

Plato describes the death of Socrates in the dialogue, the PHAEDO. In that dialogue Plato becomes the first human to set into written form an attempt to prove that human beings have souls which are spiritual and immortal. Many cultures have such a belief. It can be found all around the world. However, the Greeks were the first to attempt to offer a proof for its existence and a proof based upon reasoning. In order to understand the PHAEDO and its arguments one must first be aware of Plato's Theory of the Forms. This is needed for Plato makes use of them in attempting to prove that the soul exists and that it survives the death of the body.

In the PHAEDO Plato uses the Theory of the Forms. Aristotle made it clear that Socrates did not use that theory, it was developed later by Plato. So what is most likely is that Plato probably began the dialogue right after the death of Socrates. He must have taken notes. He was not present at the death; he was ill. He probably recorded what others told him occurred and then years later returned to the notes and finished the dialogue. So the PHAEDO is a mix of what Socrates actually said and words Plato placed into the mouth of Socrates to complete the arguments and offer stronger ones consistent with Plato's views. It is likely a Dialogue from Plato's middle period of creativity.(see mini-lecture on Plato's Dialogues) The dialogue contains four different arguments to prove the existence of the soul. Socrates states at the conclusion of the first that it is sufficient. The other three were probably added later by Plato and utilize references to Plato's theory of the forms.

### **The THEORY of the FORMS**

For many years I presented this theory in class utilizing a series of questions and practical demonstrations. In this medium we shall attempt to get as close as possible to that.

We start off with a simple question:

**What is this a picture of?**



You probably answered that it is a chair. And you are correct!

Now answer this question:

**What is a chair?**