READING THE *PHAEDO* IN *TUSCULAN DISPUTATIONS* 1

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THE DISCUSSION OF THE immortality of the soul in the first book of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* begins with a conspicuous display of deference to Platonic precedent. "Surely in eloquence I cannot surpass Plato," says the chief speaker of the dialogue (a version of Cicero himself whom I will designate, in keeping with traditional practice, with the letter "M") upon hearing his interlocutor express an anxious desire to be persuaded that there will be life after death.[1] "Carefully unravel that book of his that concerns the soul—there will be nothing more that you could require" (Cic. *Tusc*. 1.24).[2] The book recommended is of course the *Phaedo*, and for a moment, amid thoughts of Socrates in his prison cell, it seems that further consideration of immortality at Tusculum might well be superfluous. Then, in a striking reversal, the situation changes. The otherwise ill-educated interlocutor (an anonymous disciple, conventionally identified as "A") reveals that he has in fact read the *Phaedo* before, more than once. And his experiences with it have ultimately been less than satisfactory (*Tusc*. 1.24):

> feci mehercule et quidem saepius, sed nescio quo modo, dum lego, adsentior, cum posui librum et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum coepi cogitare, adsensio omnis illa elabitur.
>
> I have done so, by Hercules, and rather often at that. Yet somehow while I am reading I assent, but every time I put the book down and begin to ponder the immortality of souls on my own, all that assent slips away.

Apparently there is room, after all, for a new treatment of the subject at hand.

In the preface to *Tusculans* 1, Cicero asserts as a general principle that the existence of "Greek teachers and Greek writings" ought not to be regarded as an obstacle to Roman philosophical activity (*Tusc*. 1.1).[3] So it is not surprising that he should have been disposed to have his characters acknowledge Plato's canonical work and nonetheless discover a reason to continue beyond

1. The definitive treatment of the designation of the speakers in the dialogue is Pohlenz 1911. For a detailed discussion of how the speakers are characterized, see Gildenhard 2007, 21–34.

2. *num eloquentia Platonem superare possumus? evolve diligenter eius eum librum qui est de animo: amplius quod desideres nihil erit*. Translations of Latin and Greek are my own throughout. For the *Tusculan Disputations* I have relied on the edition of Giusta 1984. For the *Phaedo* I have used Strachan's Oxford Classical Text (in Strachan et al. 1995).

3. For analysis of Cicero's argument, in the first paragraph of the *Tusculans* preface, against the sufficiency of Greek philosophy, see Gildenhard 2007, 106–9.

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it.[4] What is remarkable is the manner in which A. describes the *Phaedo*'s inadequacy. The implication is not that M. is wrong and that Plato's book is unconvincing as such: there is no suggestion that the *Phaedo* has been found to be logically defective, badly written, or difficult to comprehend. To the contrary, A. affirms that he has been brought to believe in immortality on every occasion when he has read the dialogue, exactly as M. predicted. The problem is that the *Phaedo* has produced only a temporary enchantment—one that is entirely compelling as long as it lasts, but that fades when the book ends and A. returns, like a sleeper waking from a dream, to the reality of his own existence.[5]

The tale that A. tells is plausible enough prima facie and certainly convenient, inasmuch as it allows Cicero to move past the *Phaedo* without having to pause and criticize it in detail.[6] Yet there is much more to the story than simple pragmatism.[7] Within the context of *Tusculans* 1 as a whole, A.'s journey through assent and back to doubt plays an integral thematic role, as part of a pattern of concern with the practical challenges of philosophical persuasion—for this is not the first instance in the conversation where A. has difficulty with "assent" and finds himself unable to relinquish his deeply rooted fear of death. And beyond that there is an intertextual agenda at work. Far from representing a curt dismissal of Plato's book, A.'s experience in fact constitutes a variation on a Platonic theme, recalling specifically the episode at *Phaedo* 85c–88e where Socrates' interlocutors and auditors discover, after a period of silence following the conclusion of Socrates' initial attempt to justify his confidence in eternal life, that the argument that they have just heard, which seemed entirely persuasive while it was underway, has unexpectedly come to seem insufficient.[8] In concert with a number of other citations of the

4. The possibility that the existence and accessibility of Greek philosophy might render Roman philosophy superfluous is also raised and refuted at *Fin.* 1.4–10, *Acad. post*. 3–11, and to some extent at *Nat. D.* 1.7–8. See Citroni 2003, 164–71. It is, notably, not present in Cicero's earlier dialogues: in *De oratore*, *De re publica*, and *De legibus*—all works that tread heavily on areas that Plato had explored already—there is no suggestion that Platonic precedent is anything other than a spur to imitation and further inquiry (cf. *De or.* 1.28, *Rep.* 2.3, *Leg.* 1.15). The literature on Cicero's relationship to Plato is of course extensive. A selective list would include Van Heusde 1836, De Graff 1940, Douglas 1962, Zoll 1962, Burkert 1965, Gould 1968, Boyancé 1970, Görler 1988, Schütrumpf 1988, Long 1995, and Gorman 2005.

5. In a passing comment on this "odd passage in Cicero," Bishop Warburton was reminded of Seneca's comparison of belief in the immortality of the soul to indulgence in a *bellum somnium* (Sen. *Ep.* 102.1–2). Warburton's idiosyncratic interpretation of A.'s response is worth noting, if only for its value as a curiosity. He suggests that Cicero considered the *Phaedo* to be nothing more than an exoteric composition, and that A.'s disillusionment is meant to dramatize the response of a "better sort of reader" who, initially carried away by the "charms and allurements" of the dialogue, eventually comes to understand that Plato is not in fact making a philosophically serious argument: "But having thrown aside the book, grown cool, and reflected on those principles concerning God and the soul, held in common by the Philosophers . . . all the bright colouring disappears, and the gaudy vision shrinks from his embrace" (Warburton 1837, 477–78).

6. Gildenhard (2007, 245 n. 108) compares Cicero's narrative of his own experience as a reader of some (temporarily) consoling letters he had received from Atticus: *eas cum lego, minus mihi turpis videor, sed tam diu dum lego. deinde emergit rursum dolor et* αἰσχροῦ φαντασία (Cic. *Att*. 9.6.5). For the *Phaedo*'s dependence on the type of assent that comes from eloquence rather than argument, see Wyttenbach 1810, xxvi–xxvii, where Cicero's treatment is cited as testimony that whatever "error or obscurity there is in argumentation" in the *Phaedo* "was covered over by the *gravitas* and *suavitas* of Plato's writing." A similar interpretation is offered by Geddes 1885, xxviii–xxix. I owe both references to Dougan 1905, ad loc.

7. *Pace* Jones (1923, 206), who characterizes A.'s response as "obviously a piece of literary machinery."

8. Presumably this was the parallel that Warburton had in mind when he dismissed as unhelpful the possibility that A.'s response might be "an imitation of something like it in the *Phaedo* itself, applied to a very different purpose" (Warburton 1837, 177).

Phaedo in *Tusculans* 1—all of which refer to passages closely related to that decisive turning point in the plot of Plato's book—this allusion functions to construct this part of Cicero's dialogue as a sustained engagement with Plato's own complex treatment of assent, disenchantment, and the need for further discussion of immortality in order to attain conviction.[9]

The first step toward a full explication of A.'s experience is to review briefly the sequence of events that brings Cicero's characters, at a surprisingly late stage in their discussion of death, to contemplate the possibility of postmortem survival. Recall, then, that the disputation in *Tusculans* 1 begins with A.'s declaration that he regards death as an evil (*Tusc*. 1.9). It then enters an initial phase during which M. attempts to change his interlocutor's outlook by engaging him in an elenchus (*Tusc*. 1.9–16).[10] Having first established that A. does not believe that the dead are punished in the underworld, and that in fact he thinks they do not exist at all (*Tusc*. 1.10–11), M. gradually compels him to accept, reluctantly, that the dead consequently cannot be considered to be in a state of wretchedness (*Tusc*. 1.14). A. then attempts to salvage his position by suggesting that the evil of death has to do not with being dead but with having to die (*Tusc*. 1.15). In reply M. triumphantly points out that if the postmortem state is indeed free from evil, then the necessity of entering that state cannot be regarded as an evil either (*Tusc*. 1.16). The debate, such as it was, appears to be over.

At this juncture, however, the elenchus reaches an impasse and the conversation changes course. For although A. does not offer any specific objection to his mentor's reasoning, he nonetheless finds himself unable to abandon his anxiety. In the critical passage he describes his condition as an incapacity to "assent" to the conclusions that he is being forced to approve, and asks M. to try presenting his case in another way (*Tusc*. 1.16): *uberius ista, quaeso; haec enim spinosiora prius ut confitear me cogunt quam ut adsentiar* ("A more copious treatment of those points of yours, please; for these rather thorny arguments compel me to affirm before they compel me to assent"). There is a difference, in other words, between being bested in argument and being brought to undergo a fundamental change in outlook.[11] Moreover, method matters: M.'s difficult logic and the exigencies of debate have left no room for anything but an immediate response. A. accordingly requests not only a more elaborate approach but also an end to cross-examination in favor of "continuous speech" (*Tusc*. 1.16). Confronted with such resistance, M. has no choice but to alter his tactics. He embarks, in the dialogue's next segment, on a survey of Greek philosophical views on the nature of the soul.

It is at the conclusion of this doxography that the idea of immortality finally enters the picture. Having canvassed a range of theories, M. turns to consider the question of whether he and his auditor ought to go to the trouble of try-

9. To my knowledge the only extensive treatment of the *Phaedo* in *Tusculans* 1 is Gould 1968, which takes a source-critical rather than an intertextual approach to the relationship between the two dialogues.

10. See Gorman 2005, 64–84, for a more thorough treatment of Cicero's elenchus than the condensed summary I provide here. For a recent overview of the architecture of *Tusculans* 1 as a whole, see Koch 2006.

11. Gildenhard (2007, 221–25) links the concern with *adsensio* to Cicero's interest in the Stoic theory of συγκατάθεσις (drawing on *Acad. pr.* 37–38) and shows in detail how A.'s failure to assent to M.'s logic constitutes criticism, on Cicero's part, of a peculiarly Stoic style of philosophical persuasion.

ing to adjudicate among them. His stance is skeptical: only a god, he says, could determine which account of the soul is the true one, while to attempt to identify the conception that is most like the truth would require protracted investigation (*Tusc*. 1.23). In any event, he goes on to explain, a rational consideration of what the various theories imply about the soul's eventual destiny indicates that such an inquiry would be irrelevant to attaining the practical end of the present discussion. If the soul should turn out to be the perishable product of some physical substance, then there will be no posthumous consciousness and hence no awareness of suffering or loss. If, on the other hand, one of the nonmaterialist accounts of the soul should be true, then death may mark the transition to existence in another sphere (*Tusc*. 1.24):

> reliquorum sententiae spem adferunt, si te hoc forte delectat, posse animos, cum e corporibus excesserint, in caelum quasi in domicilium suum pervenire.
>
> The views of the rest bring the hope—if this is by chance pleasing to you—that souls are able upon departure from their bodies to come into heaven as if to their own abode.

Immortality is thus presented by M. merely as one of two logically coherent alternatives—attractive, to be sure, but difficult to verify and in no way to be regarded as the necessary solution to A.'s problem.

Once envisioned, however, the prospect of eternal life proves too enticing to leave unexplored, and A. responds to it with alacrity (*Tusc*. 1.24): *me vero delectat, idque primum ita esse velim, deinde, etiam si non sit, mihi persuaderi tamen velim* ("Indeed it does please me, and my first wish would be for it to be so. Then, even if it should not be so, I would nevertheless want to be persuaded that it is"). His enthusiasm is not surprising in light of his earlier reluctance to find comfort in the thought of annihilation, but the second part of his statement is striking. In pointed contrast to his mentor's cautious skepticism, A. declares a pragmatic willingness to accept persuasion in lieu of truth. This marks a turning point of central importance for the dialogue's treatment of immortality in general and of Plato in particular.

As a reaction to the specific character of A.'s response, M.'s recommendation of the *Phaedo*, which follows immediately, is utterly apposite. If all that A. desires is to be persuaded, then surely the *Phaedo* would be a more obvious choice than the even-handed approach that M. has thus far been offering. Indeed, it would provide exactly the sort of "richer" and "continuous" treatment that A. requested when the elenchus became too coercive. But this more agreeable mode of discourse turns out to have its own shortcoming, inasmuch as it enthralls A. and thus leaves him in the end without the resources to sustain conviction independently.[12]

A.'s discovery that Plato's book is inadequate therefore plays an integral role in the dialogue's development, functioning in counterpoint with the collapse of the elenchus to expose the need for a mode of consolation that

12. Contra Schrenk (1994, 357), who claims that the conviction A. derives from reading the *Phaedo* is short-lived because it is "philosophical" rather than rhetorical in nature. In fact the opposite is true: the problem is that the *Phaedo* is *too* eloquent, or at least eloquent in a way that is inappropriate to A.'s situation. See Michel 1973, 193.

will be neither rebarbative, on the one hand, nor merely beguiling, on the other.[13] But Cicero is doing more here than using the *Phaedo* as a prop to make a point about the dangers of enchantment. He is responding to Plato's book intertextually, by shaping his approach in such a way as to evoke Plato's own portrayal of immortality as a subject poised between assent and doubt and ultimately requiring active examination of the arguments put forth in its favor. At the outset he recalls three key passages in Plato's text, each of which marks a major turning point in Socrates' attempt to convince his interlocutors that eternal life is real and that death is nothing to fear.

The first allusion occurs even before the *Phaedo* is mentioned and is contained within M.'s revelation that immaterialist theories of the nature of the soul admit the hope for a celestial afterlife. What is in view here is a statement made early in the *Phaedo* by Cebes in response to Socrates' initial claim that his soul will survive death, and, having been freed from physical constraints, will migrate to a place where it will enjoy direct access to truth and wisdom. Unconvinced that Socrates has provided an adequate justification for his belief, Cebes first observes that "things having to do with the soul are a source of great doubt (*apistia*) to human beings," then proceeds to explain that the hope for a happy afterlife depends on establishing the soul's capacity to exist after death (Pl. *Phd*. 70a–b):

> ἐπεί, εἴπερ εἴη που αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν συνηθροισμένη καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένη τούτων τῶν κακῶν ὧν σὺ νυνδὴ διῆλθες, πολλὴ ἂν ἐλπὶς εἴη καὶ καλή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὡς ἀληθῆ ἐστιν ἃ σὺ λέγεις.
>
> And so, if indeed [the soul] should exist somewhere, having been gathered together unto itself and released from the evils that you have just now recounted, there would be great and excellent reason to hope, Socrates, that the things that you say are true.

Although described in more elaborate terms, the framework here is strikingly similar to that laid out by M.: if the soul should be indiscerptible (and this is by no means self-evident), then there are grounds for the hope or expectation (ἐλπίς/*spes*) that it will after death travel to a better place. The echo is small but significant. It serves to link the first mention of eternal life in *Tusculans* 1 to the specific moment in the *Phaedo* when the nature and magnitude of Socrates' task become clear, when the consideration of immortality is framed as an exercise in convincing an audience prone to skepticism that the prospect of posthumous survival is more than a pleasant fiction. It thereby provides the foundation for the broader engagement with the persuasive drama that unfolds in Plato's dialogue from this point forward.

The next reference follows immediately, when A. states his wish to be persuaded of immortality even though the truth of the matter should be otherwise. The passage alluded to here occurs further ahead in the *Phaedo*, in the section that follows Socrates' initial attempt to provide the persuasion that Cebes seeks. That effort, the reader will remember, seems for a time to be wholly successful, as Socrates' two interlocutors (Cebes and his fellow

13. The need for a synthesis of rhetoric and logic looks back to Cicero's plan, announced in the *Tusculans* 1 preface, to follow what he there describes as Aristotle's project of "joining *prudentia* with *eloquentia*" (*Tusc*. 1.7). It may also reflect Cicero's own experience with various modes of consolation, offered by self and others, in the aftermath of Tullia's death.

Theban Simmias) repeatedly signal their agreement to all the propositions that Socrates lays out. Yet after Socrates concludes his case, Simmias and Cebes show unexpected resistance and aver, each adducing his own argument, that the soul may not be immortal after all.[14] There follows a long interval of retrenchment, in which Socrates affirms the importance of continuing to search for the truth and exhorts his companions, who are shocked and discouraged by what has transpired, not to succumb to disgust with argument altogether (*misologia*) simply because one set of arguments has unexpectedly proven inadequate (*Phd.* 89b–91c).

Toward the end of this interlude, Socrates gives a frank account of his attitude toward the topic under discussion. Comparing himself to those "quite boorish" persons who in their conduct of arguments "give no thought to how the matters under discussion are, but are eager only to make the things that they themselves have proposed seem true to their audience," he says the following (*Phd.* 91a–b):

> καὶ ἐγώ μοι δοκῶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι τοσοῦτον μόνον ἐκείνων διοίσειν· οὐ γὰρ ὅπως τοῖς παροῦσιν ἃ ἐγὼ λέγω δόξει ἀληθῆ εἶναι προθυμήσομαι, εἰ μὴ εἴη πάρεργον, ἀλλ' ὅπως αὐτῷ ἐμοὶ ὅτι μάλιστα δόξει οὕτως ἔχειν. λογίζομαι γάρ, ὦ φίλε ἑταῖρε—θέασαι ὡς πλεονεκτικῶς—εἰ μὲν τυγχάνει ἀληθῆ ὄντα ἃ λέγω, καλῶς δὴ ἔχει τὸ πεισθῆναι· εἰ δὲ μηδέν ἐστι τελευτήσαντι, ἀλλ' οὖν τοῦτόν γε τὸν χρόνον αὐτὸν τὸν πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου ἧττον τοῖς παροῦσιν ἀηδὴς ἔσομαι ὀδυρόμενος.
>
> In the present circumstances it seems to me that I shall differ from those men only insofar as I shall be eager not that the things I say will seem to be true to my audience (unless it should be as a byproduct), but that they will seem to be so to me myself most of all. For, my dear companion, I reason thus—see how selfishly: if the things I say happen to be true, it is certainly well to have been persuaded; but if there is nothing for one that has died, then in any event I shall not by lamenting be unpleasant to the company for this time before death.

Socrates thus casts his eagerness to find a sufficient case for immortality in the light of a calculated pragmatism about what conviction on the subject would entail for him personally. If immortality should turn out to be true, then to possess already a belief in it will be all to the good; if immortality should, however, turn out not to be true, then he will at least be able to die without causing an unseemly disturbance. In *Tusculans* 1 A.'s attitude toward immortality is framed in a similar way (perfect satisfaction if it is true, but practical consolation if it is not and he has been persuaded that it is), and expressed in language that plainly echoes that of Socrates—*ita esse* and οὕτως ἔχειν, *persuaderi* and πεισθῆναι. The difference, which will become significant as Cicero's dialogue develops, is that unlike Socrates A. actively desires to be deceived, if necessary, for the sake of his own comfort.

The opening exchange about immortality in *Tusculans* 1 is thus designed to recall two framing passages in Plato's dialogue, the first of which provides

14. Simmias' objection is that the soul might be a kind of harmony, immaterial in itself but arising from physical elements and therefore subject to dissolution when the body dies (*Phd.* 85e–86d). Cebes suggests that the soul might eventually "wear out" after several lifetimes of use (*Phd.* 87a–88b). For discussion of Simmias' objection as possibly Pythagorean in origin (via Philolaus), see Sedley 1995, 22–26.

the spur to Socrates' initial argument, and the second of which constitutes its postmortem and the transition to a new phase of inquiry. These passages are unique in the *Phaedo* in that they deal explicitly with the preexisting attitude of the participants toward the subject at hand; by juxtaposing them Cicero acknowledges the link between them and evokes the arc of development that begins with Cebes' expression of *apistia* and ends with Socrates' revelation of his own desire to persuade himself. This in turn provides the background to the third allusion in the series, which is contained within A.'s description of his experience as a reader of Plato's book.

Recalled specifically is the decisive moment from the part of the *Phaedo* that bridges, literally and thematically, the two points to which Cicero has just made reference—the part, that is, where Simmias and Cebes, after a period of silence following the conclusion of Socrates' argument, begin to confer with each another sotto voce and are then asked by Socrates if they have any reservations about his case. The relevant passage is Simmias' reply to that query, which describes a trajectory of disenchantment parallel to the one that A. has traveled with respect to the *Phaedo* as a whole (*Phd*. 85d):

> ἐμοὶ γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπειδὴ καὶ πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν καὶ πρὸς τόνδε σκοπῶ τὰ εἰρημένα, οὐ πάνυ φαίνεται ἱκανῶς εἰρῆσθαι.
>
> To me, Socrates, the things you have said, when I examine them in consultation both with myself and with this man here, do not quite appear to have been said adequately.

For Simmias, as for A., doubt has not arisen while the dominant discourse was underway. But with silence it has become possible to engage in inward contemplation—compare, as descriptions of the process, Simmias' ἐπειδὴ . . . πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν . . . σκοπῶ τὰ εἰρημένα with A.'s *cum . . . mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum coepi cogitare*. And what was once completely convincing suddenly comes to seem inadequate.[15]

The importance of this reversal for Cicero rests on its importance within the *Phaedo*, where it sets off a cascade of disillusionment among the various audiences who witness it. Turning aside for a moment from his play-by-play report of the conversation, Phaedo recalls how thoroughly shaken he and the rest of the company were when they heard Socrates' case being called into question (*Phd*. 88c). While Socrates was speaking, says Phaedo, they had all been "thoroughly persuaded"; then the objections of Simmias and Cebes not only "cast everyone back into *apistia*" concerning the arguments already made, but also made them doubt their capacity to evaluate any future arguments and wonder whether the subject itself might be inherently doubtful (*apista*). This in turn prompts Echecrates, who has not been heard from at all since Phaedo began the narrative of Socrates' final hours, to break his silence and announce a similar response: he, too, had found everything that Socrates said "thoroughly persuasive," but now that the argument "has fallen back into *apistia*" he has been led to doubt the trustworthiness of any future *logos* (*Phd*. 88c–d). The entire episode therefore unfolds as an extended cautionary

15. More of a philosopher than A., Simmias does have a specific objection to offer—see n. 14 above. For Cicero, what matters is the dramatic suddenness of the reversal, not the specific argumentation involved.

example, dramatizing on multiple levels both the allure and the danger of uncritical assent. Throughout the discussion these two audiences have been nodding along, naively absorbed in the performance and vicariously agreeing to Socrates' claims. Having surrendered their own judgment, they find themselves helpless when confronted with an unforeseen development in the conversation.[16] *Apistia* reasserts itself with a vengeance.

A.'s experience of the *Phaedo* in *Tusculans* 1 constitutes not only a reminiscence of this striking episode but also an extrapolation and a reenactment. Instead of stopping with Echecrates, Cicero has gone a step further, as it were, by including A. in the roll call of enraptured audiences and extending the scope of the inadequate discourse to encompass the *Phaedo* as a whole. In so doing he effectively assimilates his predecessor, adapting a Platonic pattern to provide the justification for moving beyond Plato's text. Meanwhile, the reader of the *Tusculan Disputations* is implicated as well, made to wonder what sort of argument, or indeed whether any argument at all, would be adequate in light of the fact that Plato's has unexpectedly proven insufficient. It is a brilliantly executed maneuver: instead of simply denying the relevance of Plato's work, Cicero reinscribes its concerns in a post-Platonic setting.

And this is by no means the end of the story. As in the *Phaedo*, what the reader of *Tusculans* 1 is left with after witnessing the failure of a once-promising discourse is the need for a fresh attempt that is framed by the expression of a desire to find a persuasive case for immortality so as not to be left unconsoled. (Although A. describes his wish before recounting his tale of disappointment, it represents his desire in the present, subsequent to his reading.) Appropriately enough, A.'s troubling willingness to accept persuasion in lieu of truth is exactly what comes into focus when Plato and his book reappear later in the conversation, where the question that arises is whether Plato's claims are actually true and whether one ought to accept them even if they are not.

The first reference to the *Phaedo* in the dialogue's next segment occurs amid what is almost a replay of the earlier circumstances. Compelled by his disciple's continuing reluctance to find solace in annihilation, M. finally has no choice but to undertake the inquiry into immortality that he had wished to avoid.[17] In the opening segment of his case, he directs A.'s attention toward the testimony of traditional belief and common behavior, citing a variety of cultural phenomena as evidence of a general intuition that some sort of life continues beyond the grave (*Tusc*. 1.26–36). M. next turns to consider the question of what exactly this existence might be like—a question, he says, that can be answered only through *ratio*. He explains that Pherecydes of Syros was the first person on record to affirm the soul's capacity to exist perpetually, then notes that Pherecydes' pupil Pythagoras agreed with his master's

16. Echecrates' surrender of judgment is especially egregious, inasmuch as he reveals to Phaedo that upon hearing about Simmias' counterargument he was reminded that he himself had always believed that the soul might be like a harmony, but had simply forgotten his theory under the influence of Socrates' speech (*Phd*. 88d).

17. After A. reports his experience with the *Phaedo*, M. does try one last time to lead his disciple to accept the conclusion that death cannot be an evil if the dead are not wretched (*Tusc*. 1.25). He is not successful.

assertion and subsequently taught immortality as a matter of dogma (*Tusc*. 1.38). Continuing the genealogy to its endpoint, he goes on to state that Plato, having become acquainted with Pythagorean ideas during a journey to Italy, attempted for the first time to demonstrate immortality through *ratio*. Then, just at the crucial moment, he turns to A. and breaks off (*Tusc*. 1.39): *quam, nisi quid dicis, praetermittamus et hanc totam spem immortalitatis relinquamus* ("Which argument, unless you object, let us omit to consider, and let us put aside this whole hope of immortality").

M.'s proposal that the *spes immortalitatis* should be left in the realm of unverified possibility recalls the manner in which he first presented the possibility of posthumous existence. Meanwhile, his proposal to forgo consideration of Plato's argument would seem to represent an acknowledgment of A.'s unsatisfactory experience with the book that contains more Platonic arguments for immortality than any other. Why go over all that ground again, M. coyly suggests, if the result will just be the same as before?[18] Within this retrospective setting A.'s vigorous response has a familiar ring. A. chides M. for proposing to desert him after leading him on, then gives the following account of his own state of mind (*Tusc*. 1.39): *errare mehercule malo cum Platone, quem tu quanti facias scio et quem ex tuo ore admiror, quam cum istis vera sentire* ("By Hercules, I prefer to go astray with Plato, whom I know you value so highly and whom I admire from your lips, than to believe true things in the company of those other men"). As on the prior occasion, A. is intent on pursuing the hope of immortality once it has been placed before him.[19] And once again his immediate impulse is to declare his readiness to be misled. This time, however, the encounter with Plato plays out differently. Instead of reading the *Phaedo* on his own, A. now approaches Plato through M.'s mediation and guidance. Moreover, his willingness to dispense with truth is no longer associated simply with the desire for consolation, but with deference to authority (both M.'s and Plato's) and disdain for "those men" on the other side.

As one of the more aphoristic lines in the *Tusculan Disputations*, A.'s declaration of loyalty to Plato has sometimes been quoted and interpreted with little regard for its context, as if it were an expression of Cicero's own less-than-scrupulous attitude toward truth.[20] In fact, it makes sense only when seen as a further stage in the ongoing engagement with the *Phaedo*'s treatment of doubt and conviction. As usual, there is a Platonic passage in the background, closely linked to one already cited. Immediately after informing

18. Richard Bentley, in his *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking*, was perhaps the first to suggest that M.'s statement here is a "feint" designed to "raise the interlocutor's appetite" (1737, 260).

19. A.'s eagerness to hear more about Plato's arguments is perhaps meant to recall the attitude of Echecrates after the failure of Socrates' first argument (*Phd*. 88d): λέγε οὖν πρὸς Διός, πῇ ὁ Σωκράτης μετῆλθε τὸν λόγον.

20. Never more amusingly than by the opinionated Lord Bolingbroke, who remembers the passage only as something said by "Tully, in one of his rants" (1841, 274). Hannah Arendt, more portentously, managed to make A.'s statement the basis for a whole theory of humanism: "What Cicero in fact says is that for the true humanist neither the verities of the scientist nor the truth of the philosopher nor the beauty of the artist can be absolutes" (1954, 225). For the possibility that A.'s statement might constitute a response of sorts to a well-known apothegm with the opposite meaning (eventually given its widest currency by Cervantes, in the form *amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas*), see Tarán 1984, 116.

his companions of his eagerness to establish immortality, Socrates says the following (*Phd*. 91c):

> ὑμεῖς μέντοι, ἂν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σμικρὸν φροντίσαντες Σωκράτους, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας πολὺ μᾶλλον, ἐὰν μέν τι ὑμῖν δοκῶ ἀληθὲς λέγειν, συνομολογήσατε, εἰ δὲ μή, παντὶ λόγῳ ἀντιτείνετε. . . .
>
> Yet you, if you obey me, will take little account of Socrates and much more of the truth: if I seem to you to speak the truth, then agree with me, but if not, resist me with every argument. . . .

Socrates thus concludes his discourse on *misologia* by urging his friends, somewhat paradoxically, to express their loyalty by not taking account of him and by resisting his arguments if they seem to be false. A.'s attitude toward loyalty and truth is exactly opposite: he is eager to yield to Plato even if Plato is wrong.

The significance of this contrast becomes clear after M. resumes his discourse. He does not proceed to recapitulate Plato's *rationes* in detail. Instead, he dwells on the dichotomy that A. has identified between Plato and "those other" philosophers who deny the soul's capacity to exist eternally. Among the latter group, whose views he quickly rejects, M. mentions Empedocles, Dicaearchus, Aristoxenus, and Democritus. He reserves special opprobrium, however, for the followers of Epicurus, whom he derides for exaggerating the profundity and consolatory value of their master's doctrine.[21] Even granting that Epicurus was correct in his belief that death entails annihilation, M. says, there is nothing in such a vision that could be considered cause for pride or rejoicing. He then comes back around to the point of departure (*Tusc*. 1.49):

> nec tamen mihi sane quicquam occurrit cur non Pythagorae sit et Platonis vera sententia. ut enim rationem Plato nullam adferret (vide quid homini tribuam), ipsa auctoritate me frangeret; tot autem rationes attulit, ut velle ceteris, sibi certe persuasisse videatur.
>
> All the same I see no cause at all why the position of Pythagoras and Plato should not be true. Even supposing that Plato were to bring no rational argument to bear—observe what tribute I pay to the man—he would shatter me by his very authority. He has, however, provided so many arguments that he seems to wish to persuade others and certainly seems to have persuaded himself.

Having just posited for the sake of argument that Epicurus was right, M. has good reason to revisit A.'s statement that Plato would be worth following even if he were wrong and "those other men" should be the ones in possession of the truth (*vera sentire*). He begins by resolving the conflict: Plato's view, he reveals, seems to him to be the true one (*vera sententia*) after all.[22] He then undertakes to explain his conclusion, in a way that requires careful interpretation. In order to provide a counterweight to the Epicureans' devotion to their founder, M. first affirms his Platonic allegiance: even in the absence of argument, Plato's *auctoritas* alone would be enough to command assent.

21. So strong is M.'s distaste that he refuses even to utter Epicurus' name. Only later, after the case for immortality has reached its conclusion, does he allow himself to refer to the *Epicurei* (*Tusc*. 1.77) and their master (*Tusc*. 1.82) explicitly.

22. The connection between the two passages is noted by Bringmann (1971, 161).

But then he adds a layer of complexity. He calls attention to the fact that Plato supplied *rationes* in abundance, and interprets this as evidence that Plato, rather than simply accepting immortality as dogma, desired to persuade himself that it was actually true on rational grounds.[23] M. is therefore entitled and encouraged, on Plato's own authority, to take into account the force of Plato's arguments and the claims of Plato's opponents, and to base his assent on considered agreement rather than blind submission.

So where A. had been ready to violate the spirit of Socrates' exhortation by preferring Plato to truth, M. ultimately adopts the sort of stance that Socrates requested: instead of accepting what Plato taught simply because Plato taught it, he undertakes to determine, as he encounters Plato's exercise in self-persuasion, whether the arguments seem true or not. Cicero's treatment of immortality thus continues to unfold in a way that parallels the development of *Phaedo* precisely. At the outset there is, in both dialogues, concern about whether confident belief in an afterlife can be justified, given the difficulty of determining the nature of the soul. Next, the audience encounters an engrossing discourse that seems persuasive at first but unexpectedly turns out to be inadequate. Amid the uncertainty that follows this disappointment, the desire to find a persuasive argument is expressed, and the possibility arises that it might be as well, at least for practical purposes, to be convinced of immortality even though the truth should be otherwise. Then the importance of critically examining the arguments, regardless of pragmatic considerations and the authority of their exponent, is reasserted.

According to the pattern, M.'s eventual verdict—that he can see no cause why Plato's theory should not be true—ought also to have its own Platonic precedent. And indeed it does. When toward the end of the *Phaedo* Socrates concludes his final argument, Cebes says the following (*Phd*. 107a): οὔκουν ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, ἔχω παρὰ ταῦτα ἄλλο τι λέγειν οὐδέ πῃ ἀπιστεῖν τοῖς λόγοις ("For my part, Socrates, I have nothing else to say against these things, nor am I able to doubt the arguments in any way"). Like M., he casts his concurrence in negative terms, as a matter of having no objections to the arguments (*logoi* in Plato, *rationes* in Cicero) that have been proposed. Moreover, his response explicitly represents a resolution of the concern he raised, at the beginning of the discussion, about the *apistia* to which human beings are prone when considering the nature of the soul. So, too, does M.'s judgment in favor of the truth of Plato's *sententia* reprise and resolve his earlier assertion that only "some god could see which of these theories [about the soul] is the true one" (*harum sententiarum quae vera sit, deus aliqui viderit*, *Tusc*. 1.23). In both cases, then, the conversation begins in doubt and ends in sober agreement, passing through an intermediate stage of unstable assent along the way.

23. In undertaking to persuade himself by means of *rationes*, Plato was of course violating the Pythagorean principle of *ipse dixit*, which Cicero describes as a matter of preferring *auctoritas* to *ratio* at *Nat. D*. 1.10. Cicero's characterization of Plato's approach as the application of reason to Pythagoras' dogma comports nicely with Sedley's reading of the *Phaedo*, which argues that Simmias and Cebes are meant to be seen as Pythagoreans in need of persuasion and instruction concerning the doctrines they are supposed to hold but do not really understand (Sedley 1995, 10–13).

The difference is that in Cicero's version of the drama the role of Socrates is played by Plato himself. It is Plato whose eloquent discourse proves insufficient, it is Plato who provides more than one *ratio* out of a desire to persuade himself (and possibly others) that immortality is true, it is Plato with whose authority and arguments the audience has to reckon, and it is Plato whose case is finally deemed better than any alternative. In essence, then, what Cicero has done is not to attempt to rival or replace the *Phaedo* but rather to reenact it, taking over what is timeless (the basic pattern of the plot) but bringing the circumstances up to date. Instead of dealing directly with Socrates, Cicero's interlocutors encounter Plato and his book as artifacts that exist within a larger doxographical history—hence the emphasis on Plato's status as a successor to Pythagoras, as a member of what M. at one point describes as a philosophical *familia* (*Tusc*. 1.55), and as an authoritative opponent to other established schools of thought such as the one founded by Epicurus.

With the truth of Plato's position on immortality at last acknowledged, Cicero's intertextual engagement with the *Phaedo* is almost at an end. For a time the *Phaedo* passes almost completely out of the picture as M., in accordance with his claim about the multiplicity of Plato's *rationes*, and in keeping with Cicero's portrayal of the whole *Phaedo* as an inadequate source of persuasion, focuses on Platonic arguments in other sources: the idea that the soul is eternal because it is self-moved, from the *Phaedrus* (*Tusc*. 1.53–54); the notion that knowledge is recollection, from the *Meno* (*Tusc*. 1.57); the theory of the forms, which M. says can be found "everywhere" in Plato's works (*Tusc*. 1.58).[24] And when M. toward the end of his case eventually does return to the *Phaedo*, he does so only by way of proposing Socrates as an inspiring example of how to face death with equanimity. Without mentioning Plato or naming Plato's book, he paints a vivid portrait of Socrates in the prison cell, discoursing courageously in the moments just before his death (*Tusc*. 1.71). M. then goes on, still without mentioning any source, to recount Socrates' vision of an afterlife where vice and virtue each have their just rewards and to recall his supposition that the song sung by swans as they die is an expression of joy (*Phd*. 84e–85b)—which latter idea M. interprets rather freely as an exhortation that "the same thing ought to be done by all good and learned people" (*Tusc*. 1.73).[25] Finally, M. concludes by reproducing two of the *Phaedo*'s most striking images. No one could doubt immortality, he says, unless by considering the matter too intently he should lose his acuity of perception, like those who lose their vision when they stare at the setting sun. And given that possibility, "our speech is consequently carried like a raft on a boundless sea—doubtful, circumspect, hesitant, and fearing many adverse chances" (*Tusc*. 1.73). The first image recalls Socrates' decision not to examine reality directly with his eyes, lest he risk losing his sight like those who stare at an eclipse (*Phd*. 99de). The second echoes Simmias' statement that the best course of action, in dealing with uncertain subjects, is to find the most

24. On these passages see Gould 1968, 158–66.

25. In the *Phaedo* Socrates merely compares himself to the swans: just as people in general think that swans are lamenting their demise when in fact (says Socrates) they are rejoicing in it, so Simmias has misinterpreted Socrates' final discourse as an expression of grief when it is actually the opposite.

adequate *logos* available and "sail" on it through life like one who ventures onto a raft (*Phd*. 85d). In each case Cicero dispenses with the original context, as if to signify that, having already dealt with the *Phaedo* as a whole, he is now free to use whatever parts of it he chooses and to emphasize in his own way the limitations of human certainty that Plato's dialogue had explored.

There is, however, one final passage that constitutes a kind of coda to the main pattern. It occurs at a later stage in *Tusculans* 1, after the conclusion of M.'s case for immortality and at the beginning of a short disquisition on the attitude that an enlightened person ought to take toward the disposal of corpses. Referring A. to the *Phaedo*, which he describes as "that book about which we have already said so many things," M. recalls the response that Socrates gave when Crito asked him how he wanted to be buried (*Tusc*. 1.102–3): *"multam vero," inquit, "operam, amici, frustra consumpsi; Critoni enim nostro non persuasi me hinc avolaturum neque mei quicquam relicturum"* ("'In truth, friends,' he said, 'I have expended much effort in vain; for I have not persuaded our Crito that I shall fly away from here and that I shall leave behind no part of myself'"). The framework is notably retrospective, and the reference to persuasion is suggestive in light of Cicero's overall concern with the way in which the *Phaedo* dramatizes the persistence of doubt. But this is also the first and only time in *Tusculans* 1 where M. purports to quote the *Phaedo* directly, and the most striking thing is the comparison with what Plato actually wrote in the passage that Cicero has in mind (*Phd*. 115c–d):

> οὐ πείθω, ὦ ἄνδρες, Κρίτωνα. . . . ὅτι δὲ ἐγὼ πάλαι πολὺν λόγον πεποίημαι, ὡς, ἐπειδὰν πίω τὸ φάρμακον, οὐκέτι ὑμῖν παραμενῶ . . . ταῦτά μοι δοκῶ αὐτῷ ἄλλως λέγειν, παραμυθούμενος ἅμα μὲν ὑμᾶς, ἅμα δ' ἐμαυτόν.
>
> Gentlemen, I am not persuading Crito. . . . But what I have been arguing for a long time and at length, that after I drink the drug I shall no longer remain among you . . . these things I think I am saying in vain as far as he is concerned, just to comfort both you and myself.

The words are by and large parallel, but the emphasis is different. In Plato's version Socrates is merely amused by Crito's intransigence, which he treats as a predictable manifestation of his friend's characteristically prosaic way of thinking—thus Phaedo describes how, in a conspiratorial manner, Socrates "laughed quietly and looked away toward us" (*Phd*. 115c) before responding. There is no suggestion that the failure to convince Crito undoes what has been achieved in the conversation with Cebes and Simmias. In Cicero's account, by contrast, Socrates takes Crito's doubt much more seriously, as evidence that the whole endeavor has come to naught.[26]

The reason for the discrepancy is not far to seek. For the opening clause in Cicero's version—*multam vero operam frustra consumpsi*—does not simply adapt Socrates' statement in the *Phaedo* that he has argued at length and without effect; it also recalls the language used by M. when he first recommended the *Phaedo* to his disciple's perusal: *quid tibi ergo opera nostra*

26. The difference is noted by Schrenk (1994, 356–57).

opus est?[27] With that question M. raised at the outset the possibility that any attempt on his part to persuade A. of immortality would be pointless, given the existence and eloquence of Plato's book. As we know, the necessity of his *opera* was then vindicated by A.'s revelation that the *Phaedo* had indeed been persuasive, but only temporarily. Here, as the *Phaedo* is mentioned for the last time in *Tusculans* 1, Socrates' *opera* is revealed to have been expended in vain because Crito, after listening to the whole argument, remained unconvinced.[28] Cicero's treatment of immortality thus ends where it began, with Plato's book and an instance of persuasive inadequacy. With perfect symmetry, M. finally places his disciple back within the prison cell and, by causing him to witness Crito's recalcitrance (in a more pointed Ciceronian version of the story), presents him with an example of what not to do: unlike Socrates' companion, A. must not, this time around, render his mentor's efforts null and void.[29]

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27. Aside from these two passages, there is only one other occurrence of *opera* in *Tusculans* 1—in a textually problematic sentence in the preface (*Tusc*. 1.7) where Cicero describes the conversations at Tusculum as his effort to put into practice a *perfecta philosophia* that "is able to speak about the greatest questions in a copious and elegant way" (*quae de maximis quaestionibus copiose posset ornateque dicere*). With the emendation of Giusta, the passage reads: *in quam exercitationem ita nos studiose operam intendimus, ut iam etiam scholas Graecorum more habere auderemus*. See the app. crit. in Giusta 1984, ad loc.

28. While this is the final explicit mention of the *Phaedo* in *Tusculans* 1, Cicero does at the very end of the book make use of Plato's conception of the body as a prison (*Tusc*. 1.118, recalling *Phd*. 82e).

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