On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality

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FEW CONCEPTS have been more influential, for better or worse, in the history of Western philosophy and theology than those of incorporeal beings and immaterial essences. Their importance for the particular directions which European thought long took in pondering such problems as the nature of deity, soul, intellect, in short, of ultimate reality, is not easily exaggerated. Despite this, there still exists much confusion about the historical origins of the concepts 'incorporeality' and 'immateriality', and even an occasional failure to grasp the strict implications of these terms.

To give some examples: Étienne Drioton, writing about the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians on the afterlife, has made the following observations: "Besides body, [the Egyptians] attributed two elements to man, more or less ghostly and *independent of matter*: the 'ba' which can apparently be rendered exactly by 'soul' and which they used to represent as a bird with human head; and the 'ka' in which some Egyptologists have seen an *immaterial* reflection of man's body, a 'double' . . . Whatever the truth may be, death was definitely regarded by the Egyptians as being *the separation of the spiritual and corporeal elements* of man. . . . The first element in their belief, and presumably the most ancient, was that the *immaterial principle of man, his spirit*, continued to live in close connection with the corpse and even depending on it."[1] The anachronisms here are glaring. There can be no question of an early Egyptian belief in an 'immaterial principle of man' or in 'spiritual elements' which were 'independent of matter', if those phrases are meant to be taken in a literal and strict sense; such concepts are the creation of Greek philosophy. Prior to that even 'spirit' was material—in Egypt, in Greece, and elsewhere. Writing of far less

[1] Étienne Drioton, Georges Contenau, and Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religions of the Ancient East*, trans. M. B. Loraine (New York 1959) 44 (italics mine). In the following notes W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge 1962–78) will be referred to by author's name alone.

developed cultures than the Egyptian, Evans-Pritchard remarks, "Both ideas [*sc.* 'soul' and 'spirit'] are present among what were called the lowest savages . . . the two conceptions are not only different but opposed, spirit being regarded as *incorporeal* . . ."[2]

Classical scholars have made, often enough, the same sort of loose statements, as the following typical instances will illustrate. LSJ *s.v.* ψυχή III state ". . . the immaterial and immortal *soul*, first in Pindar . . ." Pindar never spoke of an 'immaterial' soul; as we shall see, no Greek word for that concept as yet existed. Surely unhistorical is Festugière's allusion to Empedocles (fr.134), φρὴν ἱερὴ . . . φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταΐσσουσα θοῇσιν, as a reference to "l'absolue incorporéité de Dieu."[3] More interesting, albeit still inaccurate, is Jaeger's analysis of the implications of metempsychosis: ". . . what was really fruitful in this doctrine and pregnant with future influence was not the mythical conception of transmigration, but the impetus the theory was to give to the development of the idea of the soul as the unity of life and spirit, and the vigour with which it conceived this psyche as a spiritual being in its own right, quite independent of the corporeal. If we recall that at this very time the Pythagoreans were identifying air with the empty space between bodies, thus conceiving of air itself as incorporeal, it at last becomes thoroughly clear that in archaic thought the breath-soul must have served as the vehicle for the spirit in its full incorporeality and independence."[4] There is real

[2] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford 1965) 26 (italics mine). For a more circumspect statement by an anthropologist see Adolf E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples*, trans. M. T. Choldin/W. Weissleder (Chicago and London 1963) 216–17: "We must, however, keep in mind the vagueness of the term [*sc.* 'spirit']. The same may be said of 'soul'. We hear, for example, of the 'soul' of the shaman which sets out on a journey into the beyond while his body remains behind, though the nature of this soul is not precisely defined . . . The soul which may dissociate itself from the living body has a human appearance to the degree that it may be confused with a person or may, at least, be regarded a complete person. In the same way, the idea of souls in the realm of the dead is more concrete than ours . . ."

[3] A.-J. Festugière, *Observations stylistiques sur l'Évangile de S. Jean* (Paris 1974) 122. See my remarks on this in *AJP* 96 (1975) 425.

[4] W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford 1947) 84. In equating air with empty space the Pythagoreans do not seem to have concluded that air was immaterial; they did the opposite: ". . . the void keeps [numbers] apart. What keeps things apart must be *something*, and the only form of existence so far conceivable is bodily substance; hence it is thought of as a particularly tenuous form of matter" (Guthrie I 280). Against Jaeger's too-facile assumption of incorporeality here see also Vlastos, *PhilosQ* 2 (1952) 118 = *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy* I, ed. David J. Furley and R. E. Allen (New

validity in the suggestion that the idea of soul played a part in the development of the concept incorporeality, but, once again, the language employed is anachronistic and misleading. The attribution to sixth-century 'Orphics' and Pythagoreans of a grasp of spiritual reality 'in its full incorporeality' lacks foundation. The fallacy here consists in the unconscious assumption that a soul which is independent of, indeed opposed to, the body is therefore free from matter and incorporeal. Later Greeks were to think that way. But before such concepts had become familiar, the inference was by no means automatic. There is in fact no evidence to suggest that any Greek in the sixth century was in a position to define the soul as an immaterial being.

Who first arrived at a fully explicit notion of incorporeality and of immateriality? What were the stepping stones in the history of Greek thought which made the introduction of such concepts possible? The present paper is an attempt to shed some light on these questions. As we are primarily concerned with origins, and not with the more sophisticated and intricate applications of the terms which will appear, say, in the Neoplatonists, stopgap definitions must suffice. Let 'incorporeal' mean, quite simply, 'not having a body' and 'immaterial' 'not possessing or composed of matter'. A precise definition of matter itself still eludes scientists.[5]

York 1970) 121: "If the Orphics thought of the soul as air, would they think of it as incorporeal? Is air incorporeal?" It is interesting to observe a sense of 'historical consciousness' already in that derivative individual, Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 11.1.8: *non est igitur aer anima, quod putaverunt quidam qui non potuerunt incorpoream eius cogitare naturam.*

[5] John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*[4] (London 1930) 180 n.1, remarks in passing that "The most modern forms of Monism are not corporealist, since they replace body by energy as the ultimate reality." In our times physics recognizes particles without mass. It is no part of this paper to deal with the concepts incorporeality and immateriality as they may relate to contemporary speculation, nor am I qualified to do so. My concern is solely with the origins of these ideas in their Greek framework and I restrict my comments accordingly. For some interesting remarks about the present state of the concept 'matter' see Joachim Klowski, "Das Entstehen der Begriffe Substanz und Materie" in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966) 39–40. He quotes Einstein: ". . . dann ist der Unterschied zwischen Materie und Feld eher quantitativer als qualitativer Natur. Es hat dann keinen Sinn mehr, Materie und Feld als zwei grundverschiedene Dinge zu betrachten . . . In einer solchen neuen Physik [*sc.* Feldphysik] wäre kein Raum mehr für beides: Feld und Materie; das Feld wäre als das einzig Reale anzusehen."

I

Homer provides a reasonably clear picture of the early Greek view of reality. To the extent that any conscious reflection on the question occurred, to the extent indeed that such a *Denkkategorie* was possible (no word for 'matter' yet existing), the world and all that was in it was more or less material.[6] There are no immaterial beings. The gods themselves are corporeal and normally anthropomorphic, indeed severely so; they can even be wounded by humans. The souls of the dead are so literally material that an infusion of blood will restore temporarily their wits and vitality. A particularly instructive example of this older outlook can be seen in the descriptions of invisibility which occur in the Homeric poems and Hesiod. Often it is described in terms of a 'covering' or 'clothing': *ἠέρα ἑσσαμένω* (*Il.* 14.282); *τῷ ἕνι λεξάσθην, ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλην ἕσσαντο | καλὴν χρυσείην* (14.350–51); *νυκτὶ καλύψας* (5.23) *τοὺς δ' ἄρ' Ἀθήνη | νυκτὶ κατακρύψασα θοῶς ἐξῆγε πόληος* (*Od.* 23.371–72); *κεκάλυπτο δ' ἄρ' ἠέρι πολλῇ* (*Il.* 21.549). Hesiod (*Theog.* 9) describes the Muses as *κεκαλυμμέναι ἠέρι πολλῷ*. This, West comments, is "the regular epic way of saying 'invisible'. It is misleading to translate *ἀήρ* 'mist' in such contexts: mist is something visible, and *ἀήρ* is the very stuff of invisibility. *κεκαλυμμέναι* suggests a veil (*κάλυμμα, καλύπτρα*): *cf. Op.* 223 *ἠέρα ἑσσαμένη et sim.*"[7] Verdenius disagreed with West, and his disagreement serves to call attention to the inherent lack of clarity in this old concept: "It is wrong to say that '*ἀήρ* is the very stuff of invisibility' (West). Hom. *P* 649 *ἠέρα μὲν σκέδασεν καὶ ἀπῶσεν ὀμίχλην* and *θ* 562 *ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμέναι* show that it is something visible."[8]

It is true that *ἀήρ, νεφέλη, ὀμίχλη*, and even *νύξ*, were, at least sometimes, regarded as visible; the *νεφέλη* which renders Zeus and Hera invisible, described as *καλὴ χρυσείη*, is a particularly clear example. But both West and Verdenius are seeking a consistency which is simply not there. The early Greeks, in describing invisibility, attributed it to a visible, but tenuous, agency (cloud, mist, etc.), because they were not in a conceptual position to do other-

[6] Compare Kirk in G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1963) 148 n.1: ". . . it seems unlikely that anyone before Pythagoras or Heraclitus bothered about the formal constitution of matter . . ."

[7] *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford 1966) *ad loc., cf. ad* 726; *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) *ad* 223.

[8] *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 25 (1972) 228.

wise. Far more important for our purposes than this natural inconsistency is the basic outlook implied by such a notion of invisibility. For that which renders unseen in Homer and Hesiod is a covering material, which is *external to the concealed body*. And this is true whether a human or a god becomes invisible (as, for instance, Hera and Hypnos do in *Il.* 14.281–82). The difference in outlook between these Greeks and us can be demonstrated by a comparison which may seem frivolous. The Invisible Man of modern science fiction regularly becomes so by ingesting or receiving an injection of some mysterious potion or wonder drug. The change is an *internal* one; there is no separate 'covering' to cause invisibility.

Another Homeric instrument of invisibility, the Cap of Hades, is also instructive. In *Il.* 5.845 Athena *δῦν' Ἄϊδος κυνέην, μή μιν ἴδοι ὄβριμος Ἄρης*. The Greeks derived, perhaps correctly, *Ἀΐδης* from *ἀ-ιδής*.[9] Hades is the god who renders men invisible, 'unseen', by literally removing them from the upper earth and receiving them into the separate realm of the underworld. The dead cannot be seen precisely because they are no longer on earth. The Cap of Hades possesses the property of its original owner, causing the wearer to be unseen. By a natural, if illogical, transference it has acquired the power of producing invisibility even on the upper earth. The fact that in Homer no dead mortal but an Olympian immortal is made invisible by it shows how complete a transference has taken place. (In Hes. *Scut.* 227 the hero Perseus wears it.) That the way in which this magic cap worked was conceived in only the vaguest manner is shown by the very words of Homer, which clearly allude to the etymology only and let it go at that: *μή . . . ἴδοι* echoes *Ἄ-ϊδος*.

Much the same outlook persists in the poets of the immediately post-Homeric period, and it would serve no useful purpose to rehearse their views. The gods continued to be corporeal; the soul was still a vague kind of 'stuff'. What is pertinent to our investigation is the gradual but unmistakable development of a clear body/soul dichotomy in this period. In Homer there is no body/single-soul concept of man; the various functions and faculties which later were to be subsumed under the general term *ψυχή* are distributed among several distinct organs or faculties—chiefly, but not exclusively, *ψυχή*, *θυμός*, *νόος*. That is to say, in Homeric society as in most cultures, a plurality of 'souls' is found.

[9] *E.g.*, Pl. *Phd.* 80D, 81C; *Cra.* 403A, 404B. For details see H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1973) *s.v.* *Ἀιδης*.

A subtle but significant change appears in the pseudo-Hesiodic *Scutum* (151–53):

> *τῶν καὶ ψυχαὶ μὲν χθόνα δύνουσ' Ἄϊδος εἴσω*
> *αὐτῶν, ὀστέα δέ σφι περὶ ῥινοῖο σαπείσης*
> *Σειρίου ἀζαλέοιο κελαινῇ πύθεται αἴῃ.*

In the first verses of the *Iliad*, on which this passage is obviously modelled, the *ψυχαί* which went to the underworld are contrasted with the heroes *αὐτοί*, 'themselves', who became carrion for dogs and birds: *αὐτοί* is equated with the heroes' bodies, the living body being, from the Homeric viewpoint, in the last analysis the 'real man'.[10] In the *Scutum*, by contrast, both *ψυχαί* and the periphrasis for 'body', *ὀστέα* and *ῥινός* ('skin and bones'), are separate components of the men themselves, *αὐτῶν*.[11] Man and his body are no longer interchangeable, as they sometimes seem to be in Homer. This is the beginning of a genuine body/soul dichotomy (though of course the souls which "enter the ground into Hades' house" are still material). Unfortunately this passage is regarded by some as an interpolation and cannot be dated with any precision.[12]

Pindar, however, provides a quite unambiguous instance of a body/soul dichotomy (fr.131b Sn.):

> *σῶμα μὲν πάντων ἔπεται θανάτῳ περισθενεῖ,*
> *ζωὸν δ' ἔτι λείπεται αἰῶνος εἴδω-*
> *λον· τὸ γάρ ἐστι μόνον*
> *ἐκ θεῶν· εὕδει δὲ πρασσόντων μελέων, ἀτὰρ εὐ-*
> *δόντεσσιν ἐν πολλοῖς ὀνείροις*
> *δείκνυσι τερπνῶν ἐφέρποισαν χαλεπῶν τε κρίσιν.*

This passage, with its emphatic dualism and assertion of the divine origin of the soul, represents an important departure from the old

[10] The emphasis here, as regularly in Homer, is on the here and now; but *αὐτοί* is equivalent to the body minus not merely a single *ψυχή* (the breath- and life-soul) but also the *θυμός*, the *νοῦς*, the *εἴδωλον*, the *αἰών*, the *μένος*, all of which upon death are either dissipated or go elsewhere (and all of which are vaguely material). For similar reasons the *σῶμα*/*ψυχή* contrast in *Od.* 11.51ff is apparent only and no true dichotomy: *πρώτη δὲ ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἑταίρου . . . σῶμα γὰρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς*. Compare also *Od.* 11.218–22 (*σάρκες, ὀστέα, ἶνες, θυμός, ψυχή*).

[11] I understand *τῶν* in 151 as a demonstrative and *αὐτῶν* in 152 as in agreement with it (= *ipsorum*). C. F. Russo, *Hesiodi Scutum*[2] (Florence 1965) 111–12, explains *τῶν . . . αὐτῶν* as *eorundem*. This seems to me wrong, but my main point would not be affected, as, on this interpretation, soul and body remain components of 'the same men'.

[12] See B. A. van Groningen, *La composition littéraire archaïque grecque*[2] (Amsterdam 1960) 119 n.1.

Homeric outlook.[13] The familiar motto *σῶμα σῆμα*, whether 'Orphic' or not, reflects the same attitude. The logical conclusion to be drawn from this—that the soul, if it is not a body, is not corporeal at all—has not yet been reached, but the stage is being set. Here then is one development which could pave the way for a new manner of regarding reality—one soul, still vaguely material, but nevertheless qualitatively distinct from the body.

The earliest philosophers sought ultimate reality in material substances, such as water, air, fire. But some of their speculations certainly contributed to an increasing awareness of things which, if not fully immaterial, were decidedly becoming more 'insubstantial' or 'spiritual'. Several theories in particular were fruitful in developing such notions. First, some thinkers saw in air the source of all things. Here was a real substance, essential for life, but one *which could not be seen*. In fact, from a very early period the belief in the breath-soul as a cause of life had been widespread (*ψυχή*, *anima*, *nephesh*, etc.). In Homer the *ψυχή* survives death to go to the kingdom of Hades, while the *θυμός*, originally perhaps the blood-soul,[14] perishes. Reflect that, when one dies of a bleeding wound, the spilled blood is visible there on the ground, while the breath is not, and the reason for these beliefs becomes intelligible. The expelled breath is easily conceived as continuing to exist after death, whereas blood, tangible and visible, can now be seen to have become lifeless.[15]

Certain of the Presocratics—for instance, Anaximenes, Archelaus, and Diogenes of Apollonia—went far beyond this homely way of thinking and elevated air to the status of an *ἀρχή*, to use Aristotle's terminology. When the theory of the four elements, or *στοιχεῖα*, was worked out, air, along with fire, was said to have a natural upward tendency (in contrast to earth and water) because of its lightness and fineness. Related theories about the special nature of *αἰθήρ*, sometimes conceived as a fifth element, the *quinta essentia*, were soon to appear (*Epinomis*, Aristotle). A substance which seemed barely to share the qualities of solid matter, air must have appeared not only to the common man but to some speculative thinkers—who still had no explicit concept of, or word for,

[13] In fr.133 Sn. Pindar writes *Φερσεφόνα . . . ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν*; this well-known fragment should be compared in its entirety.

[14] See H. J. Rose in *OCD*² *s.v.* "Soul," where further references will be found.

[15] It is only to be expected that these two distinct concepts of breath-soul and blood-soul would be confused in time. We occasionally find this in Homer; see, for example, *Il.* 14.518–19 (contrast 17.86), 16.468–69, 20.403.

immateriality—a reality set apart and special. Solmsen well remarks, ". . . the 'air' (or 'ether') was thought the finest and most sublime of the elements—so fine indeed as to be almost, but not quite immaterial . . . 'Air' was assumed to penetrate everywhere; it was something spiritual and yet sufficiently close to the material processes in the world to have an essential role in the coming to be and the passing away of things, and to account for the functions of man's senses and for his various reactions, physical, sensual, and intellectual . . ."[16]

Even apart from formal philosophizing there was in the fifth century a widespread popular belief in air-souls which returned to the ether while the body remained in the earth—*πνεῦμα μὲν πρὸς αἰθέρα, | τὸ σῶμα δ' ἐς γῆν*, as Euripides puts it.[17] The most familiar example of this is from the inscription on the Athenian dead at Potidaea: *αἰθὲρ μὲμ φσυχὰς ὑπεδέχσατο, σώμ[ατα δὲ χθόν]*.[18] It cannot be stressed enough that air and souls in the fifth century were closely associated, even identified, in explicit contrast to the body, the corporeal element in man. Speculation about the nature of air might well bring one very close to a notion of incorporeality; Aristotle, who understood the material nature of air, aptly observed that it "*seems* to be *ἀσώματος*."[19]

The Pythagoreans also contributed to an increasing grasp of the immaterial—albeit through a failure to distinguish adequately certain abstract concepts. For their cardinal doctrine, that the ultimate reality was Number, confounded material and formal causality. Guthrie rightly observes, "What the Pythagoreans had really done was to leave the matter aside and define things in terms of their form . . . though they were in fact describing only the structural scheme of things—in itself a perfectly legitimate procedure—they believed that they were describing their material nature too: that it was possible to speak of things as made up entirely of numbers, re-

[16] Fr. Solmsen, *Plato's Theology* (Ithaca 1942) 52.

[17] *Suppl.* 533–34; *cf.* also fr.839 Nauck.

[18] *IG* I² 945.6 (Kaibel 21b; Peek, *Gr.Versin.* I 20).

[19] *Ph.* 212a12. Empedocles' famous, and much-debated, 'clepsydra' fragment (fr.100) need not be discussed here; see Guthrie II 220ff. If some in the fifth century were aware that air was a material thing, it does not follow that others would not have a more 'insubstantial' conception of it. Even at the end of the Presocratic era there was still considerable confusion of thought in this regard, as can be shown, for instance, from the fragments of Diogenes of Apollonia. According to him Air was *ψυχὴ . . . καὶ νόησις* (fr.4), *θεός* (fr.5), and even *σῶμα* (fr.7). Jaeger noted, "In Diogenes' primal principle matter and Mind are united . . . it was easy for Diogenes to obliterate the distinction between Mind and matter . . ." (*supra* n.4: 166–67).

garded in a threefold way as arithmetical units, geometrical points, and physical atoms."[20] And again, " 'Things' for the Pythagoreans includes both the physical world and its contents and also abstractions such as justice, marriage, etc."[21] Burkert is equally emphatic: "The Pythagoreans did not differentiate between number and corporeality, between corporeal and incorporeal being. Like all the pre-Socratics, these Pythagoreans take everything that exists in the same way, as something material."[22] In attributing a material mode of existence to Number, the Pythagoreans were doing the opposite of what the advocates of a *Luftphilosophie* did. These latter took a material substance and treated it in such a way that it gradually and imperceptibly came to be felt as more or less immaterial. The Pythagoreans, by contrast, took something which was in no way matter, Number, and invested it with material properties. Both approaches, in their respective ways, resulted in a growing, if still vague, sense of the reality of independent, nonmaterial beings.

Parmenides made a contribution of a different sort, the importance of which cannot easily be exaggerated, particularly in view of the impact which it had on Plato. Granted that he did not succeed in creating an 'immaterialist' vocabulary and that he could still write, for example, *τετελεσμένον ἐστί| πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ,| μεσσόθεν ἐσοπαλὲς πάντῃ · τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μεῖζον| οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῇ ἢ τῇ* (fr.8.42–45). But what he did do was to introduce a seminal philosophical method or 'way'. He seems to have insisted rigorously on the fundamental difference between the reasoning intellect and the physical senses, between *νόημα* and *δόξα*, and firmly declared that only the former could attain to the truth. This was a decisive step. It introduced something new—the world of intelligibles (*νοητά*) as opposed to the world of sensibles (*αἰσθητά*).[23] Later, when the necessary philosophical vocabulary had been forged, we shall see

[20] I 238. Their error, especially at this stage of thought, is perfectly understandable. Compare Cornford's remark: "It is a curious fact that, not only in physical science but even in mathematics, men have made great advances and discoveries without being able to define the most important concepts correctly, *e.g.*, the concept of Number" (*Plato's Theory of Knowledge* [London 1935] 184 n.1).

[21] I 239 n.1, citing Arist. *Metaph.* 985b29, 990a22, 1078b21; *Mag.Mor.* 1182a11.

[22] Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1972) 32.

[23] Compare Guthrie II 25–26, whom I follow here against certain recent interpreters. In any event, for the present problem how Plato understood Parmenides is in a real sense more important than what Parmenides may actually have meant.

Plato actually combining the two terms 'intelligible' and 'incorporeal'—*νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη* (*Soph.* 246B). Parmenides had come very close to the world of immaterial being, though he never expressed it as such. It is no coincidence that the Presocratic who was to make the most explicit statement of incorporeality, Melissus, was a follower of Parmenides.

Limitations of space have made this survey necessarily sketchy and I am aware of the controversial nature of some of these remarks. But they represent the preliminary stages as I perceive them. To sum up: The Milesian thinkers sought the ultimate reality in some material 'stuff' (water, air, and, I believe, even the *apeiron* of Anaximander); so too, at the end of this epoch, did Democritus and the atomists, who were unequivocal materialists. (For the sense in which the void was 'incorporeal' see *infra*.) The other Presocratics were groping, more or less consciously, after a principle of being which we would describe as immaterial and incorporeal. They took definite steps in this direction, but, lacking the technical vocabulary and the fully-developed abstractions which such a vocabulary would presuppose and imply, they fell short of their goal.[24] Thus, as we have seen, the Pythagoreans treated numbers as if they were concrete objects, Parmenides' Being was a 'ball', and Air, even to its later proponents, remained, in the last analysis, material. Similar remarks could be made about the elemental Fire of Heraclitus. Empedocles' principles of Love and Strife are too little differentiated in nature from his four material *ῥιζώματα*—so for instance fr.17.18–20: *πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἠέρος ἄπλετον ὕψος,| Νεῖκος τ' οὐλόμενον δίχα τῶν, ἀτάλαντον ἁπάντῃ, καὶ Φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν, ἴση μῆκός τε πλάτος τε*. The concepts of incorporeality and immateriality still had not emerged.

Not all agree. Some scholars maintain that these concepts were in fact current and familiar already in the fifth century. If this is the case, the two main claimants for the discovery would be Anaxagoras and Melissus. The crucial passage for determining the extent to which Anaxagoras had clearly understood the implications of incorporeality and immateriality runs as follows (fr.12):

> *τὰ μὲν ἄλλα παντὸς μοῖραν μετέχει, νοῦς δέ ἐστιν ἄπειρον καὶ αὐτοκρατὲς καὶ μέμεικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι . . . ἔστι γὰρ λεπτότατόν τε πάντων χρημάτων καὶ καθαρώτατόν . . . νοῦς δὲ πᾶς ὅμοιός ἐστι καὶ ὁ μείζων καὶ ὁ ἐλάττων . . .*

[24] J. E. Raven offers some excellent remarks on this in CQ 48 (1954) 133–34; see also F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (London 1912) 83.

I cite some representative opinions on this important document. W. D. Ross: "In calling the 'mind' of Anaxagoras an element, Aristotle is treating it as a material . . . principle; and this is justified by Anaxagoras' own language, since he describes it as *λεπτότατον* (fr.12). He was aiming at the notion of an immaterial substance, but did not reach it."[25] W. Jaeger: "Anaxagoras himself had not distinguished Mind sharply from 'the other things' . . . He was therefore not yet aware of a real opposition between matter and Mind . . . he still conceived of it as something material, endowed with the power of thought."[26] J. E. Raven: "*Νοῦς*, for all its fineness and purity, is still regarded as extended in space and corporeal. For if once we admit the only alternative explanation, that these phrases are merely figurative or metaphorical, then we can hardly refuse a similar concession to Empedocles, Parmenides, and all the rest. Burnet is surely right: 'Zeller holds, indeed, that Anaxagoras meant to speak of something incorporeal; but he admits that he did not succeed in doing so, and that is historically the important point.' "[27] Guthrie disagrees (II 276–78): ". . . *Lepton* is a word commonly used with a material denotation . . . and its use here has sometimes been taken as evidence that Mind is still being thought of as corporeal. Since however it is already used of counsel or wisdom (*μῆτις*) in the *Iliad*, it is hardly worth repeating the many occasions on which it is used with similar non-material subjects in classical Greek. If Anaxagoras had at last grasped the idea of non-material existence, he obviously had not the vocabulary in which to express it . . . If any shred of materialism remains, it is very slight indeed."

The disagreement is really one of degree rather than of kind. All seem to grant that Anaxagoras has not expressed the concept of immateriality in clear and unequivocal language. Nevertheless, even taking into account the difficulties of a nascent philosophical vocabulary, Guthrie appears to concede too much to Anaxagoras. It is true that *λεπτός* and *καθαρός* can be used, even in early Greek, in a transferred sense.[28] Nothing in Anaxagoras' language, here or elsewhere, suggests that he is so using these adjectives. His words are straightforward and concrete, his diction that of a serious thinker attempting strict and sustained logical argument.

Perhaps even more telling than these epithets, though little

[25] *Aristotle's Metaphysics* I (Oxford 1924) 182 (*ad Metaph.* 989a31).

[26] *Supra* n.4: 166–67.

[27] *Supra* n.24: 134.

[28] However, Guthrie's expression 'non-material subjects' begs the question: 'counsel',

stressed by scholars, is the phrase *πάντων χρημάτων*. For *χρῆμα* is a rather 'matter-of-fact' and concrete word in Ionic Greek; the English 'thing' is an imperfect rendering of it. That Anaxagoras was using it in a specific and material sense is already suggested by the opening words of his work (fr.1): *ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν, ἄπειρα καὶ πλῆθος καὶ σμικρότητα κτλ.* Or again, *ἡ σύμμιξις πάντων χρημάτων* (fr.4); *οὐδὲν γὰρ χρῆμα γίνεται οὐδὲ ἀπόλλυται, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ ἐόντων χρημάτων συμμίσγεταί τε καὶ διακρίνεται κτλ.* (fr. 17).[29] If Anaxagoras had a fully worked-out conception of *νοῦς* and *χρήματα* as involving distinct modes of existence (*i.e.*, mind as opposed to matter), he could have expressed himself differently. It was, for instance, within the range of his technical vocabulary to have written *πάντων τῶν ἐόντων* instead of *πάντων χρημάτων* (*cf.* fr.3). Moreover, Anaxagoras goes on in fr.12 to speak of *νοῦς* in terms of *ὁ μείζων καὶ ὁ ἐλάττων*. The 'big and the small', the 'greater and the lesser', are favorite notions of Anaxagoras and are clearly used of material entities in a literal sense (*cf.* frr.3, 5, 6). Of *τὸ σμικρόν* and *τό μέγα* in fr.3 Guthrie himself comments, "No difficulty has ever been felt about the meaning of 'the small' and 'the large' here: everyone assumes without question that they mean small and large things, or particles of matter, for it is in fact obvious that in the context they could not mean anything else" (II 285). Few would underrate Anaxagoras as an original thinker: *οἷον νήφων ἐφάνη παρ' εἰκῇ λέγοντας τοὺς πρότερον* (Arist. *Metaph.* 984b17). But to assert that he arrived at a full and explicit formulation of immateriality or incorporeality is not justified by the evidence.

Melissus provides the most tantalizing statement of all (fr.9):

> *εἰ μὲν οὖν εἴη, δεῖ αὐτὸ ἕν εἶναι · ἓν δ' ἐὸν δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν. εἰ δὲ ἔχοι πάχος, εἴχοι ἂν μόρια, καὶ οὐκέτι ἓν εἴη.*

'wisdom', etc., are inherent qualities, not independently existing, immaterial substances, which is what is most at issue here.

[29] These parallels refute Guthrie's few comments in defence of a more abstract sense of *χρῆμα* in fr.12 (II 227 n.1); Guthrie there compares Pl. *Prot.* 361B: *πάντα χρήματά ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη, καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀνδρεία.* This is no real parallel, since *πάντα χρήματα* here is deliberately used in a 'cosmogonical' sense. J. Adam, *Platonis Protagoras*[2] (Cambridge 1905) 192, is correct: "*πάντα χρήματα*: exaggeration—as if Socrates held *ἐπιστήμη* to be the *ἀρχή* of the universe and said *ἐπιστήμη πάντα* as Heraclitus might say *πῦρ πάντα*." That is, *χρήματα* is used to conjure up particular connotations; the collocation of *δικαιοσύνη κτλ.* with it cannot be assumed to be normal usage. Furthermore, Plato is an inappropriate author to cite, since his flexible use of abstractions so far surpassed that of his predecessors.

This fragment is preserved by Simplicius who prefaces the citation with the words *ὅτι γὰρ ἀσώματον εἶναι βούλεται τὸ ὄν, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπών · "εἰ μὲν οὖν κτλ."* This would appear at first sight decisive: here at last is an explicit statement of incorporeality. But as soon as one compares some of the other fragments of Melissus, difficulties arise:

> *ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἔστιν ἀεί, οὕτω καὶ τὸ μέγεθος ἄπειρον ἀεὶ χρὴ εἶναι* (fr.3).
>
> *οὐδὲ κενεόν ἐστιν οὐδέν · τὸ γὰρ κενεὸν οὐδέν ἐστιν · οὐκ ἂν οὖν εἴη τό γε μηδέν. οὐδὲ κινεῖται · ὑποχωρῆσαι γὰρ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδαμῇ, ἀλλὰ πλέων ἐστιν . . . ἀνάγκη τοίνυν πλέων εἶναι, εἰ κενὸν μὴ ἔστιν. εἰ τοίνυν πλέων ἐστίν, οὐ κινεῖται* (fr.7.7, 10).

Thus, according to Melissus, Being has no body, but does have both infinite 'magnitude' (*μέγεθος*) and 'fullness'. That these two terms are being used in a literal sense, which implies matter, is generally agreed. This immediately involves Melissus in a contradiction, and attempts have been made to circumvent this. In order to avoid the attribution of incorporeality to Melissus' Being, Burnet argued that fr.9 did not refer to the Eleatic Being at all, but to the Pythagorean ultimate units.[30] Zeller, Nestle, Ross (*ad* Arist. *Metaph.* 986b20) adopted similar positions. Such a solution fails to convince and quite ignores the testimony of Simplicius who had access to Melissus' work entire. More satisfactory is the view of such scholars as Raven and Guthrie, who argue that Melissus in fact did say that Eleatic Being did not possess body, but without grasping all that this statement should imply.[31] The details of a coherent theory of incorporeality had yet to be worked out. Melissus is the earliest known thinker to deny 'body' to Being; he did not develop the formal concept of incorporeality in the usual sense of the term.[32] Moreover, it may be taken as certain that Melissus did not use the actual word *ἀσώματος*: Simplicius, as was noted above, quoted fr.9 specifically to prove that Melissus intended his

[30] *Supra* n.5: 327.

[31] For details see J. E. Raven, *Pythagoreans and Eleatics* (Cambridge 1948) 87ff, and Guthrie II 110–12. More recent is Renzo Vitali, *Melisso di Samo sul mondo e sull'essere* (Urbino 1973), but the discussion of the problem at 304–09 seems to me poor.

[32] The argument of N. B. Booth, *AJP* 79 (1958) 64, seems to have a certain force: ". . . if someone like Melissus had in point of fact developed the idea of Incorporeal Being . . . , would not Aristotle have been more likely to turn several somersaults in admiration, and hail Melissus as a sober man among drunkards?" Aristotle describes Melissus' reasoning as *φορτικός*.

Being to be incorporeal. Had *ἀσώματος* occurred in Melissus' work, Simplicius would surely have quoted the passage(s) in this connection.

To observe, however, that the concepts *ἀσωματία* and *ἀϋλία* have not yet been fully worked out is merely to state a fact, not explain it. There must have been in the Greek mental outlook specific stumbling blocks which made it so difficult for thinkers who were clearly moving in this direction to grasp such notions, and it is worth the effort to attempt to discover what they were. The notion of extension in space was one factor; the Greeks considered it so natural and essential an attribute of all reality that it simply did not occur to them at first to deny spatial extension to Being, even when they were struggling to divest it of body.[33] Since in ordinary thought bodily matter is that which is extended in space, this attitude was one potent source of confusion when speculation about non-material Being began. Another was the word *σῶμα* itself. In the fifth century *σῶμα* still meant primarily what it had always meant, namely the body of an organic being, living or dead.[34] By the fourth century *σῶμα* appears to have been capable of much the same transferred meanings as the English word 'body', so that we find such phrases as *ὕδωρ . . . ποταμοῦ σῶμα* (Chaeremon fr.17 Snell) and *τὸ σῶμα τῆς πόλεως*, our 'body politic' (Hyperides 1 [5] col.25, Din. 1.110). There is not much evidence for such wider applications of *σῶμα* in the fifth century,[35] though doubtless this semantic development was already beginning then. Melissus was necessarily conditioned by the vocabulary which he had inherited, and *σῶμα* was responsible for another confusion of thought, in my judgment the decisive one.

[33] See the remarks of Raven (*supra* n.24) 133. Kirk and Raven (*supra* n.6) 483 *s.v.* "Space": "spatial extension inseparable from existence in Presocratic thought . . ." Charles H. Kahn comes to the same conclusion from a different direction, *viz.*, an analysis of the meaning of *εἶναι*: "If existence and location are not *identical* in Greek thought, they are at least logically equivalent, for they imply one another. That is, they do for the average man, and for the philosophers before Plato. . . . The locative connotation [*sc.* of *εἶναι*], suggesting as it does a concretely spatial and even bodily view of *what is*, inclines Greek philosophy towards a conception of reality as corporeal . . . To claim that the Greek view of reality was so persistently corporeal *because* their verb 'to be' had local connotations would no doubt be an exaggeration. But the two facts are related . . .": "The Greek Verb 'To Be' And The Concept of Being," *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966) 258 and 260.

[34] The often-repeated statement that in the Homeric period *σῶμα* meant only 'corpse', 'dead body' is not true. See my paper "The Meaning of *σῶμα* in Homer," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 12 (1980); West (*supra* n.7) on Hes. *Op.* 540.

[35] See Guthrie II 111 n.2.

All physical bodies—whether the word be used in a narrower sense (*e.g.*, *σῶμα ἀνθρώπου*) or a wider one (*e.g.*, *σῶμα ὕδατος*)—partake of such sensible properties as weight, shape, extension in space, not insofar as they are *bodies*, but insofar as they are *matter*. In the fifth century *σῶμα* still bore a predominantly literal meaning—human or animal figure; at the same time the nature of matter was imperfectly understood. There was as yet not even a word for it. The consequence of this state of things was that it was possible to conceive of Body and Matter as two distinct entities. So long as *σῶμα* had a rather restricted meaning and matter was both vaguely conceived and nameless, no thinker was in a position, either linguistically or conceptually, to perceive clearly that a denial of Body necessarily involved a denial of properties which Body had not *qua* Body, but *qua* Matter.[36]

II

In a famous and influential paper, entitled simply *Ἀσώματος*,[37] Heinrich Gomperz argued that not merely the concept of incorporeality (though in a specialized sense), but even the actual word *ἀσώματος* was as old as the sixth century. If he is correct, the analysis set forth above is wrong. As proof of the relatively early existence of the word *ἀσώματος* Gomperz adduced three passages; none of them will bear scrutiny.

(1) Anaximenes fr.3: *ἐγγύς ἐστιν ὁ ἀὴρ τοῦ ἀσωμάτου · καὶ ὅτι κατ' ἔκροιαν τούτου γινόμεθα, ἀνάγκη αὐτὸν καὶ ἄπειρον εἶναι καὶ πλούσιον διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε ἐκλείπειν* (preserved in Olympiodorus, *De arte sacra lapidis philosophorum* 25). Diels-Kranz print it as a forgery with the comments "Die Fälschung ergibt sich nicht nur aus dem schwindelhaften Charakter des Buches, sondern auch aus dem Sprachgebrauch: *ἀσώματος*, *πλούσιος*; der Anfang aus Arist. Phys. *Δ* 4.212a12, der Schluss ebenfalls aus Aristot. . . ." Guthrie does not bother to mention the fragment in his *History of Greek Philosophy*, even though it would be an extremely significant pas-

[36] In this connection it is worth comparing the implications of the opening words of the *Septuaginta*: *ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος*. The earth is obviously material, and large; to describe it as invisible and without physical shape or form is to give it characteristics which would really be more appropriate to an immaterial essence. The difficulty was not perceived. It is a curious coincidence that the language here would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Aristotle's *ὕλη*.

[37] *Hermes* 67 (1932) 155–67.

sage if genuine. The beginning of the fragment may very well, as Diels-Kranz note, go back, directly or indirectly, to Aristotle's *Physics* 212a10ff, an inquiry into the nature of *τόπος*: *ἐνδέχεσθαι γὰρ φαίνεται εἶναι διάστημα μεταξὺ ἄλλο τι τῶν κινουμένων μεγεθῶν · συμβάλλεται δέ τι καὶ ὁ ἀὴρ δοκῶν ἀσώματος εἶναι κτλ.* In any event, it could hardly be argued that Aristotle is in this passage paraphrasing 'Anaximenes'. What condemns the fragment more than anything is the thought-content itself. The statement that air approaches the incorporeal reveals not merely an awareness of the concepts corporeality and incorporeality (as well as knowledge of what came to be the technical term for the latter, *τὸ ἀσώματον*). It also demonstrates the ability to distinguish clearly between substances which are (a) corporeal, but *similar to the incorporeal* (*ἐγγὺς . . . τοῦ ἀσωμάτου*), and (b) truly incorporeal. It was, as we have seen, precisely the inability to make such a clear distinction which repeatedly confounded the Presocratics down even to the time of Anaxagoras. To attribute a more sophisticated mentality to Anaximenes is both historically unintelligible and contrary to the extant evidence.

Furthermore, this passage is incompatible with Anaximenes' own philosophical views. To liken something to 'the incorporeal' clearly implies that some reality exists which is *ἀσώματος*. But what could it have been for Anaximenes? Air was his ultimate principle of being; it was through the condensation and rarefaction of Air that other things came to be and perished. Air cannot be *τὸ ἀσώματον* here; that is excluded by the wording of the fragment. If not Air, then nothing was incorporeal for Anaximenes. As Vlastos has written, "Anaximenes certainly did not think the soul 'as incorporeal as possible', but the reverse. To say that everything, from fire to earth, is air, is to say that soul, as air, is as corporeal as anything else."[38] It is obvious that whoever wrote "Air is near the incorporeal" already had a notion of an incorporeal reality, one which was distinct from air and alien to Anaximenes' philosophy.

(2) Philolaus fr.22: *nunc ad Philolaum redeo . . . qui in tertio voluminum, quae περὶ ῥυθμῶν καὶ μέτρων praenotat, de anima humana sic loquitur: "anima inditur corpori per numerum et immortalem eandemque incorporalem convenientiam." item post alia: "diligitur corpus ab anima, quia sine eo non potest uti sensibus. a quo postquam morte deducta est, agit in mundo incorporalem vitam."* This is preserved by Claudianus Mamertus, *De statu*

[38] *Supra* n.4: 118 (= *Studies* 122).

animae 2.7 (p.120.12ff Engelbrecht). Claudianus was a Christian writer who lived in Gaul in the fifth century; his *De statu animae* was composed against a certain Faustus who had ascribed some degree of corporeality to the soul. The arguments which Claudianus employs to establish his case are in good part Neoplatonic.

Diels-Kranz print this as a spurious fragment of Philolaus.[39] In the previous case the difficulty lay in attributing to Anaximenes an anachronistic belief. The situation here is different. There is no problem in ascribing to Philolaus or an early Pythagorean the general type of beliefs found in this passage. What interests us is the particular word *incorporalis*. If the passage is spurious, its testimony is worthless. But even if it is genuine, it is still not certain that Philolaus wrote *ἀσώματος*. Guthrie, in discussing this passage, refers to "traces of later Greek terminology in Latin dress" and thinks that "the word 'incorporalem' (*ἀσώματον*) would probably not have been used by Philolaus himself."[40] He gives no grounds for his opinion. In general, as stated above, Claudianus uses Neoplatonist arguments; *ἀσώματος* was well-established in the Neoplatonic vocabulary. This fragment is obviously a very shaky foundation for a reconstruction of the history of *ἀσώματος*. Nevertheless it should not be discounted without a careful examination.

To begin with, Claudianus Mamertus' authority as an independent preserver of genuine fragments of early Greek philosophy is open to grave doubts. I give some specimens. (a) *Idem Platon in libro, quem περὶ φυσικῆς scripsit: "anima", inquit, "animantium omnium corporalis non est ipsaque se movet aliorum quoque agitatrix, quae naturaliter mota [immota, v.l.] sunt"* (2.7, p.124.17ff E.). There is no work of Plato's with the title (or subtitle) *περὶ*

[39] Kranz however comments in the apparatus criticus "Echtheit wird mit guten Gründen verteidigt von H. Gomperz *Hermes* 67 (1932) 156." But H. Cherniss wrote, "This reference comes from an undoubtedly spurious work of Philolaus . . . ," *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore 1935) 323. The larger, and difficult, question of the authenticity of the major fragments attributed to Philolaus does not affect the argument here since (1) this fragment alone makes specific mention of incorporeality (*incorporalis*), and (2) its (very dubious) claim to genuineness is clearly on a quite different footing from that of the main fragments. For the Philolaus fragments compare Burkert (*supra* n.22) ch.3, and, for this fragment, 247 with n.45 and 32 n.21 ("This makes it improbable that the word *ἀσώματος* was coined by the Pythagoreans, as H. Gomperz tried to show . . .").

[40] I 311 with n.4. One may add that Claudianus also clothes his philosophy in biblical raiment: 2.3, p.105.9ff E., [Philolaus] *de mensuris ponderibus et numeris iuxta geometricam musicam atque arithmeticam mirifice disputat . . . illi videlicet scripturae consentiens, qua deo dicitur: "mensura pondere et numero omnia disposuisti"* [= *Wisdom* 11.20, a familiar verse of which Augustine was fond].

φυσικῆς; the Latin is not a version of any passage in Plato.[41] This example provides a perfect parallel for the 'Philolaus' citation. For the natural inference from these Latin words is that Plato called the ψυχὴ πάντων ζῴων (*vel sim.*) οὐ σωματικὴ or ἀσώματος. He nowhere does in so many words; a reconstruction based on this passage would lead us into error. (b) *Hippon Metapontinus ex eadem schola Pythagorae praemissis pro statu sententiae suae insolubilibus argumentis de anima sic pronuntiat: "longe aliud anima, aliud corpus est, quae corpore et torpente viget et caeco videt et mortuo vivit"* (2.7, p.121.14ff E.). Diels-Kranz remark simply "aus einer gefälschten neupyth. Schrift."[42] By the fourth century B.C. the thought expressed here had become a commonplace (*cf.* Pind. fr.131b Sn.; Hipp. *Regimen* 4.1; Arist. fr.10 Rose[3]; Philo *Leg.* 2.30; Plot. 3.6.6.65ff). Turning to the Latin tradition, we find in Cicero a passage where not merely the thought but the language appears suspiciously similar: *cum ergo est somno sevocatus animus . . . a contagione corporis, . . . futura pro*videt; *iacet enim corpus dormientis ut* mortui, viget *autem et* vivit *animus* (*Div.* 1.30.63). Claudianus' source probably owed more to Cicero, directly or indirectly, than to 'Hippon'. (c) *Archytas perinde Tarentinus idemque Pythagoricus in eo opere, quod magnificum de rerum natura prodidit . . . "anima," inquit, "ad exemplum unius composita est. . . ."* (2.7, p.121.5ff E.). Diels-Kranz list this passage among the *unechte Schriften* of Archytas;[43] they do not bother to print the supposed direct quotation from Archytas.

Such is the nature of Claudianus' general reliability. To return to the Philolaus passage itself: Gomperz correctly observed that *incorporalis convenientia* = ἀσώματος ἁρμονία, *incorporalis vita* = ἀσώματος ζωή, and that in the *Phaedo* Simmias, an associate of Philolaus (who is himself mentioned several times in the *Phaedo*), describes ἁρμονία as ἀσώματον . . . τι καὶ θεῖον (85E).[44] To Gomperz this seemed too much to be coincidence; he concluded that the agreement of Claudianus and Plato proved the genuineness of the Philolaus fragment in Claudianus and that Plato borrowed

[41] Some editors correct to περὶ φύσεως, the 'Thrasyllan' sub-title of the *Timaeus*; see *Ti.* 34Bff, *Phdr.* 245Cff. But for the true souce of Claudianus' language compare Apul. *De Dog. Plat.* 1.9, with Jean Beaujeu's comments, *Apulée Opuscules Philosophiques . . . et Fragments* (Paris 1973) 264. On this passage see further Franz Bömer, *Der lateinische Neuplatonismus und Claudianus Mamertus in Sprache und Philosophie* (Bonn 1936) 34ff.

[42] Hippasus A 10 (I 109.17ff); also printed as [Hippon] fr.4 (I 389.10ff).

[43] [Archytas] fr.9.10 (I 439.28–29).

[44] *Supra* n.37: 156.

the phrase directly from the Pythagorean tradition represented by Philolaus. The similarity between the *Phaedo* and Claudianus is of course no coincidence; but the probable explanation of it is not what Gomperz supposed. Claudianus worked in the Neoplatonic tradition in which both Plato's writings and the concept *τὸ ἀσώματον* were fully at home. The Neoplatonists were also much interested in Pythagoreanism. That these thinkers had access to spurious Pythagorean and Platonic works is well-known; examples from Claudianus himself have been given above. It is from just such a forgery that Claudianus almost certainly quotes Philolaus here; the association of Philolaus and *incorporalis convenientia* goes back ultimately to the *Phaedo* itself and not to a lost work of Philolaus to which Claudianus was privy. Claudianus himself actually quotes a lengthy extract from a Latin version of the *Phaedo* (2.7, p.125.14ff E.).

That this is the correct explanation receives additional support from the other expression supposedly used by Philolaus—*incorporalis vita*, *ἀσώματος ζωή*. Nowhere in early Greek thought is 'life' ever described as incorporeal. This involves a transferred application of *ἀσώματος* which cannot be paralleled even in Plato or Aristotle, who regularly use the word of substances, *οὐσίαι*, not properties or accidents. (*Phd.* 85E is no exception.) Gomperz is forced to say that *ἀσώματος* is here used "in einem sozusagen vorwissenschaftlichen, volkstümlichen Sinne. . . ." There is absolutely no evidence for this. As we shall see, *ἀσώματος* is a formal philosophical coinage; to speak of a 'pre-scientific, popular' use of the word is to commit an anachronism. On the other hand, *ζωή*, Life, was a widespread and basic symbol of the Christians; the word was used in particular to connote eternal spiritual life. This theological sense of *ζωή* derives not from Greek philosophy but from the New Testament.[45] *ζωὴ ἀσώματος* and *vita incorporea* (or *incorporalis*) are normal phrases in Christian writers: Origen *Jo.* 1.17 (p.21.12 Preuschen = Migne, *PG* 14.52B), *ἄϋλον πάντῃ καὶ ἀσώματον ζωὴν ζώντων*; *De principiis* 2.2.2 (Migne, *PG* 11.187B), *trinitas incorporea vita existere recte putabitur*. The expression *incorporalis vita* in Claudianus points to a date of composition in the Christian period for these supposed fragments of Philolaus.

(3) 'Orpheus' fr.13 D.–K. = fr.54 Kern: *ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὸν Ἱερώνυμον*

[45] Abundant material in Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*[2], and G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, *s.v. ζωή*.

φερομένη καὶ Ἑλλάνικον [*sc.* Ὀρφικὴ θεολογία], εἴπερ μὴ καὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν, οὕτως ἔχει · "... συνεῖναι δὲ αὐτῷ τὴν Ἀνάγκην, φύσιν οὖσαν τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ Ἀδράστειαν, ἀσώματον διωργυιωμένην ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ, τῶν περάτων αὐτοῦ ἐφαπτομένην ..." (preserved by Damascius, *De princ.* 123 *bis* [I 317.15ff Ruelle]). Gomperz is disposed to date this document "kaum später als etwa um 500."[46] This must be declared wishful thinking. The fact is that 'Hieronymos' and 'Hellanikos' have not been successfully identified; Jacoby goes so far as to place Hieronymus in the Roman period. Most recently, West has dated the work to the third or second century B.C.[47] Furthermore, the meaning of ἀσώματος is so uncertain here that the passage would be of little value in any event; even the soundness of the reading has been questioned and various conjectures proposed (δισώματον Gruppe, Zeller; εὐσώματον Ruelle). But we need not rest content with such general objections. For there is a quite specific argument against an early dating of this document. The excerpt from 'Hieronymos and Hellanikos' begins as follows: ὕδωρ ἦν, φησίν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ ὕλη, ἐξ ἧς ἐπάγη ἡ γῆ κτλ. The technical use of ὕλη as a general word for 'matter' most probably goes back to Aristotle and no further.[48] Here, of course, ὕλη is not 'prime matter' in the scholastic sense, but 'primal matter', 'Urstoff', a normal usage. Evidence that any writer as early as 500 had that meaning of ὕλη in his vocabulary is totally lacking; it would be doubtful even a century and more later.

These three passages constitute Gomperz's proof that ἀσώματος was in use in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. They are all soiled goods and prove nothing of the sort.[49] There is no genuine docu-

[46] *Supra* n.37: 163.

[47] See W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*[2] (London 1952) 85–86, 143 nn.8 and 9; F. Susemihl, *Gesch. gr. Lit. Alex.* I (Leipzig 1891) 376 n.6. F. Jacoby, *RE* 8 (1913) 1560–61 *s.v.* "Hieronymos 11"; contrast Gudeman's sensible skepticism, 1564 *s.v.* "Hieronymos 13." M. L. West, "Graeco-Oriental Orphism in the Third Century B.C.," in *Assimilation et résistance à la culture gréco-romaine dans le monde ancien*, Travaux du VI[e] Congrès International d'Études Classiques (Bucharest and Paris 1976) 223 and 226.

[48] *E.g.*, *Metaph.* 1032a17, τὸ ἐξ οὗ γίγνεται ἣν λέγομεν ὕλην. On this word see A. E. Taylor, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford 1928) *ad Ti.* 69A6; Ross on Arist. *Metaph.* 983b7; R. Hackforth, *Plato's Philebus* (Cambridge 1972) 110 n.1; *infra* n.64. It is worth noting that Latin *materies* (*materia*), like Greek ὕλη, developed the general sense 'matter' from an earlier meaning 'wood for building'. See Ernout-Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*[4] (Paris 1967) *s.v.* "materies."

[49] Since I consider Gomperz's evidence valueless, it seems unnecessary to consider in detail the meaning of ἀσώματος which he deduces from these three passages and from Melissus fr.9. Briefly, he argues that ἀσώματος meant at this time not a denial of all matter, but of coarse matter (*i.e.*, ἀσώματος = ἔχων ἀραιὸν τὸ σῶμα), and that the word regularly

ment from that period in which the word occurs. At the very end of the Presocratic period Melissus, who actually wrote that Being did not have a *σῶμα*, still does not use *ἀσώματος*, even though the Eleatics appear to have had a fondness for privative adjectives in describing their Being.[50]

In fact, there is nothing improbable in a relatively late introduction of *ἀσώματος*. Consider three comparable adjectives: *ἄψυχος*, *ἀσώματος*, *ἄϋλος*. One might reasonably suppose that all three would be coined at about the same time. Their chronological distribution paints a quite different picture. *ἄψυχος* is attested as early as Archilochus (fr.193 W. = fr.104 D.): *δύστηνος ἔγκειμαι πόθῳ | ἄψυχος, χαλεπῇσι θεῶν ὀδύνῃσιν ἔκητι | πεπαρμένος δι' ὀστέων*. Thereafter the word occurs often. *ἄψυχος* meant originally 'lifeless', 'without the *ψυχή* or life/breath soul', 'inanimate'. Lifeless objects have always been a matter of common experience; it required no formal philosophical thought to bring this word into existence, hence its early appearance: in Archilochus *ἄψυχος* is already being used hyperbolically. The situation is quite different with *ἀσώματος*. The notion of a real being without a body is very subtle and involves conscious contemplation on a mode of existence not posited until philosophy had attained a high level of abstract thought.[51] It is perfectly intelligible that *ἀσώματος* should

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suggested absence of limit ('Grenzenlosigkeit', *τὸ ἄπειρον*). His analysis is ingenious, but unsatisfactory. For instance, that these thinkers had great difficulty in distinguishing something which was composed of fine matter (*e.g.*, air) from the truly immaterial is clear. But that they would coin a word, which meant literally 'not having a body', in the sense of 'having a body of fine matter' and that this word only later came to mean 'not having any body' (as it did, even according to Gomperz) defies linguistic probability. Far more likely that *ἀσώματος* was not coined until the meaning of the concept had sufficiently crystallized to make the need for a formal term felt. (Melissus denies both density and fineness to his Being, fr.7.8 *πυκνὸν δὲ καὶ ἀραιὸν οὐκ ἂν εἴη κτλ.* This argument is believed to be directed against Anaxagoras, whose concept of *τὸ ἀσώματον* was, in Gomperz's view, identical with that of Melissus. How can Melissus deny *ἀραιότης* to his Being and mean that his Being has an *ἀραιὸν σῶμα* when he says it has no *σῶμα*?) Again, it is correct that the notion of the boundless was prominent in Presocratic thought. But that these passages demonstrate a conscious and necessary association of *ἀσώματος* and *ἄπειρος* is an unfounded assumption. Thus, in the 'Anaximenes' fragment air is boundless; it is *not ἀσώματος*, but *ἐγγὺς . . . τοῦ ἀσωμάτου*, *i.e.*, still *σωματικός*. In the Orphic fragment Gomperz maintains that *τῶν περάτων αὐτοῦ ἐφαπτομένην* means "zwar nicht den Worten, wohl aber der Sache nach—'der Grösse nach grenzenlos'." 'To take hold of the limits of the kosmos' seems to mean 'to be coextensive with the kosmos', not 'to be boundless'. In short, even were Gomperz correct in arguing for an early dating of these passages, his interpretation of them would still be faulty.

[50] See, *e.g.*, Parmenides fr.8.3–4 (*ἀγένητον, ἀνώλεθρον, ἀτρεμές, ἀτέλεστον*).

[51] Primitive man may have a vague awareness of powers which he does not consciously

not occur until much after the first appearance of *ἄψυχος*, and then only as a formal technical term of philosophy. *ἄϋλος*, 'immaterial', is a technical philosophical coinage like *ἀσώματος*, and one which was created as a consequence of reflection on the same set of problems and concepts. In later Greek the two are often found collocated and are sometimes used interchangeably. Despite this, the chronological distribution of the two words is quite different. *ἀσώματος* is found in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, even in Epicurus. *ἄϋλος*, apart from one passage in Aristotle where it is almost certainly corrupt,[52] is not attested before Plutarch; the by-form *ἄνυλος* is even later.

The reason for this at first sight curious situation is not far to seek. After the Greeks had been grappling with incorporeality and immateriality long enough to feel a conscious need for a formal term, they coined *ἀσώματος* rather than *ἄϋλος* simply because that was their only option at the time. *ἀσώματος* is found already in Plato. *ὕλη* in the sense of 'matter' first occurs in Aristotle; it was presumably his own creation. That is, *ἀσώματος* 'arrived first', and, long after the difference between incorporeality and immateriality was understood, it continued to be used, even in places where *ἄϋλος* might have been thought more exact. For example, a chapter in the *Placita* of Aëtius has the heading *εἰ σῶμα ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τίς ἡ οὐσία αὐτῆς*. The chapter begins *οὗτοι πάντες οἱ προτεταγμένοι ἀσώματον τὴν ψυχὴν ὑποτίθενται*. The subject-matter is the soul's substance or essence (*οὐσία*)—is the soul a material substance? One might have expected *ὕλη* and *ἄϋλον* to appear here rather than *σῶμα* and *ἀσώματον*. The presence of these latter two words illustrates well the persistence of the terminology which had been established first.[53]

The upshot of all this is the following. *ἄϋλος* is clearly a technical coinage of formal philosophy, created under definite intellec-

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'embody', without any reflection on the implications of this. This is a quite different matter from what the Greek philosophers achieved—beginning with corporeal beings and the data of sensation they arrived, through reason alone, at the idea of real beings which had no bodies, and then proceeded to work out in detail the properties and attributes of such beings.

[52] *Gen.Corr.* 322a28–30 (*ter*), where Joachim's *αὐλός* (*cf.* LSJ *s.v.*, I.3) is now printed. See also W. J. Verdenius and J. H. Waszink, *Aristotle On Coming to Be and Passing Away* (Leiden 1966) 29.

[53] Diels, *Dox.Graec.* p.387. For the various meanings of these terms see Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, *s.vv.* *ἀσώματος* and *ἄϋλος*; *TLL s.vv.* "incorporalis," "incorporeus," "immaterialis." Note that *immaterialis* appears to be uncommon even in the Latin fathers; it is chiefly medieval.

tual conditions in a particular philosophical climate. That it should have first appeared in the prephilosophical period, or even in the Presocratic one, is inconceivable for reasons set forth above.[54] *ἀσώματος* corresponds to *ἄϋλος*, and not to *ἄψυχος*; it is a child of philosophy. The conceptual background necessary for its first appearance cannot be documented before the end of the fifth century at the earliest. The oldest actually attested occurrences of *ἀσώματος* are in Plato. Is this coincidence?

III

Given the subtlety of the notion, it is most improbable that *ἀσώματος* was first clearly conceived by some inconsequential thinker unknown to us. Such a gap in our knowledge of Greek philosophy, imperfect though that be, is possible, but not likely. If, then, it is a realistic procedure to confine ourselves to known, 'professional' philosophers[55] and to the time framework adumbrated above, process of elimination suggests that the decisive step was taken by Socrates or Plato.

ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐρωτικὰ ἴσως, ὦ Σώκρατες, κἂν σὺ μυηθείης· τὰ δὲ τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά, ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ ταῦτα ἔστιν, ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς μετίῃ, οὐκ οἶδ' εἰ οἷός τ' ἂν εἴης (Pl. *Symp.* 209E–210A). "I incline to agree with those scholars who have seen in this sentence Plato's intention to mark the limit reached by the philosophy of his master . . . All that is contained in the lesser mysteries is true, even if there be no other world, no enduring existence for any

[54] *ἄϋλος* in a non-technical sense, 'treeless', of course could have occurred at any period. An example is Theophr. *Caus.Pl.* 1.5.2 (*v.l. ἄνυλος*).

[55] For there is no indication that any others contributed to the discovery and elaboration of these concepts. Thucydides, for instance, is so far from 'incorporeal' notions that he interchanges *σῶμα* and *ψυχή* in the same sentence (1.136.4): *καὶ ἅμα αὐτὸς μὲν ἐκείνῳ . . . οὐκ ἐς τὸ σῶμα σῴζεσθαι ἐναντιωθῆναι, ἐκεῖνον δ' ἂν . . . σωτηρίας ἂν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀποστερῆσαι.* (There is no rigid distinction here between *ψυχή* = (1) 'soul' and (2) 'life'.) The Hippocratic writers are straightforward materialists; this becomes particularly clear in their statements about the soul and thought: *Epidemics* 6.5.2, *ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ αἰεὶ φύεται μέχρι θανάτου· ἢν δὲ ἐκπυρωθῇ ἅμα τῇ νούσῳ καὶ ἡ ψυχή, τὸ σῶμα φέρβεται. Regimen* 1.7, *ἐσέρπει δὲ ἐς ἄνθρωπον ψυχὴ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος σύγκρησιν ἔχουσα, μοίρην σώματος ἀνθρώπου. Nature of Man* 6, . . . *τὸ αἷμα ῥέον ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, τοῦτο νομίζουσιν εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ. Breaths* 14, *ἡγεῦμαι δὲ ἔμπροσθεν μηδὲν εἶναι μᾶλλον τῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι ξυμβαλλόμενον ἐς φρόνησιν ἢ τὸ αἷμα* (*cf.* Empedocles fr.105.3). *Regimen* 2.61, *ὅσα μεριμνᾷ ἄνθρωπος, κινεῖται ἡ ψυχὴ ὑπὸ τούτων καὶ θερμαίνεται καὶ ξηραίνεται καὶ τὸ ὑγρὸν καταναλίσκουσα πονεῖ καὶ κενοῖ τὰς σάρκας καὶ λεπτύνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον.* (The text in some of these passages is uncertain; the main point is not affected.)

element in the individual soul. The disclosure of the other world—the eternal realm of the Ideas—is reserved for the greater mysteries that follow. If I am right in believing that Socrates' philosophy was a philosophy of life in this world, while Plato's was centred in another world, here is the point where they part company." Such was Cornford's judgment.[56] Jaeger,[57] Guthrie (III 397 n.1), and others have expressed similar views. I believe them to be correct. In the midst of the numerous uncertainties that surround the 'Socratic Question' this at least seems widely accepted, that the historical Socrates was not primarily a theoretical metaphysician.[58] The question of the nature of ultimate reality, however much it may have engaged him, was one on which he appears to have taken an agnostic position. There is no reliable evidence that he treated such problems as *τίς ἐστιν ἡ οὐσία τῆς ψυχῆς;* on the ontological level; his main interests lay elsewhere. No technical advance in the understanding of incorporeality can with any confidence be attributed to him.

Despite this, Socrates made an enormously fruitful, albeit indirect, contribution to the clarification of the concept. That contribution lay in his revolutionary notion of the soul. "For I go around doing nothing else but persuading you, young and old alike, to take care of neither your bodies nor your possessions sooner than or as much as your soul—how it shall be best." (Pl. *Apol.* 30A). *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται*: that epitomizes the Socratic gospel, and it implied an attitude toward the soul which is not found earlier.[59] Others, to be sure, had stressed the importance of the soul and elevated it far above its status in the Homeric poems ('Orphics', devotees of the mystery religions, believers in the air-soul, etc.). But Socrates was different: he stressed the soul as intellect. It was the best part of man and, if not in the Platonic sense, in some sense at least, the true self. His characteristic analogy that the soul was to the body as the craftsman to his tools illustrated vividly his opinion of the relative worth of *ψυχή* and *σῶμα* and their relation to each other. All this was argued with a unique dramatic force which can still be felt in reading the ancient ac-

[56] *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge 1950) 75.

[57] *Paideia* II (New York 1943) 192.

[58] The extreme position of Burnet and Taylor, who attributed to the historical Socrates whatever is said by him in the Platonic dialogues, leads, as is generally recognized, to a *reductio ad absurdum*.

[59] On Socrates' beliefs about the soul see J. Burnet, "The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul," *ProcBritAc* 7 (1915–16) 235–59; Jaeger (*supra* n.57) 38–43; Guthrie III 467ff.

counts of his philosophical activity. It left an indelible impression on Plato.

With Plato we are in a different world, so pronounced is the contrast between him and earlier thinkers. Much of the difference—more, perhaps, than has been consciously recognized by historians of philosophy—is directly due to his new comprehension of incorporeality and immateriality, and to the uses to which he puts it. The Theory of Forms, for instance, presupposes these concepts and would have been impossible without them. Most, if not all, of the logical consequences of positing incorporeal being are now perceived; the ontological problems involved in such theories are explicitly recognized and confronted. Of course Plato's philosophy was not a *creatio e nihilo*. Earlier tentative approaches to the question of incorporeality converge and culminate in his thought. The polarity between the sensible (*τὰ αἰσθητά*) and the intelligible (*τὰ νοητά*), which Plato, correctly or not, read into Parmenides, becomes a cornerstone of his philosophy, where 'intelligible' and 'incorporeal' are different terms for the same reality. As we have seen, Plato explicitly conjoins the two concepts—*νοητὰ . . . καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη*.[60] The Pythagorean theory of Numbers, even with its inconsistencies and contradictions, suggested the existence of a non-sensible world. This approach too was clearly a catalyst for Plato, who had a profound interest in mathematics. Several different attitudes towards the soul also were a major influence. Pythagorean and 'Orphic' teachings about the transmigration and destiny of souls, the *σῶμα/σῆμα* motif, and similar beliefs influenced Plato in one way, the Socratic elevation of the intellectual soul to a status far superior to that of the body in quite another. Also, the difficulties involved in the assumption that all being was extended in space had been a major stumbling block to propounding a coherent theory of incorporeality. So far as is known, Plato was the first thinker to recognize a mode of existence which is not in space (*Ti.* 51Eff). A breakthrough at this juncture is historically intelligible. It appears no accident that the first securely attested examples of *ἀσώματος* occur in Plato. With increased comprehension of the concept there now comes, at last, an attendant need for a *vox technica*—*ἀσώματος*. It is a fair guess that the coinage is Plato's own. There are comparable instances elsewhere of his

[60] *Soph.* 246B; see *supra* 113 with n.23. The two terms have different connotations: *νοητός* is the epistemological word and refers to the mode of cognition of incorporeal being (through *νοῦς*); *ἀσώματος* is the ontological word and refers to the essence (*οὐσία*) of such being.

coining new words for fundamental concepts; such are *ποιότης* ('quality'),[61] possibly *θεολογία*,[62] and of course the specialized senses which he gave to *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα* ('Forms').

Of the various intellectual currents that influenced Plato, was there one in particular which provided the primary impetus for the coinage of *ἀσώματος*? That can be a subject for speculation only, but it is justifiable speculation and worth making. From the archaic period onwards there had been an increasing separation in thought of soul and body; despite this, for centuries the soul continued to be conceived as in some sense corporeal and material. As reflection on the body/soul relationship crystallized, it had to have occurred to someone—to Plato, I would say—that, if soul is opposed to body, if it has no body, then it follows that it has none of those material qualities which are essential properties of body (*qua* matter).[63] It is, in the strictest sense, incorporeal. This last step, obvious in hindsight, was thus, after so many false starts, explicitly taken. *ἀσώματος* is coined. The fact that the technical term to describe this new mode of existence contains the word *σῶμα* suggests, but does not prove, that reflection on the relationship between Body and Soul, rather than on Deity or Being or Forms or Matter,[64] provided the primary, though not the sole, impetus for the formation of the new philosophical term *ἀσώματος*.[65] The evidence of the *Epinomis*, a work which, whether by Plato or not, is certainly Platonic in content, does not seem to have been

[61] Plato apologizes for his use of the word at *Tht.* 182A: *ἴσως οὖν ἡ 'ποιότης' ἅμα ἀλλόκοτόν τε φαίνεται ὄνομα καὶ οὐ μανθάνεις ἀθρόον λεγόμενον.*

[62] *Resp.* 379A; compare Jaeger (*supra* n.4) 194 n.13. This is doubted by Vlastos (*supra* n.4) 102 n.22 (= *Studies* 98).

[63] In Aristotle the reciprocal importance of the relationship between essence and properties, substance and accidents, is fully appreciated: *ἔοικε δ' οὐ μόνον τὸ τί ἐστι γνῶναι χρήσιμον εἶναι πρὸς τὸ θεωρῆσαι τὰς αἰτίας τῶν συμβεβηκότων ταῖς οὐσίαις . . . ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνάπαλιν τὰ συμβεβηκότα συμβάλλεται μέγα μέρος πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι τὸ τί ἐστιν* (*De An.* 402b16ff). I see no reason to assume that such an awareness was unknown to the Academy of Plato.

[64] The problem of matter was explicitly considered by Plato; see Guthrie V 264ff. Some even believe that at *Philebus* 54C he used *ὕλη* in a technical sense, 'matter'; see Hackforth (*supra* n.48) *ad loc.* This remains doubtful.

[65] It may be objected to this reconstruction that Plato does not call the soul *ἀσώματος*, for some have maintained that he does not (*cf.* Bömer [*supra* n.41] 35). That could be accidental, were it so. Plato certainly believed the soul to be incorporeal, which is the essential point for my analysis. In fact, at *Soph.* 247B–D soul is included among the *ἀσώματα*. Later tradition was clear on this point: *e.g.*, [Gal.] *Def.Med.* 19.355 K., *ψυχή ἐστιν οὐσία ἀσώματος αὐτοκίνητος κατὰ Πλάτωνα*; Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 2.154 Diehl, *Πλάτων ἀσώματον εἶναί φησιν τὴν ψυχὴν κτλ.*

adduced in this connection; it is most significant. There one reads *λάβωμεν δὴ τοῦτό γε, ὡς ψυχὴ πρεσβύτερόν ἐστι σώματος* (980E). Shortly thereafter, in a passage in which *ψυχή* and *σώματα* are explicitly contrasted, the following proposition occurs: *οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀσώματον ὅτι τ' ἄλλο γίγνοιτ' ἄν καὶ χρῶμα οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς οὐδέποτ' ἔχον, πλὴν τὸ θειότατον ὄντως ψυχῆς γένος* (981B).

Plato uses *ἀσώματος* with a certain facility and variety; I list the passages briefly. (1) In the *Phaedo* (85E) *ἁρμονία* is described as *ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον καὶ πάγκαλόν τι καὶ θεῖον*. Two points deserve remark. First, the collocation of *ἀόρατον*, which is a way of denying sensible attributes, and *ἀσώματον* is thoroughly Platonic, and may be compared with *νοητὰ καὶ ἀσώματα*. Second, while the *ἁρμονία* in question is that of the lyre, it is introduced specifically as an analogy for the (rejected) definition of soul as a *ἁρμονία* (86B). (2) *Philebus* 64B . . . *καθαπερεὶ κόσμος τις ἀσώματος ἄρξων καλῶς ἐμψύχου σώματος ὁ νῦν λόγος ἀπειργάσθαι φαίνεται*. Here we find both the body/soul contrast (*ἐμψύχου σώματος*) and the rule of the incorporeal *κόσμος*, to which, of course, *ψυχή* belongs. (3) In *Politicus* 286A the adjective appears to be used of the Forms: *τὰ γὰρ ἀσώματα κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα, λόγῳ μόνον ἄλλῳ δέ οὐδενὶ σαφῶς δείκνυται*. (4) Finally, *ἀσώματος* occurs twice in the *Sophist*. At 246Aff a *γιγαντομαχία* between materialists and 'friends of the Forms' (*οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φίλοι*) is described. The one group, the materialists, "drag everything down from heaven and the unseen [*τὸ ἀόρατον*—the realm of intelligibles] to earth." These equate Body with Being (*ταὐτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὁριζόμενοι*); if anyone should say that something exists which does not have a body (*μὴ σῶμα ἔχον*), they scorn them and refuse to listen. The other group, however, *ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀοράτου ποθὲν ἀμύνονται, νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη βιαζόμενοι τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι* (246B). At 247C–D the Eleatic Stranger says of the materialists that *εἰ γάρ τι καὶ σμικρὸν ἐθέλουσι τῶν ὄντων συγχωρεῖν ἀσώματον, ἐξαρκεῖ*.

But it is not simply passages where the word *ἀσώματος* happens to occur which reveal Plato's developed grasp of the concept incorporeality. In numerous other passages his language makes it clear that he understood what attributes and properties must follow once incorporeal being is posited. The *Timaeus* in particular contains sections which illustrate both Plato's familiarity with this complex of ideas and his ability to express them with full explicitness. The statements speak for themselves and here it must suffice simply to adduce some typical examples. 28B: . . . *πότερον ἦν ἀεί* [*sc. ὁ κόσμος*], *γενέσεως ἀρχὴν ἔχων οὐδεμίαν, ἢ γέγονεν . . . γέγο-*

νεν · ὁρατὸς γὰρ ἁπτός τέ ἐστιν καὶ σῶμα ἔχων, πάντα δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα αἰσθητά κτλ. (*cf. Soph.* 247B). 31B: *σωματοειδὲς δὲ δὴ καὶ ὁρατὸν ἁπτόν τε δεῖ τὸ γενόμενον εἶναι.* 46D: *τῶν γὰρ ὄντων ᾧ νοῦν μόνῳ κτᾶσθαι προσήκει, λεκτέον ψυχήν—τοῦτο δὲ ἀόρατον, πῦρ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆ καὶ ἀὴρ σώματα πάντα ὁρατὰ γέγονεν.* 52A: *ὁμολογητέον ἓν μὲν εἶναι τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὰ εἶδος ἔχον, ἀγέννητον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, οὔτε εἰς ἑαυτὸ εἰσδεχόμενον ἄλλο ἄλλοθεν οὔτε αὐτὸ εἰς ἄλλο ποι ἰόν, ἀόρατον δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναίσθητον, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ νόησις εἴληχεν ἐπισκοπεῖν · τὸ δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὅμοιόν τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον, αἰσθητόν, γεννητόν, πεφορημένον ἀεί, γιγνόμενόν τε ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ πάλιν ἐκεῖθεν ἀπολλύμενον, δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως περιληπτόν.* No predecessor of Plato's, so far as the evidence goes, was capable of formulating these concepts with such clarity. A new intellectual world has been discovered.

IV

I hope to have demonstrated that Plato's notion of incorporeality and immateriality differs *toto caelo* from that of all his predecessors. Just how great a difference there was can be further illustrated by also comparing Plato with his contemporaries and with later thinkers. Here we can only set forth the main outlines.

In a familiar, and problematic, passage of the *Phaedrus* Plato depicts Socrates as singling out Isocrates as a young man of especial promise: *φύσει γὰρ ἔνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς διανοίᾳ* (279A). Whatever Plato intended by that cryptic remark, Isocrates was a leading man of letters; his views—which he himself regarded as a *φιλοσοφία*—were typical of many of the Athenian intelligentsia during Plato's lifetime. Isocrates' writings contain a number of passages relevant to our investigation; they have been largely ignored in this connection. While not personally sympathetic to abstract ontological theory, he does on occasion reveal some degree of familiarity with such speculations. In the *Helen* (10.2–3) he mentions Protagoras and then goes on to inquire, "How might one outdo Gorgias who dared to say that no reality exists (*οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἔστιν*) or Zeno who attempted to show that the same things were possible and then again impossible or Melissus who tried to discover demonstrations that the all is one (*ὡς ἑνὸς ὄντος τοῦ παντός*) though things are by nature infinite in number?" In the *Antidosis* (15.268) he refers to the "old sophists of whom one

said the multitude of beings was infinite, Empedocles that there were four and Strife and Love in among them, Ion that there were not more than three, Parmenides and Melissus one, Gorgias none at all."

What of Isocrates' own views? To begin with, he takes the body/soul dichotomy for granted: *ὁμολογεῖται μὲν γὰρ τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν ἔκ τε τοῦ σώματος συγκεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς· αὐτοῖν δὲ τούτοιν οὐδεὶς ἔστιν ὅστις οὐκ ἂν φήσειεν ἡγεμονικωτέραν πεφυκέναι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ πλείονος ἀξίαν κτλ.* (15.180.) Not only does he recognize such a dichotomy and the superiority of soul to body, he represents this as a *communis opinio*. A passage in 2.37 is revealing: *μὴ περιίδῃς τὴν σαυτοῦ φύσιν ἅπασαν ἅμα διαλυθεῖσαν· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ θνητοῦ σώματος ἔτυχες, πειρῶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀθάνατον μνήμην καταλιπεῖν.* Don't permit your nature to be dissolved in its entirety at the same time. Since you have obtained a mortal body, try to leave behind an immortal—what? We would expect 'soul', we find instead 'memory of the soul'. This is nothing but the old belief in the immortality of the name in a somewhat modern dress. Again and again Isocrates mentions immortality; he talks about 'partaking in immortality' (*ἀθανασίας μεταλαμβάνομεν*, 5.134) and 'having a share of' it (*μεθέξειν ἀθανασίας*, 12.260). In every instance the immortality consists in a remembrance of one's achievements, the *κλέος ἀνδρῶν* of Homer clothed in the language of an Attic orator. For instance, *βούλου τὰς εἰκόνας τῆς ἀρετῆς ὑπόμνημα μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ σώματος καταλιπεῖν* (2.36); *θνητὸς δὲ γενόμενος ἀθάνατον τὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ μνήμην κατέλιπε* (9.71). See also 4.89, 5.134, 9.3, and especially 6.109: . . . *κάλλιόν ἐστι ἀντὶ θνητοῦ σώματος ἀθάνατον δόξαν ἀντικαταλλάξασθαι καὶ ψυχῆς, ἣν οὐχ ἕξομεν ὀλίγων ἐτῶν, πρίασθαι τοιαύτην εὔκλειαν, ἥ πάντα τὸν αἰῶνα τοῖς ἐξ ἡμῶν γενομένοις παραμενεῖ κτλ.*, ". . . soul, which we will not have in a few years . . ."—an explicit statement from Isocrates that the *ψυχή* is impermanent.

All this evidence is most interesting, for it is indicative of a belief among Plato's educated Athenian contemporaries, a belief both in a human nature composed of body and soul and in the superiority of soul over the body. That much has Isocrates, doubtless typical in this respect, in common with Plato. But there the similarity ends. To Isocrates the soul is a perishable and material thing; the 'dissolution'—*διαλυθεῖσαν*—of the composite human nature in 2.37 presupposes a more or less conscious feeling that the soul was a material 'stuff' of some kind. There is no trace at all of any belief in incorporeal reality despite the now commonly accepted notion

that soul is essentially distinct from body. Such views seem little, if at all, different from those current a century earlier.[66] This is in striking contrast to Plato's concepts and theories. It is possible that Isocrates consciously rejected the notion of incorporeality, but far more probably he had simply not yet assimilated the concept and was not in a position to react to it one way or the other. Presumably the same was true of most Athenians of the time.[67]

With Plato's student Aristotle this situation has changed completely. Bonitz cites thirteen occurrences of the Platonic word *ἀσώματος* in his *Index Aristotelicus*. Far more significant than the lexical statistic is the sure conceptual grasp which lies behind it. Aristotle is capable of contrasting rigorously *τὰ σώματα* and *τὰ*

[66] The notion that the soul is the intellectually guiding principle (see especially *ἡγεμονικωτέραν* in 15.180) may owe something to Socrates.

[67] The choice of Isocrates for study was no arbitrary one. The other orators were more involved in practical legal cases, public and private, and therefore less likely to express their own 'philosophical' views (had they any), if those views were not what the audience wanted to hear. Isocrates was in good part theoretical pamphleteer, and his writings happen to contain explicit statements more suited to our investigation. Nevertheless, among the other orators can be found attitudes comparable to those of Isocrates. (1) The body/soul dichotomy is taken for granted. Already in Antiphon (*Herodes* 93) there occurs a fascinating passage: *ἐν γὰρ τῷ τοιούτῳ ἤδη καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀπειρηκὸς ἡ ψυχὴ συνεξέσωσεν, ἐθέλουσα ταλαιπωρεῖν διὰ τὸ μὴ ξυνειδέναι ἑαυτῇ. τῷ δὲ ξυνειδότι τοῦτο αὐτὸ πρῶτον πολέμιόν ἐστιν· ἔτι γὰρ καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἰσχύοντος ἡ ψυχὴ προαπολείπει κτλ.* *Cf.* Lys. 2.15, 24.3; Aeschin. 2.151; Dem. 26.26, 37.41, 60.33, 61.16. In 19.227 Demosthenes states explicitly that there is one body and one soul: *ἐκεῖνος μὲν ἕν, οἶμαι, σῶμ' ἔχων καὶ ψυχὴν μίαν κτλ.* (2) The assumption that death is the end of human existence is normal. Dem. 18.97, *πέρας μὲν γὰρ ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ τοῦ βίου θάνατος*; 57.27, *πᾶσίν ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις τέλος τοῦ βίου θάνατος*. The agnostic *topos* 'if the dead have awareness of the living . . .' is common, but probably should not be taken as expressing any real conviction. Even Isocrates has it, *εἴ τίς ἐστιν αἴσθησις τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι περὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε γιγνομένων κτλ.* (9.2, *cf.* 14.61, 19.42); Dem. 20.87; Hyperides *Epitaphios* 43; Lycurg. *Leoc.* 136; Pl. *Ap.* 40C, *Menex.* 248B (Aspasia's funeral oration); Philemon fr.130 Kock. This *topos* continues later, appearing, for example, in epitaphs (Kaibel 215.5–6, 700.4) and even in Tac. *Agr.* 46 (where, however, there is explicit philosophical influence). How far removed all this is from any Platonic outlook and from a belief in eternal incorporeal being is apparent even from the word which is used to express this possible awareness—*αἴσθησις*, sense-perception. (3) The real immortality in the other orators is that which we find in Isocrates, remembrance. Hyperides *Epitaphios* 24, *θνητοῦ σώματος ἀθάνατον δόξαν ἐκτήσαντο*, *cf.* 27ff, 42. In sum, the Attic orators verify the existence of a widespread belief in man as composed of mortal soul and body; the nature and substance of the soul remains vaguely material, even if indeterminately specified. (Naturally: they still had no word for matter.) References to incorporeality are not to be found. Their absence is not due merely to the nature of these compositions as practical speeches. Long since, in Western culture, popular orators have been quite capable of referring casually to such things as our 'immortal souls' or to 'spiritual beings'. The Greek orators do not, because such concepts had not yet left the philosopher's narrow circle to become part of the educated person's vocabulary.

ἀσώματα (*Metaph.* 988b24–25), *σῶμα* and *ἀσώματον* (988a25); he enunciates the straightforward proposition *ἀδύνατον τὸ ἀσώματον μεμῖχθαι σώματι* (*Top.* 149b1–2). He has no difficulty in describing material objects which 'appear to be incorporeal' (*Ph.* 212a12). When Aristotle writes in the *De Anima* that fire is *λεπτομερέστατόν τε καὶ μάλιστα τῶν στοιχείων ἀσώματον* (405a6–7), he "means not," as Ross rightly remarks *ad loc.*, "that fire is more incorporeal than the other elements, which are not incorporeal at all, but that it has less tincture of matter than they." Compare 409b19ff: *ὁρίζονται τὴν ψυχὴν . . . οἱ δὲ σῶμα τὸ λεπτομερέστατον ἢ τὸ ἀσωματώτατον τῶν ἄλλων.*[68] (Plotinus uses similar language, *Enneads* 1.6.3: *τὸ πῦρ . . . λεπτότατον . . . τῶν ἄλλων σωμάτων, ὡς ἐγγὺς ὂν τοῦ ἀσωμάτου . . .*) As the concept of incorporeality, so too the concept of immateriality is fully at home in the philosophy of Aristotle. He devoted much thought to the problem of matter, and probably coined the technical term for it—*ὕλη*. Thus, for example, in *Metaphysics* 1071b20–21 he refers to essences, or substances, without matter: *ἔτι τοίνυν ταύτας δεῖ τὰς οὐσίας εἶναι ἄνευ ὕλης.* Such *οὐσίαι* must be *ἄνευ μεγέθους* (1073a38). His incorporeal God, the Unmoved Mover, has neither extension in space nor magnitude (*Cael.* 279a17ff, *Metaph.* 1073a5ff). That Aristotle does not happen to use the technical term *ἄϋλος* has an historical explanation, as argued above, and in no way implies an imperfect comprehension of the notion. After Plato and Aristotle the concepts incorporeality and immateriality became, once and for all, regular items in the philosopher's inventory.

But comprehension of a concept and belief in its truth do not necessarily coincide. Many philosophers in antiquity rejected these ideas, at least in their Platonic senses; a glance at the other major schools of ancient thought may help show where Plato's influence chiefly lay in later times. For him, immaterial Being is the highest mode of existence; the world of intelligible, incorporeal Reality embraces God, the Forms, Souls.[69] Aristotle already represents a definite departure from this Platonic ontology. He follows Plato in recognizing incorporeal, immaterial substances—the Unmoved Mover and the essences or 'intelligences' (as the Schoolmen later called them) which cause the heavenly motions. But in Aristotle's

[68] The use of a *superlative* adjective (or its equivalent) makes all the difference. These passages should not therefore be used in support of Gomperz's thesis that *ἀσώματος* originally meant 'having a fine or tenuous body' (*supra* n.49).

[69] We need not consider here such problems of Platonic philosophy as modifications in the Theory of Ideas or the relationship of Souls to Forms.

mature philosophy there is a significant limitation to the number of immaterial realities. The Platonic Forms are abandoned and the Aristotelian conception of soul is quite different from that of Plato. For Aristotle the human soul, while incorporeal in the sense that it is not composed of matter, is not a being capable of existing apart from the body, as it is for Plato. Rather, soul is, in Aristotle's famous definition, *ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ ὀργανικοῦ* (*De An.* 412b4–6). That is, soul and body can exist only as a unity; soul is not an independent substance, but a *principle* of substance.[70] It is *οὐσία ὡς εἶδος* (412a19–20). This relationship of soul to body is but a particular application of Aristotle's general 'hylomorphic' theory of matter and form. The contrast between Plato and Aristotle here is a real one, and is clearly illustrated by Aristotle's rejection of the 'Pythagorean myths' about metempsychosis—"as if it were possible for any chance soul to enter into any chance body" (407b21–23). The influence of such myths on Plato's thought is well-known. But despite such differences and reservations, the fact remains that Aristotle, as Plato before him and under his direct influence, accepted some form of incorporeal, immaterial being as the highest reality.

The other two dominant philosophies of antiquity, Epicureanism and Stoicism, present a quite different picture. Both systems were unequivocally materialist; both dealt explicitly with *τὰ ἀσώματα*. Epicurus recognized only two modes of ultimate reality, the material atoms and the void. There survives a clear statement on incorporeality in Epicurus' own words:[71]

> *ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τόδε γε δεῖ προσκατανοεῖν ὅ τι τὸ ἀσώματον, τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐπὶ τοῦ καθ' ἑαυτὸ νοηθέντος ἄν· καθ' ἑαυτὸ δὲ οὐκ ἔστι νοῆσαι τὸ ἀσώματον πλὴν τοῦ κενοῦ. τὸ δὲ κενὸν οὔτε ποιῆσαι οὔτε παθεῖν δύναται, ἀλλὰ κίνησιν μόνον δἰ ἑαυτοῦ τοῖς*

[70] It is true that in several passages Aristotle refers to a *νοῦς* which enters the body from without and survives its death: *λείπεται δὴ τὸν νοῦν μόνον θύραθεν ἐπεισιέναι καὶ θεῖον εἶναι μόνον* (*Gen.An* 736b27–28). See Ross on *Metaph.* 1070a21–26 and his *Aristotle, De Anima* (Oxford 1961) 41ff. This *νοῦς* is described as *χωριστὸς καὶ ἀπαθὴς καὶ ἀμιγής* in *De An.* 430a17–18. The correct interpretation of the '*nous* which comes in from out of doors' is the most difficult problem of Aristotelian psychology. Guthrie pertinently observes "even at a risk to the consistency of his own philosophy, which he valued above all else . . . the immortality and divinity of *nous*, and of *nous* alone, was a part of his Platonic heritage which he found it impossible to renounce," *Entretiens Hardt* III (Verona 1957) 19. In short, when Aristotle introduces a part of the human soul which is immaterial, eternal, divine, and capable of separate existence, he has become once again a Platonist.

[71] *Epistle to Herodotos* pp.21–22 Usener = Diog.Laert. 10.67.

σώμασι παρέχεται. ὥσθ' οἱ λέγοντες ἀσώματον εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν ματάζουσιν.

The only 'incorporeal' reality, the void, is *ἀσώματον* in the most literal sense; it is simply not *σῶμα* (*i.e.*, atoms). The contrast with the ontologies of Plato and Aristotle is self-evident.

Like the Epicureans, the Stoics, in their own way, treated all substances, including God and souls, as bodies (*σώματα*). And like the Epicureans, they had a theory about the nature of *τὰ ἀσώματα*. Sextus Empiricus states it succinctly: *τῶν . . . ἀσωμάτων τέσσαρα εἴδη καταριθμοῦνται ὡς λεκτὸν καὶ κενὸν καὶ τόπον καὶ χρόνον.*[72] This theory posited no immaterial essences, independent of and superior to corporeal beings, such as we find in Plato and Aristotle. It is of considerable interest to observe that *ἀσώματος* is now so familiar a term that it can be used in senses not only different from, but in contradiction to, the original Platonic meaning of the word. Interesting too is the fact that, in teaching that souls were bodies, Epicureans (*e.g.*, Lucr. 3.161–67) and Stoics seem to have intended a conscious (anti-Platonic) paradox. Thus Cleanthes (*SVF* I 117.14) concludes succinctly *σῶμα ἄρα ἡ ψυχή*. That is to say, Stoics and Epicureans were philosophizing within a conceptual framework far more sophisticated than that of the Presocratics who had simply failed to distinguish adequately between soul and body.

To find thinkers sympathetic to the metaphysics of Plato, it is necessary to look to the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists with their new and elaborate syntheses which, despite the several influences of Aristotle, Neopythagoreanism, and Stoicism, owed the concept of Being first and foremost to him. Here once more one encounters the realm of *τὰ νοητά*, of immaterial reality.[73] Porphyry begins his Life of Plotinus by remarking *Πλωτῖνος ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς γεγονὼς φιλόσοφος ἐῴκει μὲν αἰσχυνομένῳ ὅτι ἐν σώματι εἴη*. The *bon mot* is emblematic. In Plotinus' complex philosophy the higher the degree of reality, the further removed it is from matter. Dodds has called the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus "the one genuinely systematic exposition of Neoplatonic metaphysic which has come down to us."[74] In that treatise Propositions such as the following

[72] *Math.* 10.218 = *SVF* II 117.20–22. For Stoic views on the incorporeal see É. Brehier, *La théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoicisme* (Paris 1962).

[73] On the question of immateriality in the early period of Middle Platonism see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977) 51, 83–84, 114.

[74] *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*[2] (Oxford 1963) ix.

are expounded: "All that is capable of reverting upon itself is incorporeal" (15); "All that is capable of reverting upon itself has an existence separable from all body" (16); "Beyond all bodies is the soul's essence . . ." (20); "Every soul is an incorporeal substance and separable from body" (186). *τὰ μὲν ἄρα αἰσθητὰ πάντα, κατ' αἰτίαν προείληφε* [*sc. ψυχή*], *καὶ τοὺς λόγους τῶν ἐνύλων ἀΰλως καὶ τῶν σωματικῶν ἀσωμάτως καὶ τῶν διαστάτων ἀδιαστάτως ἔχει*, "Accordingly [soul] pre-embraces all sensible things after the manner of a cause, possessing the rational notions of material things immaterially, of bodily things incorporeally, of extended things without extension" (195, trans. Dodds). There is no better demonstration of how fully the concepts of incorporeality and immateriality had been assimilated than their appearance in such a catechism. The early Christian theologians adopted these notions with enthusiasm. A distinguished intellectual historian has written, "The most important fact in the history of Christian doctrine was that the father of Christian theology, Origen, was a Platonic philosopher at the school of Alexandria."[75] This is not hyperbole. For almost two thousand years the concepts of incorporeality and immateriality were central in much Western philosophical and theological speculation on such problems as the nature of God, Soul, Intellect. When all is said and done, it must be recognized that one man was responsible for the creation of an ontology which culminates in incorporeal Being as the truest and highest reality. That man was Plato.[76]

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[75] W. Jaeger, *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge*[2] (Berlin 1960) 297–98.

[76] I should like to thank several anonymous referees for various criticisms and references.