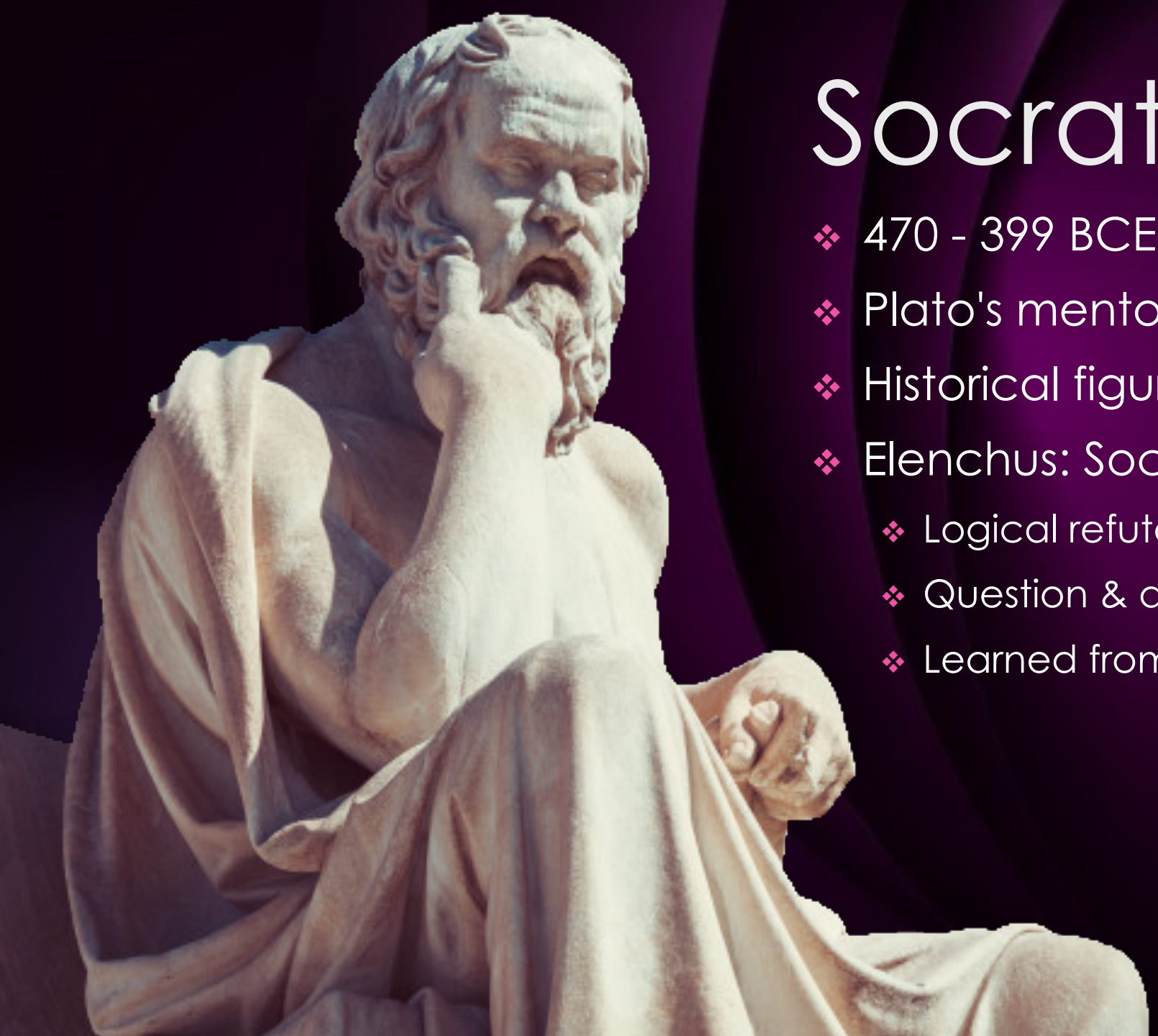
Platonism

CONCEPTS IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

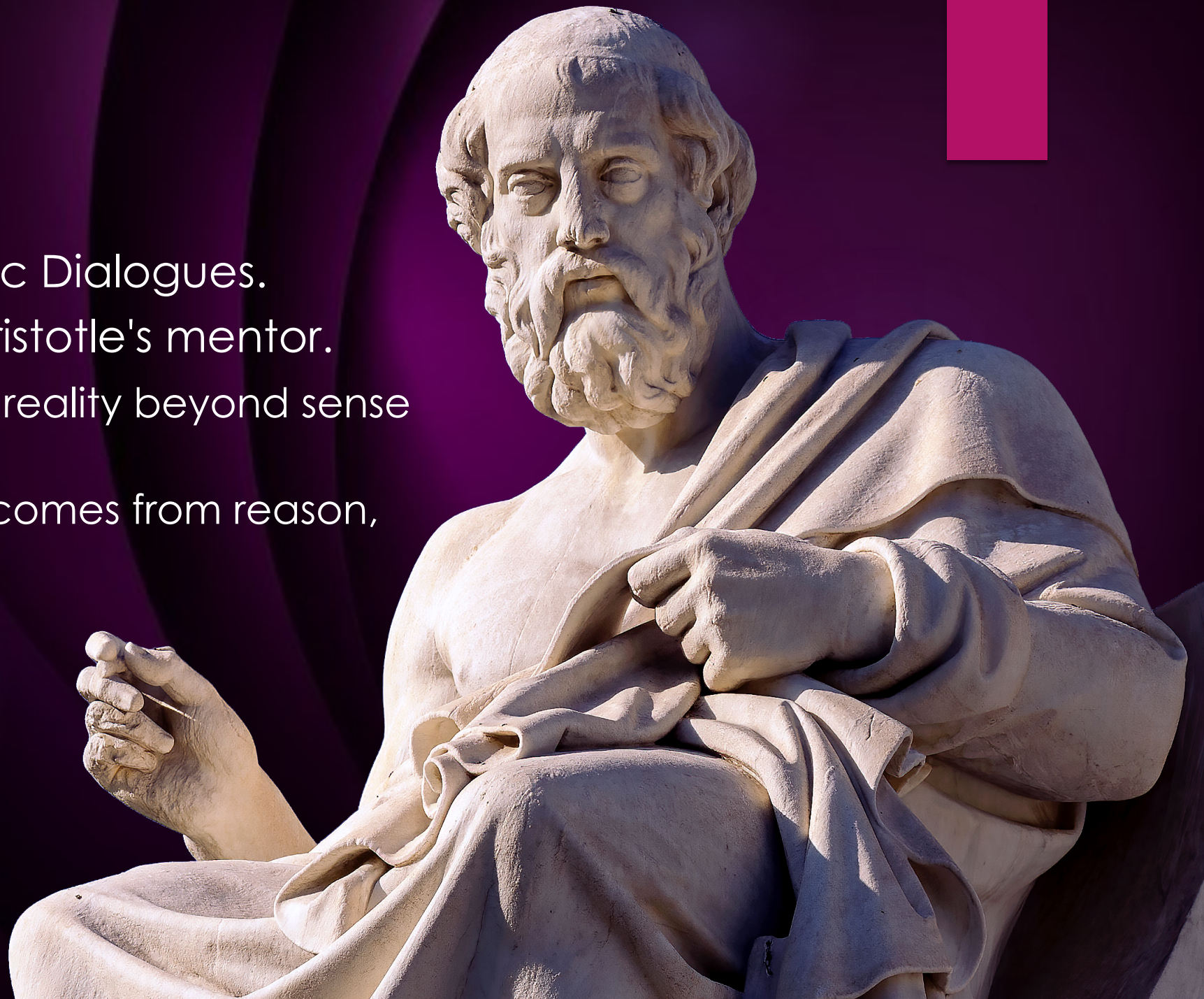


Socrates

- 470 - 399 BCE.
- Plato's mentor.
- Historical figure & Plato's mouthpiece.
- Elenchus: Socratic Method.
  - Logical refutation.
  - Question & answer.
  - Learned from Parmenides?

Plato

- 424 – 348 BCE.
- Authour of the Platonic Dialogues.
- Socrates' student & Aristotle's mentor.
- Idealist: concepts have reality beyond sense impressions.
- Rationalist: knowledge comes from reason, rather than perception.



Trial & Death of Socrates

EUTHYPHRO, APOLOGY, CRITO & PHAEDO

Platonism

- A cognitive ontology: what we know.
- Universals vs. particulars:
  - Universals: concepts, definitions, qualities, ideas, categories.
    - Grasped by the soul.
    - Reside in the Realm of Forms: transcendent; metaphysical; timeless; pure.
    - Examples: Oneness, Equality, Justice, Truth, Beauty, Anger.
  - Particulars: people, places, things, events.
    - Grasped by the senses.
    - Participate in the Forms.
    - Examples: your fingers, a cat, a chair, the room, the temperature.

Recollection & The Soul

- Recollection: learning & defining process; development of understanding.
  - An Epistemology: how we know.
    - We know of the Forms by remembering them, not through our senses.
    - We remember them from before birth.
  - Two versions/tales:
    - The soul knows the Forms, but the bodily senses obstruct the soul's memory of them.
    - We forget the Forms at birth. Contemplation & deliberation rekindle those memories.
- The soul: eternal, invisible, cognizant.
  - Returns to the Realm of Forms in death.
  - Returns to the world at birth.
  - Retains cognizance within the Realm of Forms.

Contemporary Theories

Prototypes

- Prototype Theory:
  - Introduced by psychologist Eleanor Rosch in 1971.
  - Cognitive theory of categorization:
    - Prototype: the first stimulus we associate with a category; the central member within a category.
    - Categorization: comparison between prototype & new stimuli.
    - Gradation (fuzzy boundaries): some members of a category stray far from the prototype & overlap other categories.
  - Alternative to Aristotle's classical theory of categories.
    - Emphasis on memory & nurture.

Gradation

Exemplars

- Exemplar Theory:
  - Introduced by Robert Nosofsky in 1980s.
  - Alternative to Prototype Theory:
    - We compare new stimuli with numerous examples already within that category.
    - An exemplar is one of the numerous examples stored in memory.
  - Compatible with Prototype Theory?
    - Recent psychological studies on categorization demonstrate a preference for exemplars, though prototypes are still used.
    - Integration of Heterogeneous Proxytypes in AI architecture (Antonio Lieto, 2018).
      - Enhance common-sense reasoning capabilities.

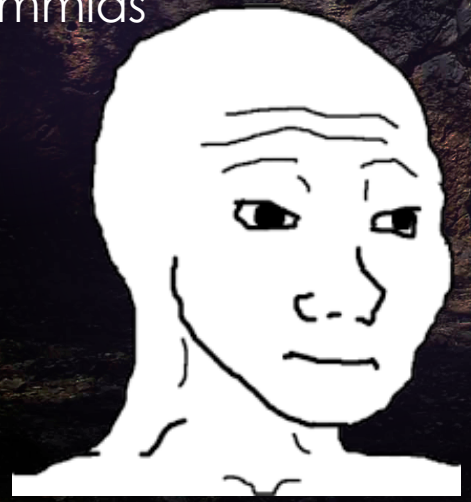
PHAEDO

A DIALOGUE ABOUT SOUL, FORMS, KNOWLEDGE, AND RECOLLECTION

Phaedo's Recounted Dialogue

Cebes

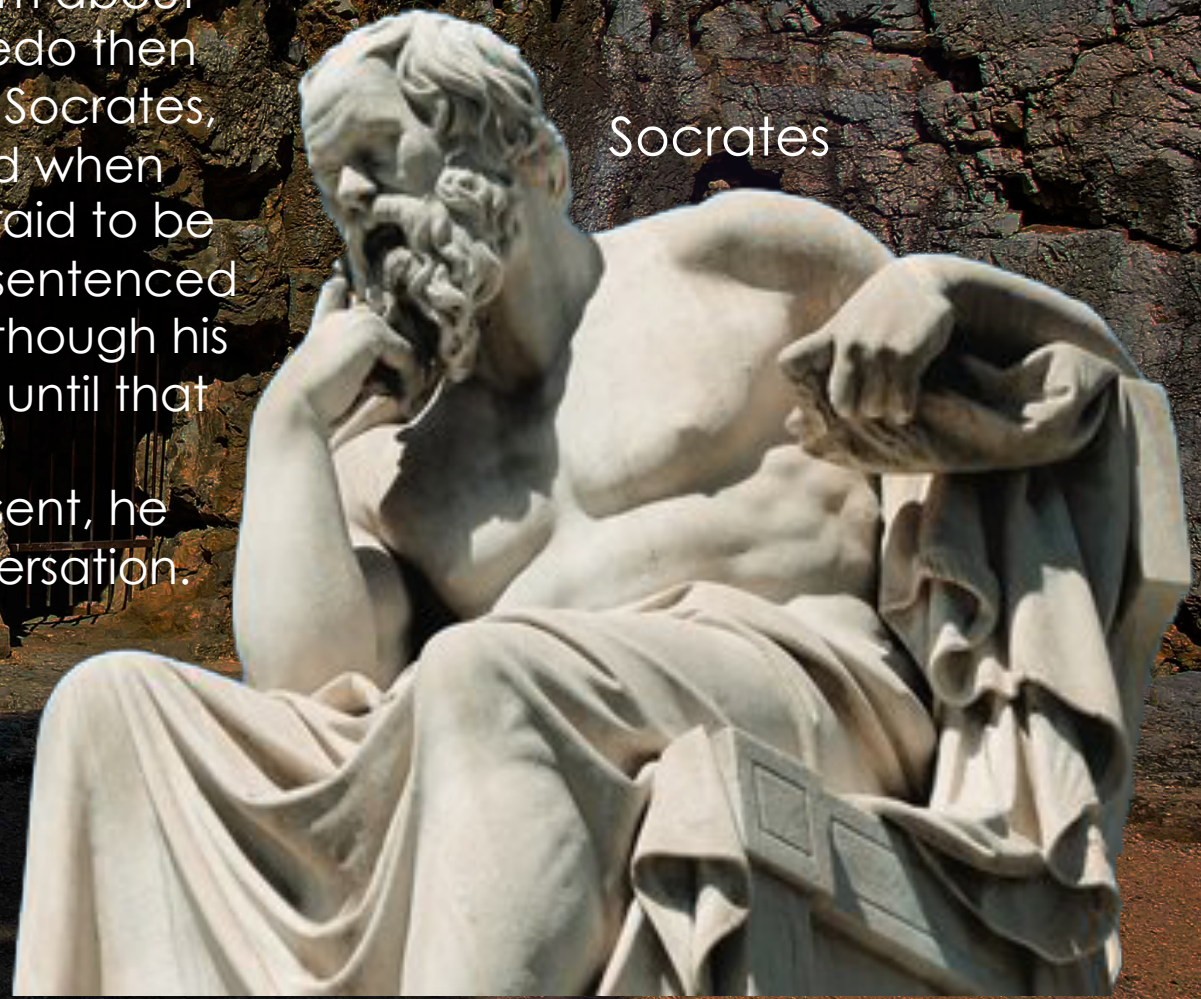
Simmias



Phaedo meets with Echecrates (a Pythagorean) a few days after Socrates' execution. Echecrates asks him about Socrates' final moments. Phaedo then recounts a dialogue between Socrates, Simmias, and Cebes sparked when Socrates mentions he is not afraid to be executed. Socrates had been sentenced to death about a month ago, though his execution had been delayed until that day.

Note: though Phaedo is present, he doesn't weigh in on the conversation.

Socrates



On the Fear of Death

On the Fear of Death

Socrates, we came because we heard your execution is today!

On the Fear of Death

That it is, Simmias.

On the Fear of Death

How is it you're so calm and collected? Aren't you afraid to die?

On the Fear of Death

The philosopher does not fear death but welcomes it.

On the Fear of Death

Then why not take your own life, since you're a philosopher?

On the Fear of Death

Because we are the gods' possessions, and just as we would be angry if our possessions destroyed themselves, so too would the gods be angry and vengeful if we destroyed ourselves.

On the Fear of Death

Then why don't the philosophers resent dispossession by the gods in death, seeing as they are wise and the gods' prized possessions? Why wouldn't they wish to remain here, governed by the gods who are their betters?

On the Fear of Death

I second that.

On the Fear of Death

"Because I have good hope
that some future awaits
men after death."

On the Fear of Death

What future? Tell us about it.

On the Fear of Death

Sure, but first let me restate that philosophers are meant to spend their life in preparation for death. It wouldn't make sense to resent the coming of what one spent their life preparing for.

On the Fear of Death

Lol Socrates, you're a walking stereotype. Most people mock philosophers for being nearly dead. Some even wish death upon them.

On the Fear of Death

True, though we're only 'nearly dead' in a certain sense. Let me explain: by death we mean the separation of body and soul?

On the Fear of Death

Yeah.

On the Fear of Death

All right. Do we agree philosophers are not to be concerned with bodily pleasures like eating, drinking, sex, material possessions, or wealth, but rather with freeing their souls from association with the body as much as possible?

On the Fear of Death

We agree.

On the Fear of Death

And do we agree that truth and reality are acquired by reason alone, since the body obstructs us in our search for truth, because our senses deceive us?

On the Fear of Death

Yes, that too.

On the Fear of Death

And do you believe there are such things as the Forms like Justice, Goodness, Beauty, Bigness, Health, and Strength; none of which are grasped by the bodily senses but by the soul?

On the Fear of Death

Of course.

On the Fear of Death

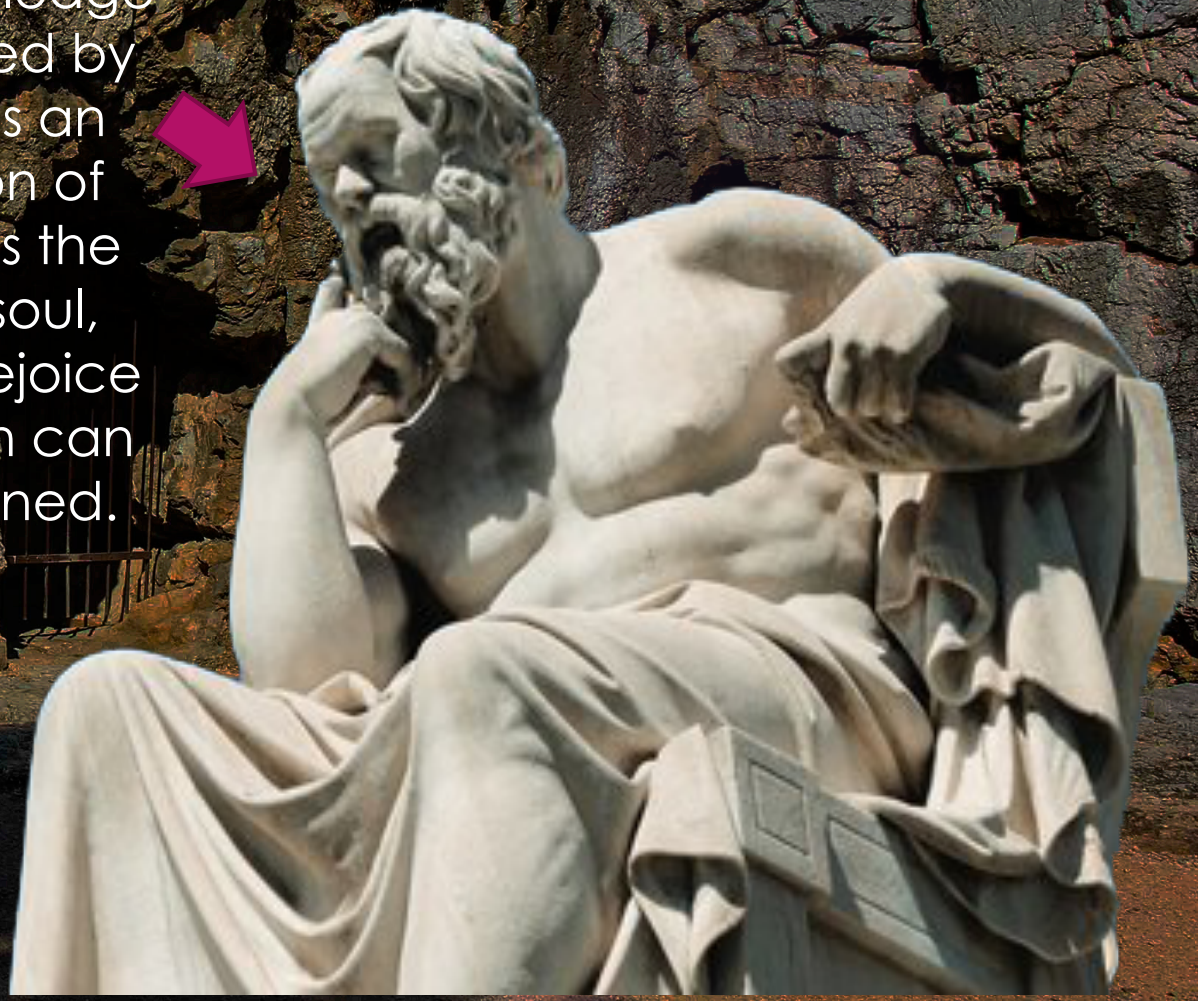
It follows then that the philosophers, who concern themselves with truth and use reason alone to grasp the reality of these concepts, while disregarding as best they can the influence of the body, will attain the most accurate knowledge of reality.

On the Fear of Death

That does follow.

On the Fear of Death

Well, there you have it. If philosophers strive for knowledge which can only be obtained by the soul, and if the body is an obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge, and if death is the separation of body and soul, then philosophers should rejoice in death, since only therein can pure knowledge be obtained.



On the Fear of Death

Okay, I get it now.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

Hold on, Socrates. What you say about the soul isn't necessarily true! Your argument is based on the belief that the soul isn't annihilated in the event of death.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

Good point, Cebes. In response, let me examine the myth of the underworld. Some believe that the souls of the dead reside there, and some others believe that the souls of the living are born here from there. I will try to prove that this is the case, and in so doing prove also the immortality of the soul.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

Go for it.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

Would you agree that things come to be from their opposites? For instance: that a thing becomes big from small, and becomes small from big? Would you say this also of the strong and the weak, the beautiful and the ugly, the just and the unjust, the worse and the better, and so on and vice-versa?

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

I would say that.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

And do you agree that death is the opposite of life?

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

Of course.

On the Immortality of the Soul 1

My guy, if life and death are opposites, then they must come to be from one another.
It follows that if the dead come to be from the living, then the living come to be from the dead. So, the dead must reside in the underworld. If this were not true, then everyone would be dead, just like how everyone would be asleep if they couldn't wake up.

On Recollection

Huh, that's a good one. I can see it relates to your theory of recollection: that the soul is immortal and pre-exists the body, so our knowledge of concepts comes from our memory of them.

On Recollection

I've heard that
theory too Cebes,
but I've never heard
a proof for it.

On Recollection

I can prove it for you, Simmias.

On Recollection

Right on.

On Recollection

Do you agree that some things remind us of other things which are dissimilar from themselves? For instance: when someone looks at a shirt and is reminded of a loved-one, or when someone looks at a drawing and remembers the one who drew it, or when someone looks at you yourself and remembers Cebes?

On Recollection

Yeah.

On Recollection

And do you agree that the form of equality, or the Equal itself, exists and can be known?

On Recollection

Yeah, that too.

On Recollection

"Whence have we acquired the knowledge of it?" Would you agree of sticks and stones which appear to be equal, that upon further investigation they turn out to be different, and that the perceived equality between them is different than the Equal itself? That knowing this perceived equality falls short of knowing the Equal itself?

On Recollection

Certainly.

On Recollection

Good. Do you agree that someone who, upon seeing something, knows that it resembles something else which it is like but also inferior to, must have prior knowledge of the superior something it's being compared to?

On Recollection

Yes, I agree.

On Recollection

Then it must be that our souls acquired knowledge of the Equal before birth, since we cannot know it through our senses, so that our knowledge of it is like that of a recollected memory. It must also then be, since we've witnessed the Equal and remember it, that the soul pre-exists the body.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

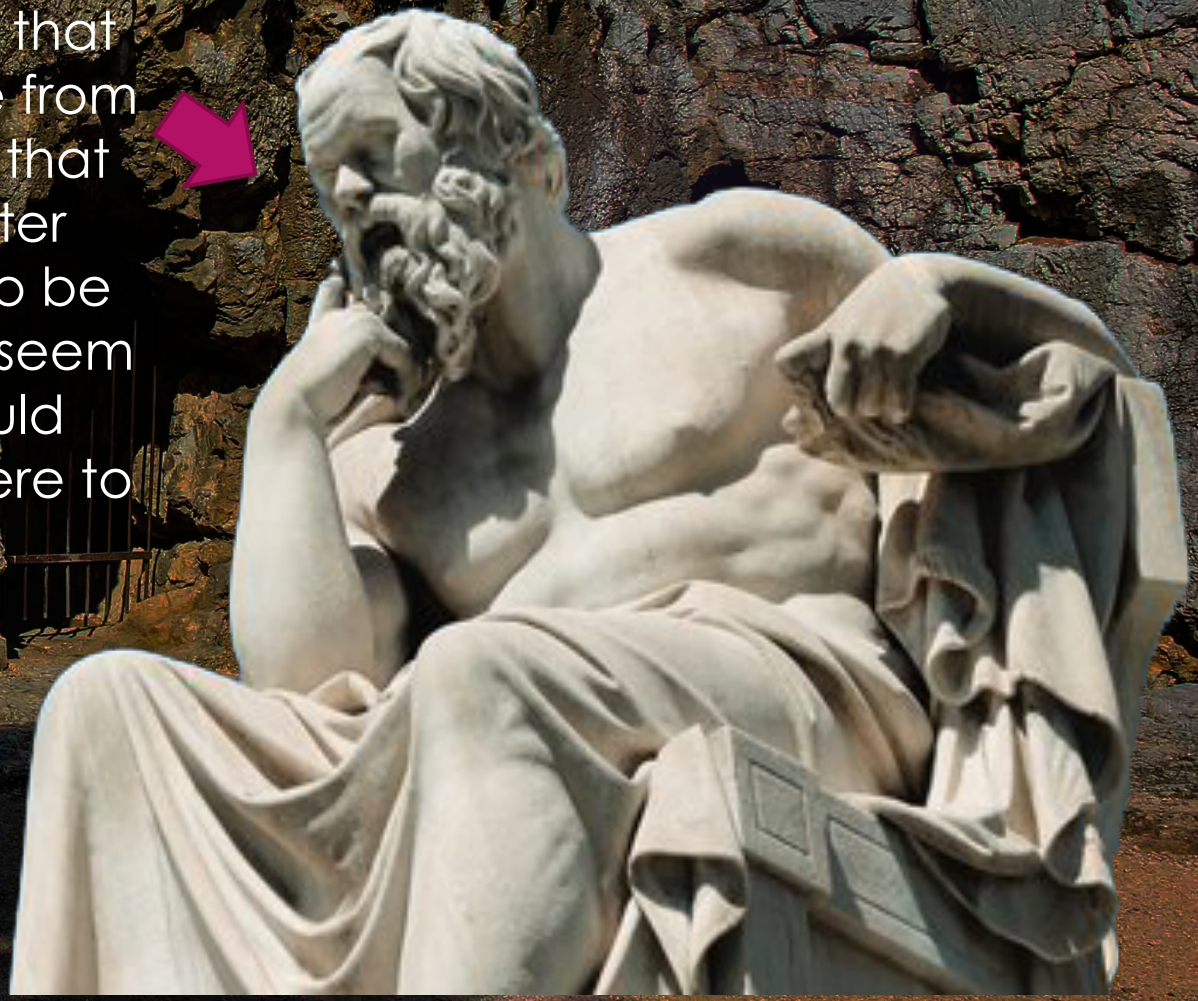
Well, Socrates, you've convinced me that the soul pre-exists the body, but you still haven't proven that the soul continues to exist after death.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Word.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Really? If you only consider what we previously established: that the souls of the living come from the dead; then it must be that they continue to exist after death in the underworld to be brought back in birth. You seem afraid that your soul would scatter like leaves if you were to die on a windy day.



On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Lmao! We aren't afraid Socrates; we just aren't convinced.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

All right then, I'll try to prove it another way. What kinds of things are likely to scatter or be destroyed? That would be composite things, right?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Right.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

And would you say of things that always remain the same that they are pure rather than composite?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

I would say that.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

So, what would you say of the Forms we were just talking about? Would you say that the Equal, or the Beautiful themselves stay the same or change from day to day?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

They always stay the same.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

And what of the particulars we discussed: sticks, and rocks, and the like? Do they stay the same, or are they prone to change?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

They are prone to change of course.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Good. Now, do you agree that the particulars are grasped by the senses, and are visible, whereas the Forms are grasped by reason, and are invisible?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

I agree.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

Returning to the soul and the body: would you agree that the body is more akin to the visible, and that the soul is more akin to the invisible? Would you also agree now, as you did earlier, that the invisible Forms are grasped by the soul, while the visible particulars are grasped by the body?

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

I think those are both sound statements, Socrates.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

So, then, you must also agree, based on the previous statements you've agreed to, that the soul is like the Forms, and always stays the same, whereas the body is like the particulars, and is prone to change.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

I guess I do, yes.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

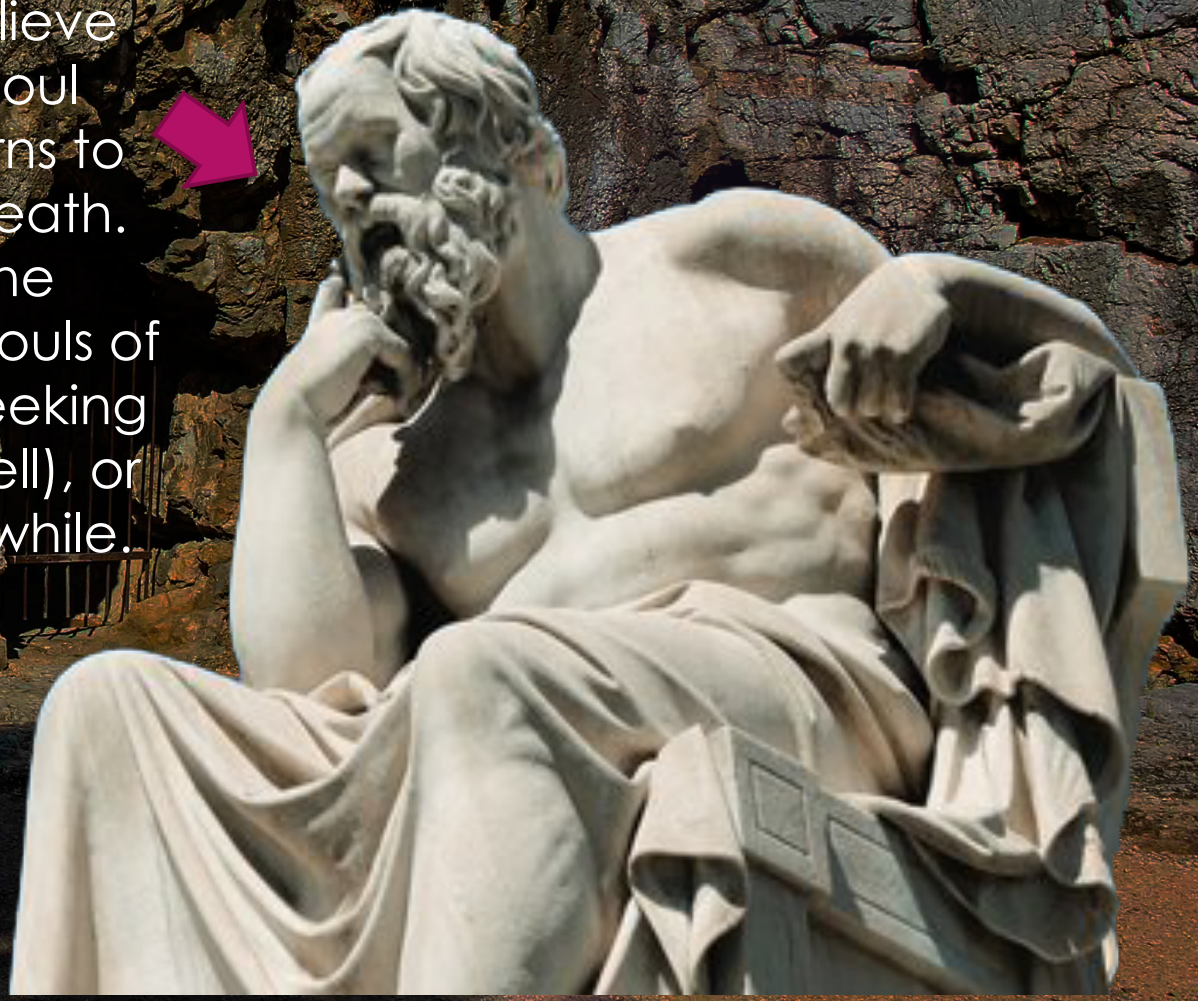
Well, there it is. If the soul is more like the pure, unchanging, invisible Forms, which are not composite, it cannot be that the soul scatters in death.

On the Immortality of the Soul 2

A splendid argument, Socrates!

On the Virtue of Philosophy

I would also like to add, if I may, that though the soul is indestructible, I do also believe that the quality of one's soul determines whether it returns to the Realm of Forms after death. No doubt this is true of the philosophers' souls, but the souls of the wicked and pleasure-seeking either end up in Tartarus (hell), or they become ghosts for a while.

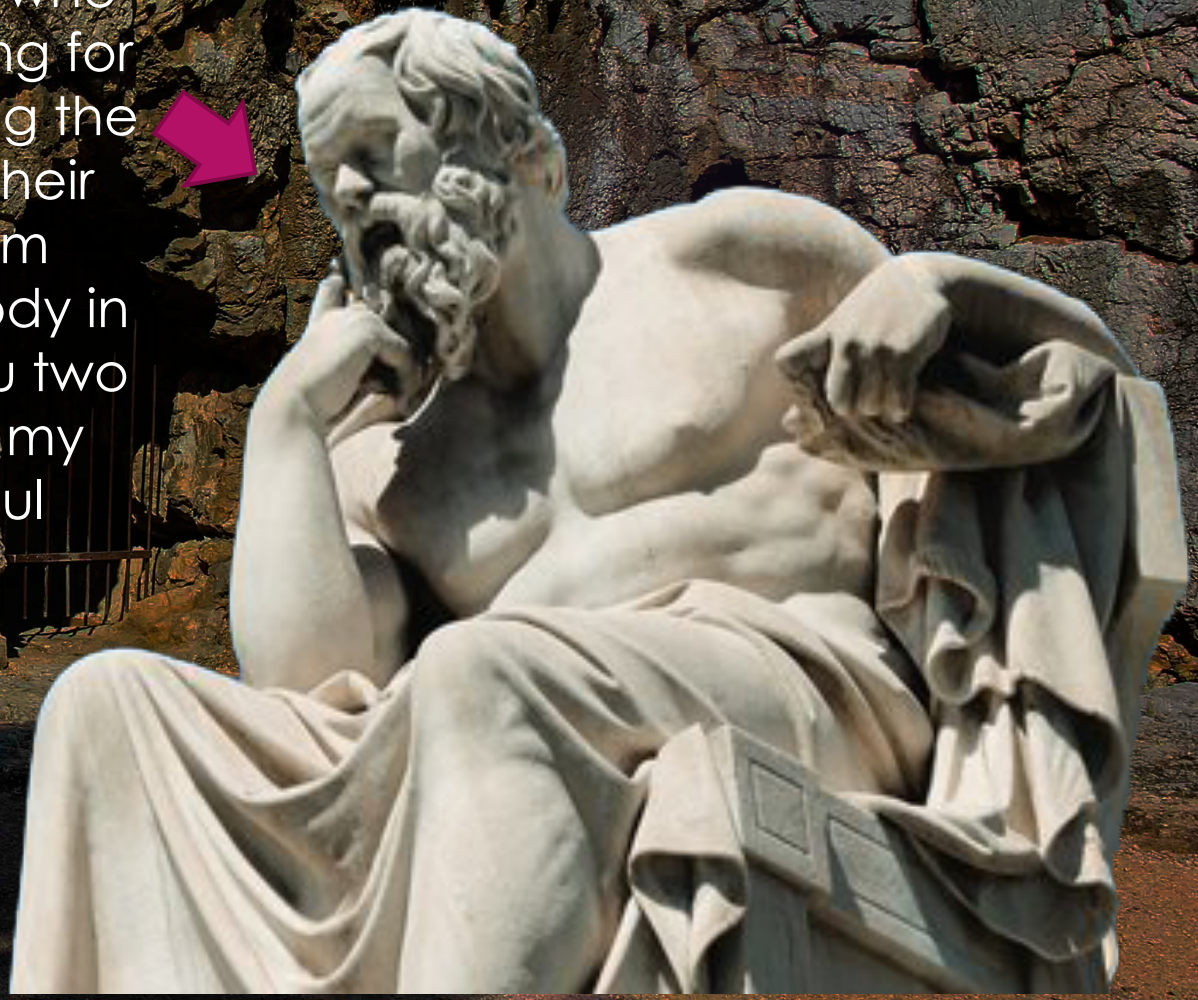


On the Virtue of Philosophy

You serious?

On the Virtue of Philosophy

Deadass.
Only the philosophers, who spend their life preparing for death by contemplating the true and divine, free their souls completely from association with the body in death. So, what do you two think? Have I justified my beliefs about the soul adequately?



On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Honestly, Socrates, I still don't think your proof is adequate. Do you, Cebes?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Nah, me neither.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Hmm. Okay then, what's the problem?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Well, if we were to liken the soul to harmony, you would seem to be saying that a harmony continues to exist even after the instrument it was played on is out of tune, or even smashed to bits. I don't see how this is the case.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

I hear you, Simmias. And you, Cebes?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

My issue, Socrates, is that even if it's true, as you say, that the soul survives death and is brought back multiple times, there's no evidence that the soul doesn't eventually perish as well, after having worn out many bodies.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Interesting… Let me get this straight: you, Simmias, liken the soul to harmony, and are concerned that even though it is invisible, it predeceases the body, as would a harmony if we smashed the instrument?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

That's right, but I only say so because I've heard others use the same metaphor.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

I got you.
And you, Cebes, you're concerned that even though the soul is more resilient than the body, and goes through many, it too perishes when separating from its last body?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

You got it.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

All right, just making sure. Now, Simmias, have you changed your mind about the earlier statements we made concerning recollection, and the soul's pre-existing the body.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Nope. I'm still on board with that.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

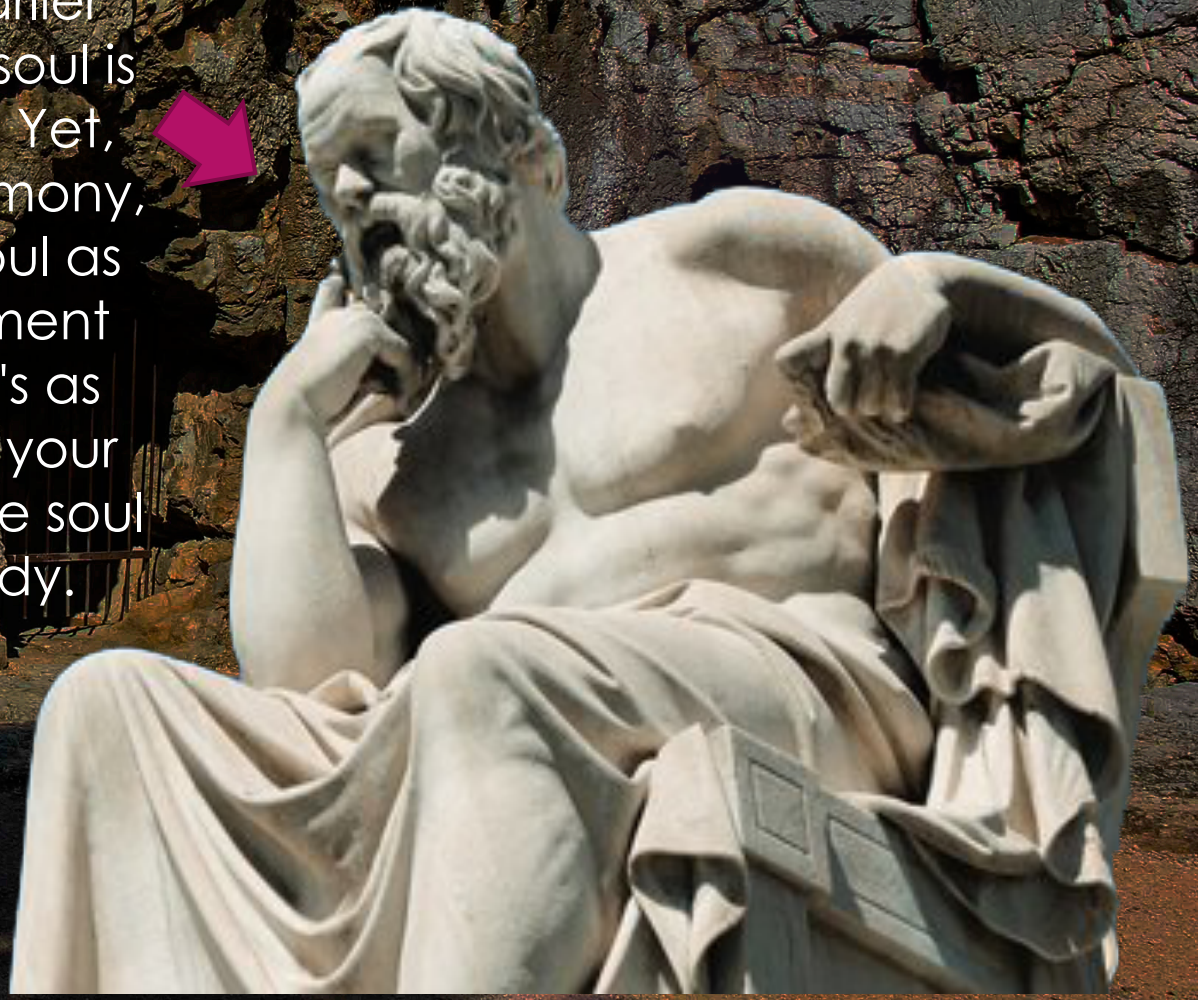
You do realize those statements, and the ones you make now about the soul being akin to harmony, are inconsistent with one another?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Wtaf? How so?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Well, one of the premises from which we drew those earlier conclusions was that the soul is not composite, but pure. Yet, by likening the soul to harmony, you are describing the soul as composed by the instrument with which it is played. It's as though you've changed your mind, and now believe the soul is composed by the body.



On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Oh.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Furthermore, if the soul is harmony, then what would it mean to play a disharmonious tune on an instrument? Would you liken disharmony, then, to a wicked soul?

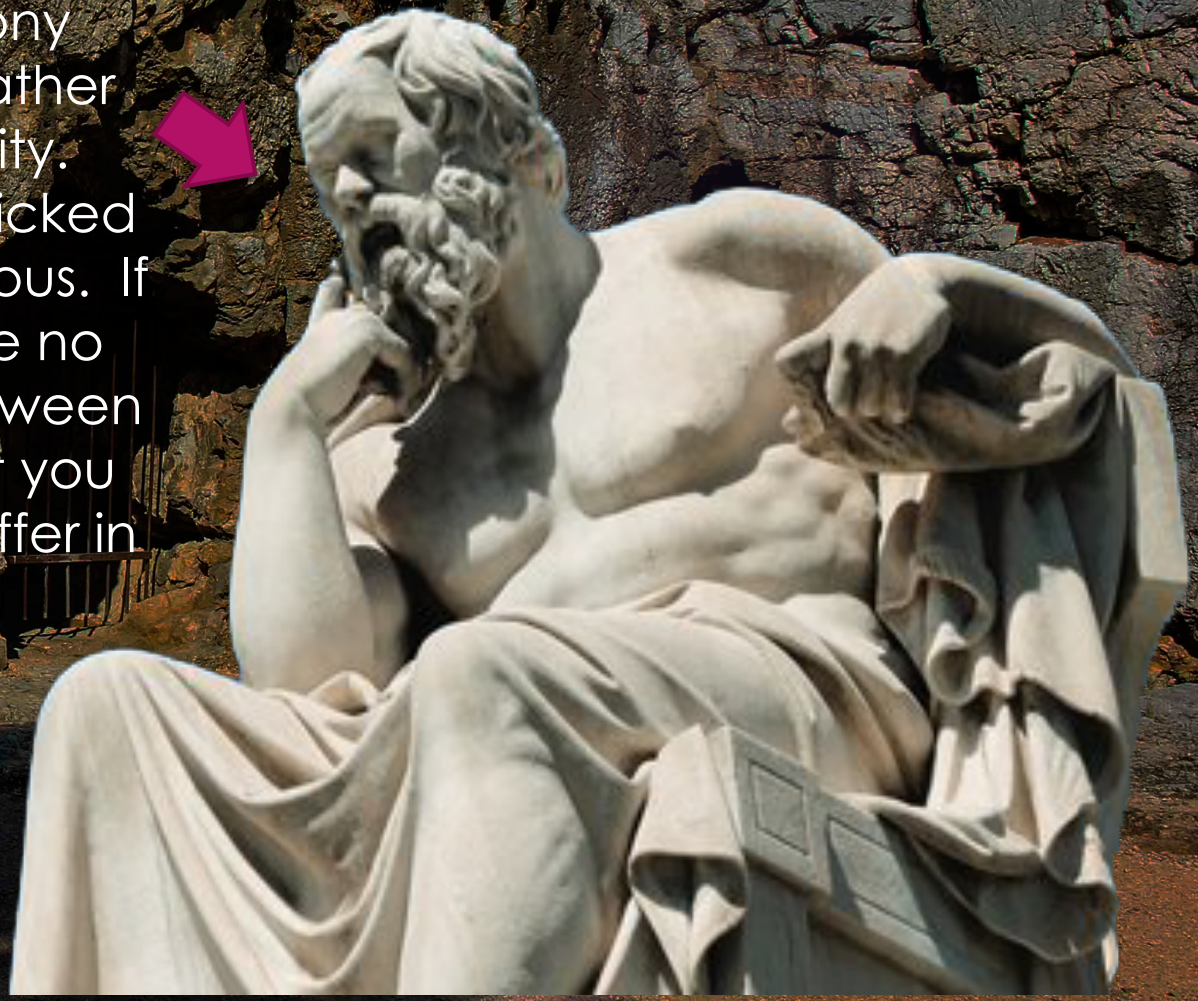
On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Yeah, I guess.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

So, there is a second inconsistency. If the soul is truly harmony, then disharmony would be a lack of soul, rather than a soul of poor quality.
So, even the souls of the wicked would have to be harmonious. If that's true, there would be no discernable difference between one soul and another, but you agreed earlier that souls differ in their quality.

*I forgot to add the part where Simmias agreed to this. Would be around slide 78.



On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Oh damn! You're right Socrates.

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

So, Simmias, to remain consistent with yourself, you either need to concede your present argument that the soul is harmony or change your mind so as to disagree with our previous conclusions. Which do you prefer?

On the Immortality of the Soul 3

Hmm... I'd rather concede the present argument.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

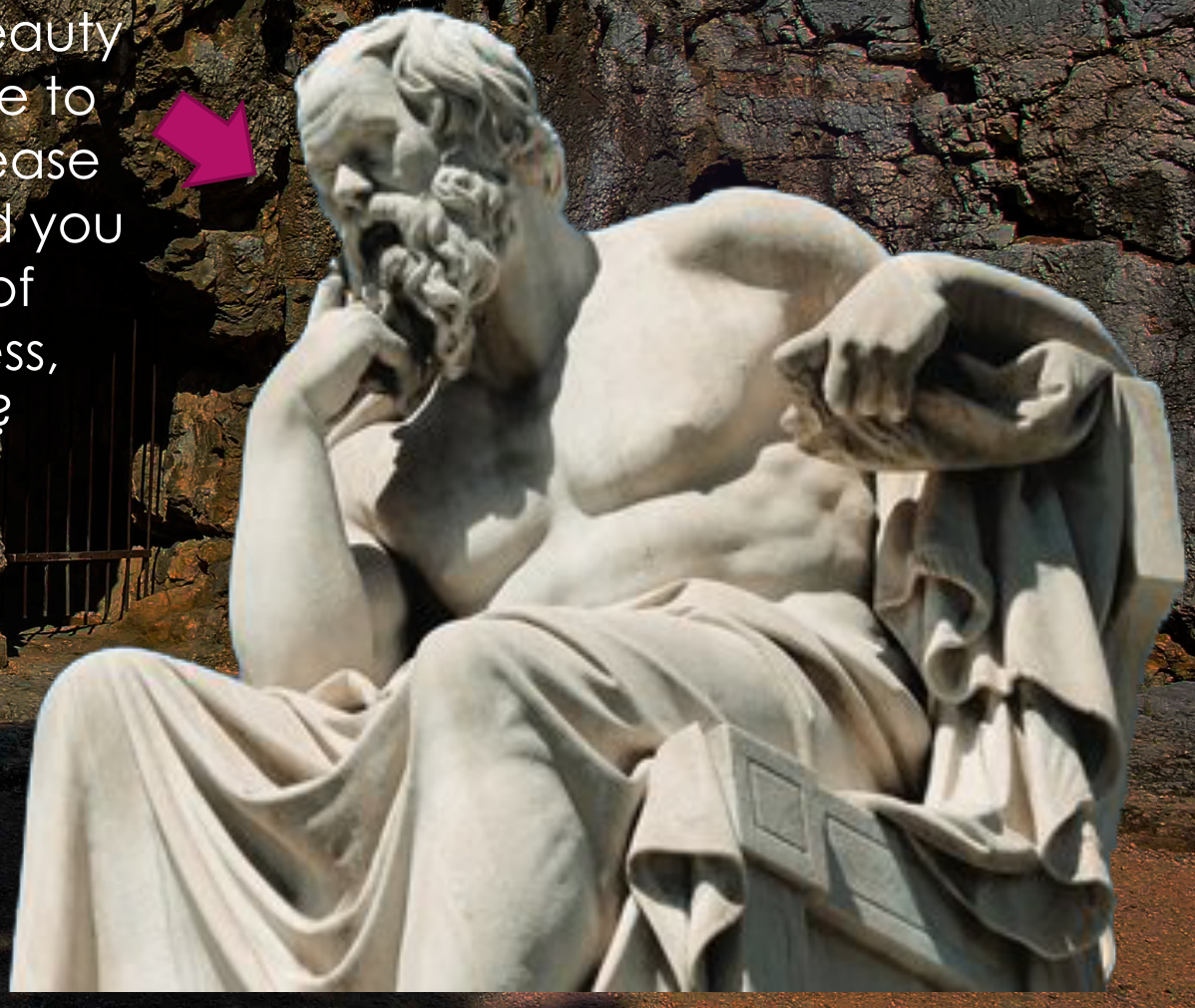
Wonderful. Now it's your turn, Cebes.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Right on.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Would you agree that what makes things beautiful is Beauty itself, so that if a thing were to lose its beauty, it would cease to be beautiful? And would you also agree in the case of Bigness, Smallness, Tallness, Shortness, and the like?



On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Yup.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Would you say Simmias is taller than I am, but shorter than Phaedo, and that this is because Phaedo has tallness with respect to Simmias, Simmias shortness with respect to him, and me shortness with respect to both?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

I would.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Then Simmias is called both short and tall, since he is taller than me but shorter than Phaedo. My question is, can Tallness ever be anything other than itself, or ever admit of its opposite: Shortness?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

No, it can't, and I would say that for all such concepts.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Cool. By that I meant to ask if you think Tallness would disappear if Shortness were ever to approach it, and vice-versa?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Yes, that's what I think.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Good. Do you also think that things which share in a Form, cannot admit of the opposite Form?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Yes, that too.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

So, snow will never admit of Hotness, because it's cold, nor will two ever admit of Oddness, because it's even?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

On God.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Now, pay close attention Cebes. What is it, present in the body, that gives it life?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

The soul, of course.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

And what is life's opposite?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Death.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Indeed. So then, would you agree that since the soul is the Form of life, and death is life's opposite, that the soul could never admit of it, in the same way Oddness could never present itself in the number two?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

I would.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

That makes the soul deathless, doesn't it?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

It does.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

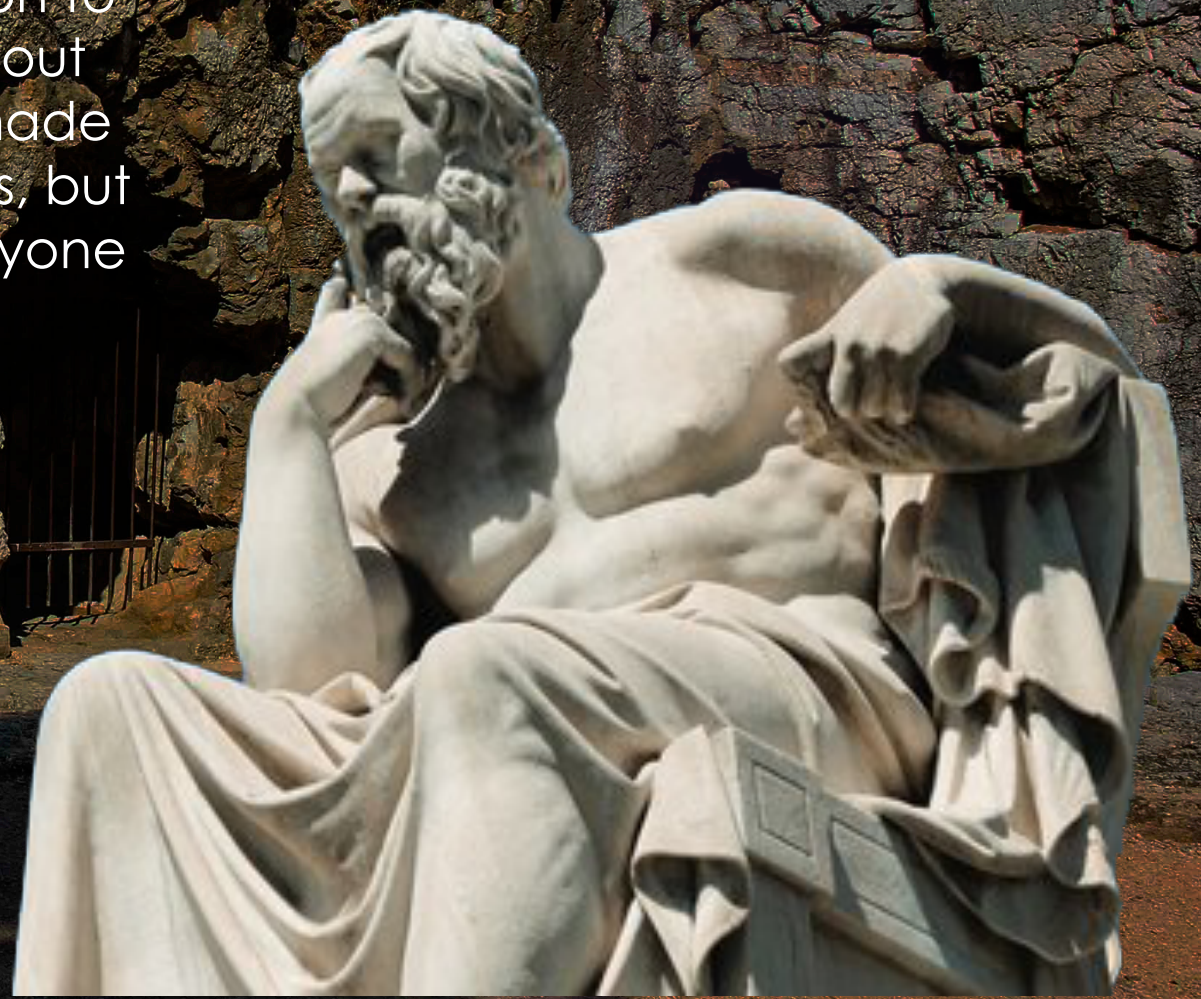
How's that for proof then?

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Very good, Socrates. You've convinced me.

On the Immortality of the Soul 4

Swaggy.

The End

Satisfied, Socrates goes on to tell a few more tales about the afterlife. He is then made to drink hemlock and dies, but not before mocking everyone for crying about it.