# Arguing for the Immortality of the Soul in the Palinode of the *Phaedrus*

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that in his second speech of the *Phaedrus* (the "palinode"), Socrates gives an intentionally fallacious argument. He gives this argument, starting "all/every soul is immortal" (245c6–246a2), to show his speech-loving friend Phaedrus how—rather than simply to tell him that—analytic as much as imagistic speech can persuade without deserving conviction. This argument joins four others that recent *Phaedrus* scholarship has shown to be deliberately misconstructed. The entire dialogue has Socrates demonstrating to Phaedrus that the proper attitude to speech is active and critical scrutiny. "Philosophy"—toward which Socrates wants to turn Phaedrus—is not the rhetorical mode "speaking in sequential inferences" but is instead a kind of shared listening and conversation, an association committed to "making a person most thoughtful." Yet inducting someone into philosophy still depends on some rhetorical mode: the kind that reveals a person's need for a commitment to investigation.

KEYWORDS: persuasion, equivocation, deception, Alcmaeon, Plato

## INTRODUCTION

Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus* includes the argument (245c6–246a2) that starts "all/every soul is immortal" ("ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος").[1] This argument has attracted attention for its austerity and placement in Socrates' grand speech about chariots and love. Yet it has never been identified as a deliberately fallacious argument.[2] This article argues that it is. Socrates

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intends to confront his interlocutor Phaedrus with a dubious sequence of reasoning. He does so to show his speech-loving friend how—rather than simply to tell him that—analytic as much as imagistic speech can persuade without deserving conviction.

It has been shown in recent years that on four other occasions Socrates deliberately utters bad arguments to Phaedrus.[3] Each unsound argument, this scholarship has revealed, exemplifies the mode of deception through sequential apparent similarities that Socrates discusses in the dialogue's second half (261e6–262c4). Socrates wants Phaedrus (and Plato wants his readers) to realize that speeches, even if they articulate their premises and lead incrementally to their conclusion, are not on that account sound. The proper attitude to all speeches is active and critical scrutiny. "Philosophy"—toward which Socrates wants to turn Phaedrus (257b6, 259d3, 261a4)—is not the rhetorical mode "speaking in sequential inferences" but is instead a kind of shared listening and conversation, a kind of association (συνουσιῶν) committed to "making a person most thoughtful" (239b1–4). Yet inducting someone into philosophy still depends on some rhetorical mode: the kind that reveals a person's need for a commitment to investigation.

The argument about immortality, near the beginning of what Socrates calls the "palinode" (243e9–257a2), serves, like those other deliberately fallacious arguments, I claim, to teach Phaedrus something about himself and about philosophy. We have better reason to believe that Plato intended to present this sequence of five bad arguments—namely, to show Socrates' attempt to diagnose Phaedrus's susceptibility to passive appreciation of speeches—than that he accidentally makes blatant and simple logical errors so frequently and in the vicinity of so much language about the critical investigation of arguments.

The palinode is the dialogue's last of three speeches about love. The first, Phaedrus's presentation of Lysias's written speech, aims to seduce its listener by listing charges against people in love (they are crazy, jealous, labile, etc.), from whom the speaker distinguishes himself (230e6–234c5). The second, Socrates' ventriloquism of ancient poets, takes up the same assignment but is based on a putative definition of love and a psychomechanical account of desire (237a7–241d1). After these two speeches, Socrates reflects and decides that he approves of neither seduction speech: both deprecate what they in effect both seek, *erôs*. He decides to "sing again," in a third seduction speech, a praise of love. This praise, like many encomia, includes mythic imagery, and so it narrates, for many of its pages, the career of the winged and charioteered soul both alone and with his beloved. But, again



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like many encomia, it includes more than mythic imagery; it also includes, at its beginning, a taxonomy of four kinds of mania (μανία [244a5–245c2]), and shortly thereafter, an argument for the immortality of the soul.

The structure of the argument for the soul's immortality (245c6–246a2) is "long, extremely involved, extremely compact and extremely difficult" (Demos 1968, 134–35) or, again, "highly compressed, which jeopardizes its coherence" (Yunis 2011, 135–38).[4] The fact of the argument's gnarled, bewildering exposition is an interpretative point for this article. All the same, its strategy is clear enough. That which moves itself is immortal; the soul is one of these self-movers; so the soul is immortal. The argument links movement to life and self-movement to ceaseless movement. The palinode includes this argument because it provides background for an ethical claim. Soul immortality is a precondition for the better transmigratory placement of the person living with justice and analytic clarity (248e3–249b6).[5] This is a life infused with the salutary mania of love, the celebration of which is the palinode's burden (244a6–8). This third speech is meant to turn Phaedrus toward philosophy and love (257b3–4, 6). It is to this life, which involves companionship with Socrates, that Socrates aims to seduce his friend Phaedrus. It is a life not capped by rhetorically fine speeches but one that uses those speeches to establish a philosophical community.

Few should find impossible a Socrates offering deliberately bad arguments for soul immortality; he does so frequently in the *Phaedo*, and on other topics throughout the Platonic corpus.[6] But Phaedrus, or a reader, need not know about Socrates' trickiness before suspecting this argument. The dialogue encourages scrutiny of the argument's content and form in a range of ways. I have already mentioned two of them: Socrates comes to use deliberately deceptive arguments elsewhere in the dialogue, and he employs an ostentatiously crabbed verbal style here.[7] Here are two more clues. After the palinode, neither Socrates nor Phaedrus ever returns to the proof of soul immortality, revealing—were the argument to be one worth taken seriously—a shocking disregard for a profound existential matter.[8] Indeed, when Socrates recounts the value of the palinode, he discards everything as "play" ("τῷ ὄντι παιδιᾷ πεπαῖσθαι" [265c8–9]) except for the articulation of the two forms of thought we call "collection and division" (265c8-266c1) and its well-ordered composition (264c2–5). The speech, a suitable, quiet hymn to Love (265b6–c3), thus illustrates, perhaps with some truth, the experience of love. The details, in contrast, may have gone off in the wrong direction ("ἄλλοσε παραφερόμενοι" [265b7–8]). The soul immortality argument, which contributes only distantly to the praise of love, is therefore unserious

and may very well have missed the mark. It would be like the etymological follies at the palinode's opening (244b6–d3) and throughout the dialogue, conjectured resemblances between words asserted for rhetorical rather than scientific purposes.[9]

A final tip-off to the questionable status of the immorality argument is the palinode's overpleading of its case, stating three times within six lines that it is going to give a demonstration ("ἡμῖν δὲ ἀποδεικτέον αὖ τοὐναντίον" [245b7], "ἡ δὲ δὴ ἀπόδειξις" [c1], "ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀποδείξεως ἥδε" [245c5]). Such repetition is deliberative in flavor. The middle instance, seen in its context, emphasizes this point. "The demonstration will be unbelievable to the clever, but believable to the wise" ("ἡ δὲ δὴ ἀπόδειξις ἔσται δεινοῖς μὲν ἄπιστος, σοφοῖς δὲ πιστή" [245c1–2]). Because the argument for soul immortality is part of the demonstration, the palinode admits that its ensuing argument should not convince the clever—those clever, presumably, in argument.[10] The "wise" would believe not that the soul has been proven to be immortal but rather that love is a great god. Socrates had already, at the end of the dialogue's first speech, indicated that one should listen primarily to the argumentative aspect of a speech and assess whether it is sufficient (234e7–235a8). Socrates encourages listening to the inferential success of any piece of reasoning, this one being no exception.

The clues adverted to here do not exhaust the ones Plato uses; I discuss the remainder at the close of the article. It suffices to say that we would condescend to Plato were we to think, given the complex buildup of this argument, that whatever appears faulty to us exposes his analytic inadequacy. We should remain open to the possibility that Plato may not always use Socrates to assert his settled convictions (if he ever does).[11] Plato may instead deploy Socrates to voice fallacious arguments that diagnose in the interlocutors and his readers their failures of complete commitment to the philosophical norms of scrutiny and self-knowledge.

The main task of this article is to analyze the way the palinode presents the soul immortality argument in light of that argument's overall function. It is not to explain the purpose of the palinode itself, though I hope my analysis contributes to any future explanation. All the same, a proper reading of the soul immortality argument is work enough. It requires diagnosing its ills as well as explaining its appeal. As the conversation in the *Phaedrus* later explains and depicts, an appealing argument is one that intentionally moves from one view to another stepwise by means of apparent but not real equivalences (261e1–262b8).[12] The listener hears each subsequent claim as conforming with his previous understanding; at the same time,



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the argument nudges, without respect to truth, each subsequent claim a little closer to its goal. The claim that Plato intends for Socrates to utter an invalid argument is vindicated when we can see that the fallacious inferences are artfully made, made to draw a listener whither it wishes.[13] We can see the intended effects on a listener only if we proceed in the order the argument itself proceeds, in the order in which a listener (or reader) would apprehend it.

## THE ARGUMENT AT 245C5–246A2

Understanding how Phaedrus would hear the argument, or how a reader would read it, calls for considering the ways either Phaedrus or a reader would be primed to hear its words, especially the ambiguous ones, and be primed to interpret its claims, especially the surprising ones. A sympathetic audience is disposed to make sense of statements in a favorable light—as both somehow true and somehow consistent with what preceded. Conversely, a speaker who aims to persuade an audience will try to articulate her claims in a way that will allow her audience to interpret them as true and consistent with what preceded. So a person studying an argument must observe how it accomplishes its persuasive function: how it comes to appear true. But one must also evaluate the logical validity of its claims and inferences.

The following analysis studies each clause of this twenty-one-line argument in the fashion just described. For each set of clauses I ask several questions. Would Phaedrus or a sympathetic reader hear the clause as relevant, true, and consistent with its surroundings? Why does the speaker use certain phrases to draw his audience to his conclusion that soul is immortal? And what is the warrant, if any, for each inference?

c5 ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος.

Every //All soul is immortal.

The argument starts with the claim presumably to be proved, that, without exception, souls are—or soul is—immortal. The conclusion itself, however, twenty lines later, lacks the word "πᾶσα" ("every"/"all") and adds the predicate "ungenerated" ("ἀγένητον") and so reads "soul is immortal and ungenerated" (246a1–2). The difference is easily missed, but as we will see, is of greatest importance.

Grammatically speaking, the word "πᾶσα" here can mean either "every" or "all."[14] "Every soul," the distributive sense, would imply the immortality of individual souls; "all soul," the collective sense, would imply only the



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immortality of a world soul or the totality of soul stuff. The conversational context alone determines how Phaedrus would hear the word "πᾶσα." From the previous and subsequent course of the *Phaedrus*, he would be strongly disposed to understand it as "every [soul]."[15] The two initial speeches of the dialogue debate the salutary effect of love on distinct lovers and beloveds, individual people with individual souls. A few moments earlier, the narrator of the palinode had spoken of the effects of the Muses on an individual soul ("ψυχήν" [245a2]), and then, just before starting the immortality argument, he had spoken of souls as having types, experiences, and deeds (245c3–4), again suggesting individual ones with their respective careers. Nothing implying the existence of a world soul or a mass of soul stuff has come up, and so Phaedrus would have no reason to think the narrator refers here to that.[16] Finally, the statement itself is about immortality, which characteristically applies to living things—biological creatures or divine gods—all of which are individuals.

The way one hears the word "πᾶσα" makes a dialectical difference. It would be possible for "all soul" to be immortal while individual souls were not. A finding about the collective sense, then, would not hold for the distributive sense.[17] The narrator sets the argument in a context that makes it seem to be about the distributive sense, about individual souls, and he must do this given the palinode's ethical claim. As we will see, however, the argument fails to support individual immortality. Its evidence could support at most "all soul" (collective) immortality. Conveniently, the argument's conclusion, that "soul is immortal," ignoring the possible distinctions between souls, encourages the mistaken memory that the argument had always been about collective immortality. The conclusion has shed the argument opening's equivocal connection to the distributive sense, but the opening's equivocation allowed this to happen. We see that the equivocating opening makes the ensuing argument seem simultaneously *relevant* (as about personal immortality) and *consistent* (as about, by contrast, soul in general).

c5 τὸ γὰρ [ἀεικίνητον/αὐτοκίνητον] ἀθάνατον·

For the [always-mover/self-mover] is immortal:

With this second statement, we learn the palinode's argumentative strategy. It will link two distinct realms—physics (change) and biology (death)—and will claim that life is explained in terms of motion. How precisely it makes this linkage, to vindicate its claim, depends on the way



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one resolves a textual crux.[18] The argumentative burden is practically the same either way, whether we read "ἀεικίνητον" ("always moving") or "αὐτοκίνητον" ("self-moving").[19] Showing self-motion to be always moving requires a two-part argument: that the self-mover never stops moving while it exists and that it always exists. Add to this the plausible assumption that what always moves is immortal, and we see that self-motion is immortal. Showing self-motion to be immortal while bypassing any claim about "always moving"—as the less-popular "αὐτοκίνητον" reading does—requires its own two-part argument: that self-motion is always alive and that it always exists. Since moving and living are equated in the next lines (c6–7), the first part of both two-part arguments—"never stops moving" and "always alive"—amount to the same thing. In either case, the argument links self-motion and immortality through the twin features of continuous movement and eternal existence.

c6 τὸ δ' ἄλλο κινοῦν καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλου κινούμενον,
c7 παῦλαν ἔχον κινήσεως, παῦλαν ἔχει ζωῆς.

> and something moving one thing and being moved by another,
> having a cessation of movement, it has a cessation of life.

Now in its third segment, the argument explicitly links movement and life. It does so through the equation of their respective cessations. Life occurs when something both is moved and moves something else; death occurs when movement stops.[20] Which movement? The next clause states that things that move themselves never cease being moved (c8), with the implication that they are therefore immortal. This suggests that death comes from the cessation of *being* moved. Why then does the argument mention the *active* moving of other things ("τὸ . . . ἄλλο κινοῦν"), if death amounts to the end of the *passive* receipt of motion?[21] It must be because living depends on having a causal role in the world. Shadows are moved, but they move nothing else; they are not alive, cannot die, and cannot be immortal. Natural bodies, by contrast, seem moved, passively, by their souls and move, actively, their tools or other effects. Thus the picture seems reasonable. An account of life and death is a precondition for an argument about immortality.

The indirect wording about cessation rather than activity, however, draws attention away from the implausibility of this picture of life. It is too

capacious, requiring that we call "bows, axes, billiard balls" alive while they are in use (Rowe 1986 ad 245c6–8). Nobody considers such instruments living nor, when they cease moving, dead. Thus we lack a suitable definition of life and thus too the prerequisite for a plausible defense of the immortality of the soul.

Even should the "being moved and moving something else" definition range no further than natural bodies (being moved by souls, moving tools), its validity would depend on at least two dubious assumptions. First, the body must be physically and not just conceptually distinguishable from the soul (as it is at *Phaedo* 64c3–7 and *Gorgias* 524b), such that the latter can move the former. But this begs the question against the person who thinks that body and soul die together (for example, the attunement theorist). Second, it must be the body and not the soul that is held responsible for moving other things. But this contradicts subsequent claims in the argument, namely, that every movement comes to be from a beginning and that soul alone is a beginning. Still, once the listener accepts c6–7, that listener has therefore implicitly accepted these dubious assumptions.

Whereas c6 aims to bring to mind animal bodies and thereby to import unsubstantiated assumptions about physical and causal distinctions between soul and body, c7 makes an explicit linkage between life and movement. It does so on the basis of a rhetorically jingly parallel ("παῦλαν ἔχον . . . , παῦλαν ἔχει").[22] The simplicity of the parallel cannot square two improbable consequences. A momentary pause in moving other things entails momentary death. This requires a view either about death's frequency (one dies as many times as one pauses) or about pausing's infrequency (one moves even when apparently at rest). Either is possible, but each is so controversial as to demand support. The argument does not provide it.

c8 μόνον δὴ τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν,
c9 ἅτε οὐκ ἀπολεῖπον ἑαυτό, οὔποτε λήγει κινούμενον,

Only the thing moving itself,
since it does not leave itself, never ceases being moved,

This piece of reasoning aims to show that self-movers are always moved. If being moved is one of the criteria for being alive—as c6–7 asserts—then c8–9 provides the first of the argument's two parts ("always living," leaving "always existing" for later).

But the reasoning, based on the claim that a self-mover does not leave itself, is undermined by the claim at c6–7. That earlier claim admitted either



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that some movers stop moving (i.e., when they die) or that things that move other things sometimes change what they move (i.e., causing a death). So it seems conceivable that a self-moving thing qua moving thing could either stop moving or change its object and thereby move something besides itself.

The argument's emphatic "δή" ("indeed") and its assertion that the self-mover cannot leave itself fails to vindicate it.[23] Why can it not lose itself? Of course, if "τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν" refers to the property of being self-moving, it cannot lose its property of self-movement. But "τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν" must refer to *something* self-moving, rather than the property. There are two reasons. First, properties are atemporal universals and thus all are trivially immortal, and so the details of the argument would be otiose.[24] Second, soul, which is to be equated with τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν, is a thing that can be individuated, predicable, and causally involved; it is not merely a property of something else. So, τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν must be something individuated, predicable, and causally involved. This thing need not always move itself, as we have seen. But why not? Using modern terminology, we would say that we have found an equivocation between properties and substances; a claim that must apply to substances has depended on intuitions about properties.

c9 ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως.

but even to as many other things as it moves, it is fount and beginning of motion.

With "καί" ("even," "and") we come to the argument's second part, about the eternal existence of the self-mover.[25] There is a second purported feature of self-movers: that for the things that they move, they are a starting source. This is consistent with other (non-self-moving) things also being the beginnings of motion, as the ensouled bodies at c6 are. But the indefiniteness of the word "ἀρχή" frees the argument, making it eventually seem to have shown that *only* self-movers are beginnings, which is necessary to show that souls, as self-movers, cannot be destroyed and thus must be immortal.[26] What this slippage will require is another equivocation, here best expressed as that between a relative beginning (as the nominal status of the first moment of a process) and an absolute beginning (as that before which there is nothing causally or explanatorily effective).[27] Relative beginnings may be broadly instantiated, in living bodies for example. Absolute beginnings may not. The passage at c9 encourages reading "ἀρχή" in the absolute sense, because it is paired with "πηγή," ("fount").[28] "Fount," not



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otherwise mentioned in the argument and thus placed here solely for rhetorical strength, refers to the sole source of, for example, a stream.[29]

d1 ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγένητον.

And a beginning is ungenerated.

This statement, once substantiated, will give grounds for the claim that a beginning is imperishable (at d4). This executes the second part of the argument's overall strategy. Self-movement is connected to beginnings, beginnings are connected to being ungenerated, being ungenerated is connected to imperishability, and soul is connected to self-movement, and so the argument infers a connection between soul and imperishability. But the connection between self-movement and lack of generation through the middle term of a "beginning" equivocates on "beginning," as noted in the discussion of c9. A beginning names the first moment of a temporally extended process of generation.[30] The sentence immediately preceding the argument makes this explicit. The argument, it says, will provide the "beginning" of the overall demonstration ("ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀποδείξεως ἥδε" [c5]).[31] The dialogue strongly encourages hearing "ἀρχή" in a relative, nominal way, treating "ἀρχή" this way a dozen times as against twice as "rule" and never (except purportedly in the present context) as "first principal."[32] Relative, nominal beginnings are neither generated nor ungenerated. The statement concerns only the thing that has been deemed a beginning, but that thing

d1 ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον γίγνεσθαι,

From a beginning necessarily everything that comes to be comes to be

is not generated or ungenerated qua beginning, only qua thing. The nature of beginnings does not give the information one wants.

Understood familiarly (per c5 or c9), everything that comes to be "must" ("ἀνάγκη") come from a beginning. This is a case of conceptual necessity: given that generation is temporally extended, and "beginning" names or marks the first point in a sequence, all generation starts its coming to be at the beginning. But by having its audience think that this claim is true on conceptual grounds (taking "beginning" nominally), the argument gets a free pass on its actual task, proving that beginnings are causally necessary (as "ἀνάγκη" is used at 246b4: piloting a chariot is necessarily hard *because* one horse is bad). The next clause presents the conclusion of a subsequent

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subargument, that beginnings differ from other kinds of generation in coming from nothing at all. Such a contrast assumes that both beginnings and generation participate in causal chains. By putting matters in these terms, the argument encourages the audience to think of beginnings, and thus of self-motion, as substances and not properties; arguments about immortality properly apply only to substances.

d2 αὐτὴν δὲ μηδ' ἐξ ἑνός·

but it [i.e, the beginning] out of not a single thing:

Since Phaedrus will likely have heard the assertion that everything that comes to be must come from a beginning as making a definitional claim, this assertion will sound definitional as well. A beginning has no substantial existence, and so it does not come from anything. Not only is Phaedrus predisposed to be thinking nominally; this claim would sound implausible otherwise. For beginnings considered as *things* very frequently do themselves come to be. Socrates—or nymphs, or Plato—composed the beginning of the palinode; he or they brought it into being.

d2 εἰ γὰρ ἔκ του ἀρχὴ γίγνοιτο,

for if out of anything a beginning should come to be

To support the claim that a beginning comes "out of nothing at all," the argument makes the counterfactual assumption initiating a reductio ad absurdum. It supposes that a beginning should come to be ("γίγνοιτο") from something ("ἔκ του"). Given that a beginning is either the sort of thing for which coming to be does not even apply or that obviously comes to be in the midst of chains of coming to be, the force and brevity of the ensuing argument should be a cause for suspicion. For in either case, the argument will have to be supposing something unusual about beginnings. If it derives some conclusions about beginnings from this unusual sense of them, it cannot, except illicitly, apply those conclusions to beginnings as we generally understand them.

d3 οὐκ ἂν [ἔτι ἀρχὴ] γίγνοιτο.
[ἐξ ἀρχῆς]

it would [no longer come to be a beginning it] a beginning
[would not come to be out of]



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This clause infers, from the assumption, the impossible result that overturns the assumption. The textual tradition preserves two readings. As with the crux at c5 ("always-mover" vs. "self-mover"), it does not matter which one prefers. They share a superficial plausibility and a deeper implausibility. Cicero and Iamblichus likely read "οὐκ . . . ἔτι ἀρχή" ("no longer a beginning"). Were a beginning to come to be from something, it would no longer come to be a beginning. This is a good inference only on a strained understanding of beginnings. Usually we think of beginnings relative to processes. Some beginning (e.g., the first leg of a relay race) brings about a subsequent beginning (e.g., the second leg of the relay race). So given the way we usually think, the reasoning would be absurd. The argument makes sense only if there is only one beginning (or one beginning for every causal sequence). With "absolute" beginnings in mind, one absolute beginning cannot come to be from another absolute beginning; the temporally prior beginning has already monopolized the title. Thinking in terms of absolute beginnings—newly, since through d1 the argument had to refer to relative, nominal beginnings—rescues the argument. Thus it is here that the argument equivocates on "beginning." What holds for absolute beginnings—that they do not come to be—has not been shown to hold for nominal beginnings. If self-movers are relative beginnings, then a property of absolute beginnings—imperishability, as it turns out—has not been shown to hold for self-movers.[33]

The reading "ἐξ ἀρχῆς" is in MSS B and T and read by Simplicius and Stobaeus. It states that if a beginning should come out of something, then that something would not itself be a beginning.[34] This would be so only if there is only one beginning, since anything else at all could simply not be a(nother) beginning. This equivocates in the same way the other reading does.

d4 ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀγένητόν ἐστιν, καὶ ἀδιάφθορον αὐτὸ ἀνάγκη εἶναι.

And since it is ungenerated, it must also be imperishable.

The argument now argues from a fact about absolute beginnings to another fact about beginnings. Were we still thinking about the colloquial sense of beginnings (per d1), we could create an easy argument for the perishability of beginnings. If the source of some



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generation stopped generating—perhaps it ran out of raw materials—the thing that we called a source would no longer be called a beginning. The thing would still exist, but not the beginning. So the argument must be arguing about absolute beginnings. The word "imperishable" ("ἀδιάφθορον") and the next line's "being destroyed" ("ἀπολομένης," cf. "ἀπόλλυσθαι" [d8]) strengthen, at least superficially, the sense that the beginning is a really existing thing, not merely a relative nominal quality that can be lost but not destroyed.[35]

d5 ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης οὔτε αὐτή ποτε ἔκ του οὔτε ἄλλο

d6 ἐξ ἐκείνης γενήσεται, εἴπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δεῖ τὰ πάντα γίγνεσθαι.

For a beginning being destroyed neither will it ever out of something, nor anything else out of it, come to be, if from a beginning everything must come to be.

Here we have the first part of another reductio. Assume, counterfactually, that a beginning can be destroyed. It will not come back, since beginnings cannot come to be (per d2–3), and so there will be no further generation (per c9 and d1). The reductio goes through if the situation involving no further beginnings or generation could not come to be. The argument defers clinching the reductio to e1–2.

d7 οὕτω δὴ κινήσεως μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν.

d8 τοῦτο δὲ οὔτ' ἀπόλλυσθαι οὔτε γίγνεσθαι δυνατόν.

In this way a self moving itself is a beginning of motion. And this is not possibly destroyed nor brought into being,

These two lines, inserted in the midst of the reductio, reiterate what has purportedly already been shown. The claim that a self-mover is a beginning of motion reiterates c8–9. There, the palinode had not treated beginnings absolutely or as really existent, only as nominal descriptions of the first moments of a process. It had asserted, quite uncontroversially, that self-movers are beginnings in this way. The second half of d8 claims that beginnings cannot come into being. This reiterates d4–6, which spoke only of absolute beginnings. So the word ("τοῦτο") "this" ([d8]) equivocates. The insertion "not possibly" ("οὐ . . . δυνατόν") reinforces the shift away



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from the definitional (nominal, relative) sense of beginning. The first half of d8, "this is not possibly destroyed," gets its (dubious) support from the ensuing two lines.

e1 ἢ πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε [γῆν εἰς ἓν]
[γένεσις]

or the whole heavens and entire [earth into one]
[coming to be]

The first part of the reasoning recapitulates what is at stake. We know from d1 that it is everything that comes to be ("πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον"). Speaking of the whole universe and earth (or *genesis*) vividly points up the immensity of the scope. Abstract as it still is to talk about these two sets of all there is, it is the only imagery in the entire argument (at 246b6–7, "πάντα οὐρανόν," "whole universe," is again used concretely; cf. 246c1–2, "πάντα τὸν κόσμον"). It is also, as we will see, the lynchpin of the argument.

The persuasive significance of the line is relevant to the textual problem. The charge against the "earth into one" ("γῆν εῖς ἕν") reading of Philoponus, which is accepted by Burnet, is that "heaven and earth" is rhetorical.[36] But this charge assumes, without evidence, that the argument does not depend on rhetorical forces, when in fact it may. A point in favor of reading "and whole earth *into one*" ("εἰς ἕν") is that it strengthens the sense of "collapsing" and "standing still" in an unmoving, undifferentiated, unchanging monad. All the same, both sides of the crux include everything there is.

e1 συμπεσοῦσαν στῆναι

e2 καὶ μήποτε αὖθις ἔχειν ὅθεν κινηθέντα γενήσεται.

falling would stand still and never again have something whence it will come to have been moved.

The inference is that with the destruction of the beginning, everything would come to a final stop. Though the argument does not say so, it assumes that this is an impossible outcome and that it thereby overturns the assumption at the head of this reductio, "a beginning [could be] destroyed" ("ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης" [d5]). But neither the inference (that it would bring about a final stop) nor the assumption (that a final stop is impossible) is very promising.



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Why would the destruction of a beginning cause everything to fall into a standstill? Were the beginning some absolutely first thing, one that had no generation (a big bang, for example), all that happens and continues to happen in the world would seem already to have received its impetus, and the continued existence of that one absolute beginning would seem otiose. So the beginning that would be destroyed—in order for everything to fall into a standstill—must be the beginning of *every coming to be* (c9, d1, d7). These beginnings, as we have said, are relative, nominal, and plural. And yet the beginning that is ungenerated is not of this kind. Thus here, once again, the argument equivocates on "beginning." This is not merely a linguistic equivocation. By defending its claim that a beginning cannot come to be again (e2, relying on d2), the argument treats a "beginning" as a real thing susceptible by hypothesis to destruction. Beginnings considered nominally are not even logically susceptible to destruction. The thing *that is* a beginning can be destroyed, and the property of beginningness may no longer be instantiated there, but beginningness is not destroyed. What stops some other thing from instantiating beginningness? Nothing, as far as the argument goes. So the inference—that the destruction of beginnings would cause the world to stop—is logically incoherent.

But for the sake of argument, let us accept the inference. Its validity matters only if it leads to an impossible outcome. Whether it does or not is a serious difficulty. Given that the argument maintains the image of providing the inferential steps at each point, it is surprising—or not so surprising!—that it does not state the step most important for clinching the impossibility. It does not say that the world will never stand still.

Commentators have always supplied this implicit premise. Charles Griswold says that the premise has "moral" backing.[37] Others observe that neither Plato nor the Greeks ever imagined the world coming to an end.[38] They might say that the premise has "cosmological-intuitive" backing. But we should perhaps not be so eager to provide the missing premise. We should ask ourselves what has happened, given the absence of this premise. What has happened is that the palinode has stopped arguing, and stopped at the crucial moment. It has simply and brazenly begged the question.

It may seem to us mortals, from a day-to-day perspective, that souls endure for a long time. But we worry, when we take the long view, that they do not last forever (cf. *Phaedo* 88ab). Thus we seek an argument that they do last forever. So we appeal to the world (as a macrocosm) for information about the soul (as a microcosm). From our mortal perspective, it seems that the world goes on for a long time. But, should we take the *really* long



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view, can we be confident that the world lasts forever? We must seek an argument for this too. Our uncertainty about the soul is identical to that about the world, excepting the relative duration we can safely assume. So to the extent we do not know about the soul, we do not know about the world. So assuming that the world will not come to the end is equivalent to assuming that a soul will not come to an end. But this was exactly what we wanted to prove rather than to assume.

e3 ἀθανάτου δὲ πεφασμένου τοῦ ὑφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ κινουμένου,

And that which is moved by itself having been shown to be immortal,

This states the conclusion for the main part of the argument: the self-mover is immortal. Depending on our reading of c5 ("a self-mover/an always-mover is immortal"), the argument takes one of two routes to arrive at this conclusion. If the argument states that the self-mover is immortal, it goes on to say that the self-mover never ceases movement and it always exists; since movement is the definition of life, the self-mover is always alive, and thus it is immortal. If the argument states that the always-mover is immortal, it goes on to say that the self-mover meets the double criteria of being an always-mover: *moving* always and *existing* always. The recapitulation here covers up the dubious argumentation that preceded. It gives a fresh start for the final inference.

e3 ψυχῆς οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον τοῦτον αὐτόν

that this is the essence and definition of soul

The final inference will be that given that the soul is a self-mover, the soul is immortal. The lines e3–7 attempt to prove that the soul is a self-mover. Line e3 gives the premise, for which the following provides the evidence. The premise is that soul ("ψυχή") is, in the most central way, a self-mover. The premise involves a duplication, "οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον," and a demonstrative paired with an intensive. Together these stress the centrality of self-motion to the soul. But the separate specifications of "essence" (or "being") and "definition" (or "account") do not get separately supported. Nor is self-motion shown at all to be the main feature relevant to soul. There are reasons to think that it is not, at least not obviously so (and it is certainly not shown that soul *is* self-motion, since this would conflate a



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thing that has properties with a single property). Between 241c and 245c, "ψυχή" is mentioned three times, in quite different contexts, none appreciably connected to self-motion. The lover can damage the soul's education, and that education is the most valuable thing in the world (241c5); the soul has divinatory powers, which in Socrates' case alerts him to his first speech's impiety (242c7); and some souls are tender and virgin and are awakened and Bacchically aroused (245a2).[39] All three examples in fact suggest that the soul is moved, at least in part, by external factors. Thus the duplication ("οὐσίαν," "λόγον") appears rhetorical, perhaps to discourage thinking about soul in other terms.

e4 τις λέγων οὐκ αἰσχυνεῖται.

someone will feel no shame saying.

The sense that e3 has something rhetorical about it is strengthened by the editorialization here that comments on the reasons rather than providing new ones. It implies that one may speak shamefully about soul. Perhaps this would be possible were someone to say grand things about that toward which one should stay humble. To speak without shame would amount to saying something very obvious or uncontroversial. To advert to the self-motion of the soul would not sound controversial (relative to the other things one could say about soul). Of course, its sounding uncontroversial would not make it uncontroversial. Still, a listener might think that there *would* be shame in *denying* that self-motion is the essence of soul.

e5 πᾶν γὰρ σῶμα, ᾧ μὲν ἔξωθεν τὸ κινεῖσθαι, ἄψυχον,

For, every body whose source of movement is external is without soul,

The palinode here commences its reasoning that soul is self-motion. It does so with a rhetorically precise parallel structure, contrasting bodies whose source of motion is external with those whose source is internal. The reasoning seems easy: since the only difference between bodies externally moved and internally moved is the presence of soul, it must be soul, internal to the body, that provides its (internally originating) motion. Because, by hypothesis, the source of motion is internal, the source of motion for the soul must also come from inside the body. Yet the body does not provide its own motion, and so only the soul, being hemmed wholly within the body, can provide its own motion. Thus the soul is self-moving.



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Before assessing this argument, it is worth pointing out the nature of the referents in this clause. The reference to bodies, "πᾶν σῶμα," must mean "every body," because there are two classes of individual bodies indicated by the parallel structure ("ᾧ̔ . . . ᾧ̔ . . ."). But if so, this would suggest that "ψυχὴ πᾶσα" at the argument's start (c5) means "every soul." Of course, that is how a reader would have taken it; this echo reinforces that interpretation. As we have found, however, the long span of argument about beginnings (d1–e2) assumes the "all soul" view. So though e6–7 will benefit—from the perspective of plausibility—from the individual soul view, the evidence for those claims does not come from an argument about individual souls.

Now to the argument assessment. The first difficulty is that this two-member "external vs. internal" analysis of movement differs from c6–8, which takes up a three-member "moved by others vs. moves others vs. moves self" analysis. In other words, at c6–8, life for a body is implicitly defined as being moved by something distinct from the body and moving something else distinct from the body. Now, being ensouled is defined as being moved by something *internal* to the body. On a normal understanding of soul, being ensouled is identical to being alive. This being so, we note two differences between c6–8 and the present e5. First, something's being alive no longer requires moving something else distinct from it. The view espoused at c6–8 warns about the tenuousness of life: it depends on something's precarious intermediate role in chains of movement. It offers this warning in order to motivate confidence in the reliability of unalienable self-motion. This view expressed at e5 shines a gentler light on life, casting it as *powered by* that very unalienable self-motion earlier *contrasted with* it. The second difference is that the source of motion at e5 is specified not as "distinct from" but as "internal to" the body. When motion—be it self-motion or motion otherwise unspecified—is distinct from the body, its continued existence after the dissolution or death of the body it once powered is irrelevant to the matter of personal immortality. An external force takes up none of the qualities of the body it moves. Its longevity would be like the longevity of the ground we walk on or air we breath: unimportant to *us*. When the motion is "internal" to the body, however, its continued existence does seem to matter. Its being internal seems to mean that it takes up, or even constitutes, central properties of *us*. Indeed, whereas at c6–8, the body, as that which lives and dies, seems to ground personality, now the body seems a mere container for the more personally crucial soul.

Because of these shifts of spatial emphasis, it is hard to establish the truth of the claim. Since body is distinct from soul, soul is somehow always



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external to body, and thus body may be moved by soul and moved from what is external. On this reading, both views say the same thing. Then "without soul" ("αψυχοῦ") must mean "not connected to soul in any causal way." How this would fit with 246b6— "every soul takes care of everything unsouled" ("ψυχὴ πᾶσα παντὸς ἐπιμελεῖται τοῦ ἀψύχου,")—is uncertain. But there is an important distinction between the two views. Per c6–8, whenever a body is both moved by something else and moves something else it is alive. But on the reasoning here, it might not be ensouled, because its source of motion might not be something self-moving. So it would be alive but without soul. This is counterintuitive. It is not clear, however, that the argument makes it impossible. It never once explicitly links soul with life.

These details show the shaky foundation of the argument as a whole. The argument must include this line, however, simply to motivate the line that follows, and it is there that we find the key fallacy.

e6 ᾧ δὲ ἔνδοθεν αὐτῷ ἐξ αὑτοῦ, ἔμψυχον, ὡς ταύτης οὔσης φύσεως ψυχῆς·

> but whose source of movement is internal to it, from itself, is ensouled, because this is the nature of soul:

Here, internal motion is equated with self-motion. But internal motion and self-motion are not always identical. Equating them requires seeing the body as a simple, bounded realm, such that any motion that comes from *within* it counts as coming *from* it. Were the body complex, its movement might come from the movement of enclosed microbodies. Whether those microbodies were self-moved or other-moved, the macrobody would not be moving itself. Other things would be moving it, and those things could, in theory, abandon it (per c7–9). Were it not self-moving but were it also ensouled, soul would not be self-movement. Because the argument depends on the idea that soul can be equated with self-motion, and on none other, the argument has foundered.[40]

What has gone wrong? The word "self" in "self-moving" is ambiguous. It means either that the mover is identical to the moved (the "reflexive" reading) or that the movement for some complex entity comes from inside a border (the "locational" reading). The latter meaning is what can definitely be shown by looking at living creatures, and any audience to this argument would agree with that idea. But the argument needs the first reading to vindicate its claims.



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To bridge the two distinct readings, the argument deploys an amazing rhetorical maneuver. Rather than simply contrasting "ἔνδοθεν" ("from inside") with the previous line's "ἔξωθεν" ("from outside"), it appends two pronouns meaning "self": "αὐτῷ" ("to itself") and "ἐξ αὑτοῦ" ("from itself"). Because it had been speaking of self-movement ("τὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν" [c8], "τὸ αὐτὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν" [d7], "τοῦ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ" [e3], ["αὐτοκίνητον"] [c5]), and goes on immediately to speak of self-movement ("τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν" [e7]), the argument equates all talk of "self" and pretends that "from within" is identical to "from oneself" and "to oneself." This is hardly an innocent clarification of the position and orientation of the internally located movement. It is an attempt to dupe the audience into accepting that motion from within is self-motion and that being ensouled is what accounts for this self-motion and thus that the soul is self-motion—as though the "self" of the body and the "self" of the soul were identical.

e7 εἰ δ' ἔστιν τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχον, μὴ ἄλλο τι εἶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν ἢ ψυχήν,

and if this is the case, the self moving itself is nothing other than soul,

The argument claims here that the soul is self-moving. But even were it true that it is an internal soul that causes movement for a body, it is possible that something else moves the soul. (It is also possible, more damagingly, that soul is sometimes self-moving but does not always have that property.) For the fact that the self-mover moves other things (c8–9) does not entail that all moving things are moved (immediately) by self-movers. The argument at c6–7 even assumes that some things are moved by other things that are not themselves self-movers. So there is no solid evidence that the soul is a self-mover; the feeling that it is comes from (i) its implicit association with a "beginning" and (ii) the equivocation on the idea of "movement from out of oneself." Living creatures themselves seem self-moving, and so on the overall argument they would be immortal; but obviously and by hypothesis they are not immortal.

246a2 ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀγένητόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον ψυχὴ ἂν εἴη.

from necessity ungenerated and immortal soul would be.



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The argument thus concludes that the soul has never come into being and will never die. The "from necessity" ("ἐξ ἀνάγκης") emphasizes the apparent strength of the logical form. But why is "ungenerated" mentioned here, and why is "imperishable"—presumably the more important aspect—not mentioned? There are three possible ways to account for this that can preserve the argument's dignity: "ungenerated" stands in for "imperishable"; "immortal" simply means imperishable; or only "immortal" matters. But perhaps the argument drops the most important element because it does not provide good reasons for it.

## SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

The argument works to move its audience in two stages from self-mover to immortal and in a third stage from soul to self-mover. The first of the two stages from self-mover to immortal is the position that when the self-mover exists, it always moves; the reasoning relies on the assertion that the self-mover never abandons itself. The second of the two stages is the position that when the self-mover exists, it always exists; the reasoning here relies on the idea that the self-mover is a beginning, and beginnings always exist. The final stage, from soul to self-mover, articulates the idea that ensouled bodies, unlike soulless bodies, move themselves; this last span of reasoning relies on the view that an ensouled body's self-movement depends on its soul's self-movement.

The argument makes fallacious inferences at each of its three stages. There is no reason given to assume, as the argument does in the first stage, that something that moves itself will never "abandon" that self-movement rather than stop moving altogether or change to moving something else. The only thing that cannot abandon itself is the *property* of self-movement, but the argument must claim that a *thing* that self-moves will always self-move. In addition, even if beginnings are not generated and do not perish, the things that *serve as* beginnings may very well be generated and perish, and so those things that are self-movers are not, on account of serving also as beginnings, thereby ungenerated and nonperishable, as the argument assumes in the second stage. A further problem is that self-movers may be "relative" beginnings, but the argument about a beginning's lack of generation and destruction holds only for "absolute" beginnings. In the third stage, souls are said to be located in bodies whose motion comes from within, but a self-moving body need not get its motion from a self-moving soul,



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and a soul that is self-moving need not always be self-moving (given that self-movement as its "essence and definition" has merely been asserted).

These fallacies—and the others discussed in the course of the analysis—are hardly naïve. They tend to be obscured behind expressly rhetorical flourishes (e.g., "παῦλαν . . . παῦλαν . . ." [c7], "λήγει . . . πηγή" [c9], "τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε γῆν εἰς ἓν / γένεσις [e1], "οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον τοῦτον αὐτόν" [e3], "ἔνδοθεν αὐτῷ ἐξ αὑτοῦ" [e6], etc.). That they are neither oversights nor matters trivial or obscure to Plato is clear from the less tendentious, and often more plausible, talk of beginnings, souls, and bodies throughout the palinode and the rest of the *Phaedrus*.

## Socrates' Rhetorical Goal

Understanding the purpose of the palinode requires understanding the purpose of the other speeches in the first half of the dialogue. Near the start of the dialogue, Socrates encourages Phaedrus to read straight through Lysias's speech (228d6–e2). He does this to make two connected points. Phaedrus reacts with supreme enthusiasm to the speech's cleverness (234d1–6). Unfortunately, the speech lacks a cogent argument (235a1–8). Socrates identifies, and even belabors, both points, presumably to encourage in Phaedrus both greater self-reflection and greater examination of the argument. Socrates goes on to give a second speech. This one includes precise definition and naming (237b7–d5, 238a2–4), as well as an argument based in purported claims of necessity (e.g., "ἀνάγκη που" [238e3], cf. 239a5, a7, b5, c5, "ἐξ ὧν πᾶσα ἀνάγκη" [240a4], d1, e1, 241b4, b5, b7, c2). Socrates goes on to examine this speech, too, and discovers that it has its own problems. It talks only partially about *erôs* and says what a freeborn Athenian would find offensive (243c1–d1). Its impiety (242c1–d7) is based in its seeming plausibility ("σεμνύνεσθαι ὡς τὶ ὄντε, εἰ ἄρα ἀνθρωπίσκους τινὰς ἐξαπατήσαντε εὐδοκιμήσετον ἐν αὐτοῖς" [243a1])—with its articulation of the topic and seemingly demonstrative reasoning—as well as in its argumentative incompleteness (242e2–4). In both cases, Socrates appears to be presenting Phaedrus with something he will love—a performance of a verbal composition—that he should nevertheless not love so uncritically. By discovering how much he unconsciously affirms dubious material, Phaedrus can discover how speeches may seem true or good without actually being true or good.

It seems plausible that with the palinode, being yet another speech, Socrates will continue this lesson. The palinode may in many ways be the best of the three speeches. But being the best does not mean that it will not

incline Phaedrus to cheer or accept what he should rather take critically. Socrates' remarks that the palinode was presented mostly in play encourages this view. His continued discussion of rhetorical problems would give Phaedrus or a reader the critical tools appropriate to analyzing it. Later in the dialogue, Socrates observes the problem of equivocation in arguments: without defining certain terms, it is easy to convince people to believe or do what you wish (263a2–c12). "Soul," "life," and "beginning" are canonical instances of this kind of term. Socrates goes on to say that an important mode of speech is defining clearly and self-consistently (265d3–7), suggesting that Phaedrus should ensure that his favorite speeches follow this mode. Even earlier, however, the palinode itself admits that giving the form of the soul would be a divine task and one that would take a long time (256a3). The argument for the immortality of the soul of course assumes a particular form of the soul or, if it argues for it, does so in an extremely short span of time.

My claim then is that Socrates presents Phaedrus the argument for the immortality of the soul to show Phaedrus that the fact that an argument sounds rigorous does not insulate it from the need to analyze it. Once Phaedrus (or the reader) does analyze it, using the interpretative tools the palinode and Socrates otherwise provide, its sheen of logical correctness will dull.

The fact that Alcmaeon had already presented an argument like this, that Aristotle suggests that other thinkers too took a similar line, and that it "uses the style of the Ionian philosophers" supports my claim.[41] Plato appears to have inserted a popular and clever-sounding argument into the palinode. It could have sounded familiar to his contemporary readers, who thus could have taken it precisely as a specious argument.[42] This means that Plato's readers could have understood—as we too should understand—that this dialogue helps us discover our vulnerabilities to *every* sort of speech (cf. 261a8–b2, d10–e4).

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## NOTES

1. Lineation and text from Burnet's Oxford Classical Text except where noted; translations by the author.

2. J. B. Skemp (1942, 3–10) leaves evaluation aside to note this argument's innovation over the *Phaedo* arguments by avoiding questions about Forms; Josef Pieper says that



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analyzing the argument "would lead us too far afield" (1964, 74); Robert Patterson (1965, 114–22) calls the argument Plato's favorite—it expresses his commitment to personal immortality—but admits that, while the argument is highly probable, it needs the reasoning found in other dialogues to overcome its rational inadequacy; Raphael Demos (1968) summarizes the argument with no skepticism; Thomas Robinson (1968, 13–15) thinks Plato's logic is fine (and that it gives a better account than the *Phaedo*, whose arguments are confused) but that his exposition is poor; N. H. Reed (1974) merely expresses skepticism about the scope of the conclusion; Beverly Bardsley (1975, 108–28) treats "self-motion" as thematic and unifying for the dialogue but does not analyze the argument; John Sallis (1975, 135–40) explains the argument's inadequacy by saying that "it can be seen to be not so much a proof . . . as rather a peculiar way of laying out what is to be proved (i.e., shown forth, exhibited) in the second speech as such" (136); Robert Zaslavsky (1981, 76–81) finds that the ambiguities in the argument are emblematic of the nature of the soul; R. W. Sharples (1985) identifies a coherent argumentative strategy; Charles Griswold (1986) reconstructs a valid sorites after filling in missing assumptions and explaining away troublesome claims and moves; Richard Bett (1986) notes a few invalid inferences that he thinks Plato did not notice; Giovanni Ferrari (1987, 123–25) hints at his dubiety but explicitly avoids the debate; Christopher Rowe (1986 174–77) briefly mentions some problems but reconstructs the argument into two valid subarguments; R. James Hankinson—claiming that he "shall not here be concerned with Plato's motives for engaging in this bizarre exercise" (1990, 1)—diagnoses a fallacy and an unsubstantiated premise but implies that Plato did not recognize these and that the argument is otherwise worthy of respect; Mary Louise Gill and James Lenox (1994, xiii) suppose Plato meant to prove the indestructability of the soul as self-mover; Dougal Blyth (1997) believes the argument is valid but is deliberately made to appear invalid; Andrew Mason (1998) judges this argument, like Plato's other arguments about self-motion, invalid; Graeme Nicholson (1999, 155–63) thinks the argument is fine as it stands; Stephen Scully (2003, 26n67, 80–81), says that Socrates argues like a pre-Socratic; neither Hallvard Fossheim (2010) nor Paul Ryan (2012) make any criticisms; Harvey Yunis (2011, 135–38) reserves judgment but alleges difficulties; Daniel Werner (2012, 48–54) starts out saying that he "will not dwell here on the logical details of the argument, such as the question of its validity and soundness" (51), but goes on to admit that he finds both that Plato believes that the soul is a self-mover (hence the need for myth to appeal to it) and that the "conspicuous logical flaws of the argument" in their "logical terseness" juxtaposed with the "expansive narrative of the myth serves a broader metanarrative aim: to raise the very question of 'μῦθος versus λόγος'" (54).

3. Scott 2011 (244a5–257a2); Yunis 2011, 169–74 (257c4–258d2); Moore 2013 (261e6–262c4); Moore 2014 (261a7–e4).

4. Cf. Robinson 1968, 12; Griswold 1986, 78; Hankinson 1990, 12. It is hard to countenance Bett's claim that Socrates is here "aiming for maximum clarity and logical perspicuity" (1986, 2).



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5. Each soul "go[es] around the entire universe, coming to be now in one form, now in another" (256b7).

6. Sandra Peterson (2011, 165–95) says that the questions Simmias and Cebes ask diagnose their own confusion about their own supposed doctrinal commitments. James Arieti (1986) argues that we come to know that we do not know about the immortality of the soul, and thus we can face death with true, philosophical courage. Skemp writes that "Plato seems to be insisting that the [final] argument is ambivalent and that the only unquenchable evidence for immortality is Socrates himself, who has the faith and courage to say 'Bury me if you can catch me'" (1942, 7). Rowe (1986, 174–77) uses the *Phaedo* instead as evidence that there can be no doubt about Plato's commitment to soul immortality, but he argues that having written many arguments about soul immortality does not mean that Plato must think that the present argument is a sound one. It is worth remembering that Socrates, as Plato portrays him, seems ultimately agnostic about immortality (McPherran 1994). For Plato's bad arguments on other topics, see Klosko 1983 and 1987 and Sprague 1962.

7. Hankinson observes that this is "an extremely uncharacteristic section," and is unusual just because it is a "self-consciously arranged in the form of a succession of premises" (1990, 1).

8. The fact that Aristotle, in his survey of early views of the soul, does not mention it, referring only to Plato's *Timaeus* and perhaps to other unknown writings (404b16–29) and, when speaking of continuous motion, referring only to Alcmaeon's theory (404b29–34), is also evidence that the argument is suspect. At 404a20–23 Aristotle speaks of a *group* of theorists holding that motion comes from moving things and that soul moves itself, so there is no reason to think that he speaks specifically of the *Phaedrus* (or of *Laws* 895b).

9. Yunis 2011, 132, citing also 238c4, 249e3, 251c6.

10. Will the "wise" find it believable, whoever they may be? If so, then they will presumably not embrace it simply in the way of accepting the validity of the inferences but in some deeper or indirect way. Werner does not clarify the issue when he writes that "Socrates says only that the proof will be *believed* (πιστή) by the wise person. This is quite different from—and much weaker than—saying that the wise will uphold the truth or veracity of the proof …. Socrates is saying no more than that it will have a certain patina of plausibility—it will *seem* to be true" (2012, 49, cf. 40). It is hard to know what "believing" means other than "taking to be true" (even if it includes being willing to examine it later).

11. I do not address here whether Plato ever uses Socrates for such purposes or what kinds of convictions Plato would assert through Socrates; see Peterson 2011 and Belfiore 2012 for views with which I sympathize.

12. Moore 2013; Scott 2011.

13. The dialogue calls this drawing "psychagôgia," on which see Moore 2014, Moss 2013, and Asmis 1986.

14. Cf. Frutiger 1930, 131–34; de Vries 1969, ad loc; Bett 1986, 14n24. Hankinson claims that in principle it could also mean that "the whole" soul in contrast to a proper part is



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immortal, since ancient philosophy often takes up this concern; he notes, however, that the argument obviously does not take up the concern here (1990, 3). Robinson offers "soul in all its forms," though really only "rational soul," which gods may share, as stipulated by 245c2–4, but admits that this coheres only with the argument's "very general" conclusion (1968, 12). For the ancient debate, particularly between Posidonius (τοῦ κόσμου, or world soul) and Harpocration (πάσης ἁπλῶς καὶ τῆς τοῦ μύρμηκος καὶ μυίας, or every or all kinds of soul, "simply all, even of bees and ants"), see Ju 2009, 120–24.

15. Ferrari (1987, 124) agrees that Plato means for "πᾶσα" to be ambiguous but argues that Plato does so to hint that the impersonal attitude toward soul expressed in this argument—even if it concerned individual souls—would not suffice to address the proper aim of psychological inquiry. This is, at any rate, a more charitable view than that held by Reginald Hackforth (1952) (and rejected by neither Gerrit de Vries [1969, ad loc] nor Hankinson [1990, 3–5]): "The distinction between collective and distribute sense is not here before his [Plato's] mind, any more than it need be in the case of πᾶν σῶμα at 245e4," which assumes Plato's confusion about a most basic distinction between soul abstractly and individual souls, one that he has Cebes bring up (*Phaedo* 70a1–b3).

16. See also Hankinson 1990, 4–5. Though Griswold (1986, 84–85), Fossheim (2010), and Yunis (2011, 135–38) appear to bite the bullet when they claim that the argument is not about personal immortality, they are right only from the perspective of the topic the argument has any purchase on; they are not considering what the argument aims to *seem* to be about. Yunis at least acknowledges that there is an ambiguity here.

17. Contrast Sharples, who begs the question when he says that one can generalize from a "characteristic of one, supreme existence of the soul-type" to "all instances of this type," supposing that Plato provides this principle at exactly this place when he says "all soul is immortal" (1985, 67). Hankinson (1990, 4, 27) emphasizes that the immortality of a part need not hold for the whole and vice versa. The vagueness of de Vries's claim—"the next section of the text seems to point to the [collective sense]; the [distributive sense], however, is not absent since the myth will treat of the individual soul" (1969, ad loc)—does not account for the way the argument deliberately encourages taking "πᾶσα" in two different ways as the argument proceeds.

18. See Diano 1947, de Vries 1969, ad loc, and Decleva Caizzi 1970 for the long debate.

19. Bett (1986, 4) agrees. Hankinson observes that "one might think that nothing much turned on this," that is, on which reading we give, and yet he also observes that the first, but not the second, formulation "is supposed to express a conceptual truth" (1990, 6–7), and he subsequently articulates the structure of this supposed conceptual truth (8–14). All the same, on either reading the argument deserves conviction only with sufficient explanation. See also Ackrill 1953, 278, and Robinson 1968, 12.

20. Hankinson translates the clause at c6 as "and if what either moves something else *or* is moved by something else" (1990, 2, emphasis mine), translating the "καί" disjunctively, without explanation. This strikes me as an implausible interpretation, even were the



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grammar possible, since it requires the argument to claim that any moving thing or moved thing is susceptible to life cessation, and is thus alive, which is hardly compatible with the connection between soul and bodily movement later in the argument. But nothing in Hankinson's further analysis, at 11–13, turns on his translation.

21. de Vries takes the "καί" as "semi-explanatory" (1969, ad loc) apparently implying that the movement of other things is explained by its being moved by something else, but such an explanation seems not to take on the relevant issue when defining life.

22. Plato rarely uses "παυλᾶν"; he does so nowhere else in this dialogue. The most famous usage is at the climactic point of the *Republic*, when Socrates says that until philosophers rule as kings, or vice versa, cities will have no cessation of evils (473d5, reiterated at 501e4; cf. *Letters* 7 336e4.). The only other times are when Socrates speaks of pleasure as the cessation of pain (*Philebus* 51a3, *Republic* 584b3).

23. Cf. de Vries, who claims that the use of "indeed" here "marks the evidence of the inevitable conclusion" (1969, ad loc).

24. De Vries (1969, ad loc) appears to fall for the fallacy. Hankinson (1990, 13–14) seems, I think, to take it as a "general principle" that Plato simply accepts.

25. There is a question whether this clause provides additional support for the claim that "only the thing moving itself . . . never ceases being moved" (i.e., in addition to "since it does not move itself") or whether it is a second observation, namely, that not only does the thing moving itself move itself but it is also the beginning of whatever else it moves. I follow Burnet's comma before the clause, but de Vries (1969, ad loc) and Rowe (1986, ad loc) suggest a full stop. Whatever the punctuation or reading we prefer, the argument is setting up some illicit inferences.

26. Gregory Vlastos says that "Ἀρχή is a 'weasel-word' in Plato. It may mean any, or all, of (i) beginning, (ii) source, (iii) cause, (iv) ruling principle, (v) ruling power" (1939, 82n1); this is of course because the word, in fourth-century intellectual circles, could mean all these and yet the listener's context may favor hearing one or another of the connotations.

27. Hankinson, agreeing that the argument's most important equivocation is in its use of the term "ἀρχή," speaks of "unrestricted" and "restricted" uses; his "unrestricted" refers to the absolute causally first *x* in the universe and his "restricted" refers to any causally first *x* in a pair *x* and *y* (1990, 21–22). These map readily to my distinction between the one absolute beginning ("unrestricted") and the potentially many nominal, relative beginnings ("restricted").

28. Cf. Ryan 2012, 181.

29. Cf. Hippocrates, *De flatibus* 1.17.

30. The proclivity of commentators and translators to render "ἀρχή" as "first principle" (e.g., De Vries, Sharples, Rowe) occludes this fact and plays into the argument-narrator's hopes.

31. Cf. de Vries 1969, ad 245c4.



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32. "ἀρχή" is used in its sense as "beginning," often of a speech or process, in 237b7, 237c4, 241b6, 253c7, 254a7, 258a1, 262d8, 263e3, 264a5, 264a6 ("ἄρχεται"), 266d8, 272d4. The two places it is used to mean "rule" are 238a2 (of pleasure, over us) and 241a8 (mindless).

33. Many scholars reject the "ἔτι ἀρχή" text (see de Vries 1969, ad loc, for a comprehensive account of the history of reconstructing this text). They think the clause with "still a beginning" would require an "εἴη" ("would be") rather than the "γίγνοιτο" ("would come to be"). This is because they would want to read "the beginning would no longer *be* a beginning." Though "γίγνοιτο" can mean "would be," its use exclusively as a verb of development in this argument seems to count against that more colloquial meaning (see Yunis 2011, 137, on this reading). This rejection is neither necessary nor desirable. "γίγνοιτο" provides the parallel with the previous clause ("εἰ γὰρ ἔκ του ἀρχὴ γίγνοιτο" ["for if out of anything a beginning should come to be"]). The idea is that a beginning leads only to coming to be; thus, if a beginning came from a beginning, whatever came to be would have come to be, but now (ἔτι), in this case, it could not have come to be a beginning.

34. Some scholars accept the text but assume a different subject: "For if out of something a beginning should come to be, everything that comes to be [τὸ πᾶν γιγνόμενον (d1)] should no longer come to be out of a beginning." The reasoning is that everything that comes to be would no longer be coming out of a beginning, per d1, but out of this intermediate stage. This reasoning once again assumes only absolute beginnings.

35. This is so whatever reading one accepts. The reading "ἀδιάφθορον" is from T and Proclus. Stobaeus read the less emphatic "ἄφθορον." B has "ἀδιάφορον," "not different." The beginning, since it is ungenerated, must not "change" in any way. The only way a beginning can change is to lose its status as a beginning, for the only property a beginning has is beginningness.

36. Ryan 2012, 180–83. See Blyth 1997, 208–9, for a balanced view.

37. Griswold 1986, 82–83.

38. Cf. Hackforth 1959; 66n2, de Vries 1969, ad loc; Rowe 1986 ad 245d7–e2.

39. De Vries says that the soul must be tender and virgin "in order to be impressionable" (1969, ad loc).

40. "Here at least the argument fails to achieve the rigour to which it otherwise pretends" (Rowe 1986, ad loc).

41. de Vries 1969, ad 245c5ff. In *De anima* 405a30–32, Alcmaeon says about the soul that "αὐτην ἀθάνατον εἶναι διὰ τὸ ἐοικέναι τοῖς ἀθανάτοις: τοῦτο δ'ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ ὡς ἀεὶ κινουμένῃ: κινεῖσθαι γὰρ καὶ τὰ θεῖα πάντα συνεχῶς ἀεί, σελήνη, ἥλιον, τοὺς ἀστέρας καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ὅλον." See also Robinson 1968, 13 and 16n17.

42. That Socrates puts self-movement (κίνησις αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν κινεῖν) in the category of phenomena that some people doubt and that other people accept, in line with self-seeing, self-hearing, and self-burning (*Charmides* 168e9–10), suggests this is a popular topic.

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