

In this paper, Plato's argument from invisibility for the conclusion that the soul cannot be destroyed (*Phaedo*, pp. 68-70, margin numbers 78b-80c) is reconstructed into the following six premises and one conclusion:

P1. Visible things are composite.

P2. Invisible things are non-composite.

P3. Composite things can be split up and are dissoluble.

P4. Non-composite things cannot be split up and are indissoluble.

P5. If the soul is invisible, then it is non-composite and it cannot be split up.

P6. Since the soul is not detectable by senses, it must be invisible.

C. Therefore, the soul continues to exist.

The word "composite" is used in premise 1 to premise 4 frequently. In Plato's definition, something that is composite means that it can be divided into smaller pieces than the original object. "Non-composite", on the other hand, has the opposite meaning – something that cannot be cut into smaller chunks.

Plato defines "invisible things" as anything that is not detectable by the five senses – taste, touch, sight, smell and sound. He continues to argue that if an object is invisible, then it is non-composite since it is impossible for one to split up the object that does not have a physical appearance. An object of such is "indissoluble". The word "indissoluble" means that the object

cannot be split up or change gradually in this context; in other words, it continues to exist and is indestructible.

Furthermore, Plato claims that physical things, such as human bodies, are composite, and qualitative things, such as ideas and properties, are non-composite through his daily observations. This is certainly convincing. If an object is visible, then it has a physical appearance that one can touch and interact with, and such an object is composite by his definition. This is because one could make it scattered as it can be affected by the external forces from the physical world. On the contrary, qualitative properties such as “the Equal itself [and] the Beautiful itself” (*Phaedo*, pp. 69, margin numbers 78d-e) are not interactable with any physical factors; they are abstract definitions that remains uniform and the same in the way of how they are defined. If qualitative properties were changeable after a period of time, they would no longer be themselves. They would become something completely non-relevant, due to the fact that their identity holds by their definition and does not tolerate any alteration.

Assuming that all the premises about invisible and non-composite objects are true and the soul does exist, then the soul which is certainly not detectable by any of the five senses falls under the invisible and non-composite category. Plato asserts that the soul “[which] resembles the divine ... [is] deathless, intelligible, uniform, [and] indissoluble” (*Phaedo*, pp. 70, margin numbers 80a-c) to support his argument that the soul has the properties of invisible things. Therefore, one is able to finally conclude that the soul does continue to exist and cannot be destroyed, regardless of the status of the body which the soul belongs to, even if it is after one’s death.

Nevertheless, although Plato’s argument is valid, it is not sound. There is a hidden assumption that Plato believes to be true without any supporting evidence in premise 6 which

states that the soul must be invisible. The interference implicitly made in premise 6 is that the soul does exist. If the soul does not exist, it is certainly not detectable by any of one's senses since it is never there to start with. The existence of the soul is questionable due to the lack of understanding of the subject. People who believe in physicalism argue that the soul is equivalent as one's consciousness; it is the transmitting signal among neurons to pass nerve impulses in the mind. Even though physicalism denies the continuity of people's consciousness/soul after their death, one cannot completely deny the correctness of this premise at its time in order to reject the argument, especially because of the fact that physicalism had not well-developed yet at Plato's time. It is still controversial to claim the soul does not exist at all even now, since no reliable pieces of evidence have found to prove whether it exists or not. The focus of Plato's argument from invisibility is that the soul is indestructible, and an additional argument that the soul does exist can be added in advance to make the argument sound. People could also argue that premise 6 is true in Plato's period.

However, as time passed, the daily observation used as the evidence to support the first four premises to be true collapses. For example, premise 2 states that invisible things are non-composite, and it was reasonable to believe that premise 2 is true during Plato's time when people had not acquired a sufficient understanding of the physical sciences and the idea that the decomposition of objects is made of chemical molecules. They only noticed that composite things were composite based on the gradual change of its physical appearance, and one could see the change only if it was visible. Nowadays, the science to explain why invisible things are not detectable by sight and composite objects are separable is developed enough to be sufficient to reject Plato's argument that invisible things must be non-composite. Air is one of the many counterexamples to prove that invisible thing could also be composite. Air is certainly invisible

under Plato's definition, as no one can see, taste or smell the air, but air consists of chemical molecules and can be split up to smaller particles such as oxygen, nitrogen, etc.; thus, air which is invisible is composite and separable. The word "composite" is given a contemporary meaning. Something that is composite means that it consists of many small particles such as the chemical elements, and this new meaning implies Plato's definition that composite things can be divided into smaller pieces than the original object at the time. Premise 2 that invisible things are non-composite is false in the modern time. Both of these objections, especially the one using air as a counterexample, is adequate enough to conclude that the premises are not all true, which proves that Plato's argument from invisibility for the conclusion that the soul cannot be destroyed is not sound.