PHIL 204

Greek Philosophy

Lecture 4

Socrates 469-399 BCE

Raphael, *The School of Athens*, 1509-10 (Vatican)
Click here for a key to the figures

Refutation of alternative theories

[6] *Simmias' objection:*

Just as in the affinity argument:

The soul is like the attunement (harmony) of a tuned lyre which does not exist apart from the lyre.

Socrates' reply to Simmias:

Everyone now accepts the recollection theory.

The attunement theory is incompatible with it.

Because harmony cannot exist prior to that which is harmonised.

(i) Attunement is composite.

The soul, unlike attunement, is not a property that depends on the prior existence of something - the material of the lyre and its organisation.

(ii) Attunement comes in degrees - the soul does not.

So if a soul is attunement, it must be the same degree of attunement as every other soul.

So the degree of attunement cannot explain vice and virtue.

(iii) The soul is the ruling principle of the body.

Attunment is governed by the material of the musical instrument but the soul governs the body.

[**7**] *Cebes' objection:*

Accept that the soul exists before birth.

But might the soul be like the body of a weaver?

It occupies many different coats while he is alive.

But eventually the weaver dies leaving his last coat intact!

[8] *Socrates' intellectual development:*

(a) Rejects scientific naturalism and reductionism.

(b) Seeks a rational principle of order based on value - an explanation of why things are as they should be

[9] *Socrates' New Method of Hypotheses:*

An Argument to the Best Explanation

Assume the principle judged to have the greatest explanatory power.

Affirm what follows from it and deny what is inconsistent with it.

Argument: Assume that absolute beauty (= the beautiful-itself), goodness (the-good-itself), greatness (the great itself), etc. exist.

Agreed: Something beautiful is beautiful because it participates in the-beautiful-itself (i.e. in absolute beauty) and the same holds for (all?) other features.

By participating in the beautiful-itself things become beautiful, by participating in the-great-itself) things become great, by participating in the-small-itself things become small.

Analysis: It is not proper to say *A* is taller by a head than *B* - rather *A* is taller by participating (more) in tallness.

We are not to say that ten exceeds eight by two but rather by number.

We should not say that the addition of one to one is the cause of two.

The **problem** is to find the ultimate explanation of the existence of two things as two things.

The cause of two(-ness) is participation in duality (the-two-itself).

Proceed to assume higher and higher principles of explanation.

Example: The existence of a pair of things explained by the existence of the number two which is itself explained by the existence of the Form, or Idea, of Duality.

Conclusion So Far:

Ideas (Forms) exist and other things participate in them and derive their names from them.

[10] *The Exclusion of Opposites:*

We predicate both greatness and smallness
of Simmias - Simmias is greater than Socrates, but
smaller than Phaedo. So Simmias is said to
be both great and small.

Neither greatness itself nor the greatness in
Simmias will ever be small.

In general no opposite in itself can change into the other opposite in itself.

Heat and cold are not the same as fire and snow, rather heat makes fire hot and cold makes snow cold.

Snow under the influence of heat does not remain snow - the snow either retires or perishes. Likewise for fire and cold.

Sometimes the name of the Idea is a applied to what participates in the Idea.

An odd number is always called 'odd'. Odd numbers are called 'odd' not because they are Oddness, i.e. The-Odd-Number-Itself but because they always participate in Oddness.

Essential opposites exclude one another and the presence of one opposite in a concrete thing precludes the presence of the other opposite.

So the number 3 cannot be turned into an even number.

These are things which when they are possessed guarantee the possession of something else.

Example: Possession of (participation in) the number three guarantees possession of (participation in) oddness.

Therefore an odd number can never be even.

Nothing which necessarily brings with it one opposite will allow the other to be present.

What makes a body alive: The presence of the soul.

So a soul brings life to a body.

The opposite of life is death.

A soul cannot receive the opposite of what it brings.

Something which will not admit death is immortal.

Therefore the soul does not admit of death.

Therefore the soul is immortal.

The immortal is imperishable.

Therefore the soul is immortal and imperishable.

Jaques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*, 1787 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)