko noted:

> Only [Plato's] characters speak, and they speak to each other within the strict confines of a dramatic context. Furthermore, Plato never employs such literary devices as the soliloquy or the chorus, which might be interpreted as statments directed by the author to his audience.[23]

Thus even if we suppose that Plato neither wrote nor sanctioned the composition of the Seventh Letter, we could still argue, as Sinaiko does, that "Plato in his own person never did commit his philosophical ideas to writing."[24]

Simmias represents precisely this aspect of Plato's work: Plato's extreme reluctance to let any position stand as a final truth.[25] Especially when the stakes were high — as they surely were on the question of immortality — one had to be content with "the best of human arguments" (85c). Simmias' role in the *Phaedo* then is akin to that of a witness. His primary function would seem to be to remind us, Plato's readers, of the elusive quality of the subject at hand.[26]

If Plato "knew" from the outset that the subject of immortality did not admit of a proper solution, why did he persist in offering

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21. L. Edelstein, *Plato's Seventh Letter* (Leiden, 1966) and Ryle, *Plato's Progress*, pp. 47, 68-69.
22. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London, 1977), p. 11.
23. H. L. Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato* (Chicago, 1965), p. 4.
24. *Ibid.*
25. J. Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (Chapel Hill, 1965), p. 147, writes: "Socrates fully approves of Simmias' stand and even extends the distrust (ἀπιστία) to the very first suppositions underlying the entire argument (τάς γε ὑποθέσεις τὰς πρώτας — 107b 5): however trustworthy they may appear, they ought to be looked into more thoroughly." On the other hand, Bluck, *Plato's Phaedo*, p. 35, takes Simmias to task for not being "by nature. . .logically-minded." Bluck's criticism is beside the point. Because the nature of the subject requires both heart and head, Plato had to portray Simmias in the way that he did.
26. We should bear in mind throughout this discussion a remark by Taylor, *Plato*, p. 184: "Simmias had asked only for πίστις (conviction), not for demonstration, and Socrates professes no more than to consider whether immortality is 'likely' (εἰκός) or not." Cf. K. Dorter, "The Dramatic Aspect of Plato's *Phaedo*," *Dialogue* 8 (1970), esp. p. 574, n. 7. Also see Hackforth, *Phaedo*, pp. 101 and 165-66.

inadequate proofs? To put this question in another way, if Plato did not realistically think he could attain truth, how can we explain his painstaking consideration of a succession of inadequate arguments and dialectical refinements which he makes at every stage? The most convincing reply to these questions is that Plato regarded the proofs as models of philosophic activity, as "vital initiators of thought."[27] By including them, Plato is showing his readers that a discussion concerning immortality might proceed in this or in that fashion. In the absence of any truly persuasive argument, Plato presents several arguments. Any one of these might prove fruitful as a prod to further dialectic. But the parts of the dialogue which seem to approach the "truth" are in fact only points of departure. They are not, nor were they intended to be, dogmas for later generations to adopt.[28]

III

As we have seen, Simmias represents a questioning, skeptical strain in the *Phaedo*. Socrates, on the other hand, seems personally convinced of the immortality of the soul. His conviction is not, strictly speaking, based in knowledge, but rather in intuition, belief, or perhaps faith. Socrates, undaunted by the doubts of Simmias, but having apparently exhausted his supply of formal arguments for immortality, turns to myth. Accordingly in *Phaedo* 107c-115a, Socrates gives "an account of our souls and their future habitations." Socrates' and Simmias' responses, however different, should not be considered in conflict. Plato, the master of philosophical composition, skillfully arranges for them to complement each other.

Just as Socrates and Simmias balance one another, so the myth and the death scene balance the formal arguments of the dialogue. More than one commentator has pointed out that Plato resorts to myth when he deals with subjects which transcend ordinary human experience.[29] I shall argue here that not only myth, but also

27. Sinaiko, *Love*, p. 15.

28. Those modern commentators who ask for rigorous proofs or are disappointed to find that the proofs are weak have had the wrong expectations. Uncertainty is part of the endeavour as we have seen in *Phaedo* 66e-67a, 85c, and 107a-b. D. Hitchcock, "The Role of Myth and its Relation to Rational Argument in Plato's Dialogues (unpublished Ph. D. diss.; Claremont, 1974), pp. 172-78, presents an alternative reading of the *Phaedo;* some points of disagreement will be discussed below. Although I disagree with Hitchcock often, his treatment of the *Phaedo* is thoughful and useful. Also see C. Ritter, *The Essence of Plato's Philosophy* (trans. A. Alles; New York, 1968), p. 120.

29. E.g., P. Friedländer, *Plato* (trans. H. Meyerhoff; 3 vols.; Princeton,

the death scene should be regarded as continuing the lines of the dialogue. Both sections address themselves, albeit informally, to the main concern of a dialogue which transcends mundane life.

Returning to the subject of myth, we find that Plato discourages any tendency readers might have to treat the mythological passages as if they were true. He insists that "no man of sense should affirm decisively that all this is exactly as I have described it" (114d). But if the myth is not literal truth, what is it? First of all, Socrates' vision is precisely that — a vision, a picture in words. It would be reasonable to suppose that Socrates' words function here, as they do in *Meno* 86b, pragmatically.[30] That is, myths are useful in the conduct of men's lives. The man who believes (rightly or wrongly) that his soul is immortal is more likely to tend his soul during its earthly sojourn. He would be inclined to act more justly than a person who did not hold such a belief.[31] This appears to be the significance of Socrates' remark in 107c-d: "Since the soul is clearly immortal, it can have no escape or security from evil except by becoming as good and wise as it possibly can."

At this point, the views of two contemporary commentators require comment. Edelstein has remarked that "reason to Plato is supreme; myth is subservient to reason."[32] Hitchcock's position in some respects follows on this. For Hitchcock there is a distinction between philosophers, who have embraced wisdom and have recognized the operation of rational arguments, and non-philosophers, whose attitudes do not change by argument. Non-philosophers are dependent on myth; philosophers, on the other hand, have no such need.[33] Both Edelstein's view of the supremacy of reason and Hitchcock's concept of the philosopher may be faithful to certain strands of Plato's thought. But the relation between myth and reason in the *Phaedo* is more complex

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1969), III, 59; W. R. Inge, "The Place of Myth in Philosophy," *Philosophy* 11 (1936), p. 141; Gallop, *Phaedo,* p. 224, quoting E. R. Dodds; and Hitchcock, "The Role of Myth," pp. 179ff.

30. Socrates and Meno have just concluded their discussion of recollection and immortality. Socrates then says: "I shouldn't like to take my oath on the whole story [recollection and immortality], but one thing I am ready to fight for as long as I can, in word and act — that is, that we shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking. . . ." (trans. W. K. C. Guthrie in E. Hamilton, *The Collected Dialogues).* The pragmatic value of Socrates' discussion of immortality is evident here.

31. Cf. Gulley, *Philosophy of Socrates,* pp. 199-200.

32. L. Edelstein, "The Function of the Myth in Plato's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 (1949), 467.

33. Hitchcock, "The Role of Myth," p. 187.

than either of these commentators indicates,[34] for the central concern of that dialogue, immortality, is *sui generis* in not having *true* arguments which apply to it. Hitchcock recognized the deficiencies in the arguments presented in the *Phaedo*.[35] More important, at least some of Socrates' companions in the dialogue itself found them so. When Socrates speaks of charming the fear out of us (77e), he is not referring simply to the non-philosophers in his midst. In confronting death, the majority of mankind is weak of spirit, especially when moved by unreasoning fears and confronted with inadequate arguments. Socrates' actions on the day of his death bear eloquent testimony to his awareness of the frailty of human nature. From this perspective, the philosopher who is committed to formal inquiry is not necessarily at an advantage. He may be better equipped to carry on dialectical conversations than his non-philosophical counterpart; he may even succeed (like Socrates) in calming the child within himself. The truth, however, eludes philosopher and non-philosopher alike.

Because the subject of immortality is elusive, perhaps Simmias demonstrates the better part of wisdom by remaining skeptical and by not clutching at straws of logical arguments. Plato's use of a myth is not an indication of the failure of rational inquiry, for a rational inquiry into immortality was in some sense bound to fail. Rather, the myth simply indicates the limit of what formal inquiry might achieve.

It may be said, without exaggeration, that the final scene of the *Phaedo* is one of the most moving passages in the literary and philosophical heritage of the West. Perhaps because it touches us so deeply, there is a reluctance to discuss its implications. Gallop's treatment, for instance, is terse,[36] and Hackforth remarks only: "This final section needs neither summary nor comment."[37] Yet because the formal arguments for immortality can never be conclusive and because the myth cannot be taken literally, we are justified in examining the meaning of the death scene.

This section of the *Phaedo* may be studied for its dramatic content[38] or for glimpses into historical reality. Regarding the

34. Cf. Hackforth, *Phaedo,* pp. 171-75.
35. Hitchcock, "The Role of Myth," pp. 179-80.
36. Gallop's admirable commentary on the *Phaedo* is 150 pages in length. Less than half a page is devoted to Socrates' death.
37. Hackforth, *Phaedo,* p. 187.
38. It is interesting that in his article entitled "The Dramatic Aspect of Plato's *Phaedo*," Dorter does not dwell on the death scene. This is a bit strange since Dorter begins, p. 564, by pointing out that the dramatic

historical dimension, Gill has noted that Plato's description of Socrates' death by hemlock is not faithful to what is known, medically, of the action of that poison.[39] Gill's conclusion is that the final scene was not meant to be realistic.[40] Rather it was designed to point to a moral: the liberation of the soul from the body.[41]On this interpretation, the final scene becomes an integral part of the dialogue. It then should be regarded as profoundly philosophic, for it leaves the reader with the most powerful of all arguments — the concrete example of a man who both lived the philosophical life and died in accordance with it.

One of the most striking aspects of the final scene is that in it Plato moves the focus of the *Phaedo* from the realm of thought to the realm of action.[42] By so doing, Plato demonstrates the unity of "word and act" (as indicated in *Meno* 86b).[43] Plato addresses himself to this difficult issue by the unique progression which we may discern in the *Phaedo:* from formal argument, through myth, to action. The mode of expression changes; Plato's purpose does not. The depiction of Socrates' last moments is Plato's way of bringing to life certain truths of Socrates' experience. The dialogue as a whole is not aimed at just one part of a tripartite being. It is aimed at the whole man with his hopes and his irrational fears. The portrayal of the death scene is an extension of the lines of the dialogue by means much stronger than anything else that could be said or intimated about immortality.

Are we left, then, with an imponderable void or a logical tangle when we try to reflect upon immortality? Not at all. But instead of trying to fill the unknown with details which do not exist, the reader is challenged to imitate Socrates' philosophical calm with regard to that unknown. If this can be achieved, whether by formal dialectical means, by informal pragmatic means, or by both, the purpose of the *Phaedo* will have been served. One can speak with relative confidence of the purpose of the *Phaedo.* Everything in the

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element in Plato has recently been seen as "more than mere ornamentation or naturalism. . . ." For a stimulating discussion of the dramatic aspects of the *Phaedo,* see Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno,* p. 148.

39. C. Gill, "The Death of Socrates," *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1973), 25-28. Cf. Burnet, *Phaedo,* Appendix I, pp. 149-50.

40. Also see Stewart, "Socrates' Last Bath," pp. 253-59. Baron, "On Separating. . .," p. 269, is willing to identify a realistic Socrates only where Plato uses the words εἶπεν, ἐφθέγξατο, and ἔφη.

41. Gill, "The Death of Socrates," p. 27.

42. Cf. S. K. Gaffney, "Dialectic, the Myths of Plato, Metaphor and the Transcendent in the World," *Myth and Philosophy,* Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, Vol. 45 (1971), p. 78.

43. *Meno* 86b is cited above, n. 30.

dialogue — from the formal arguments to the profound description of Socrates' death — points to the same conclusion: the reader should concern himself more with the state of his soul and his philosophical stance vis-à-vis the unknown than with immortality itself.

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