

Can the Death Anxiety Be Dispelled?

-- Investigation based on Plato's Text

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Abstract. Death anxiety is a unique and mysterious breakthrough in Plato's philosophy, for which Plato put forward a solution worthy of discussion. In the text dominated by Plato's middle and late dialogues, he tried to dispel death anxiety by showing a "true death situation" from the perspective of the philosopher Socrates. Furthermore, its complexity made Socrates have to look for its realization in the confrontation between eros and logos, so as to finally define it as a philosophical fusion to eliminate the contradiction. However, Russell et al. we're not completely satisfied with this scheme. From the perspective of contemporary emotional psychology, the limitations of this scheme can be effectively explained and clarified. In other words, the "true death situation" is not only a cognition, but also a practice of death and survival. Through Platonic philosophical life, individuals gain life tranquility, thus effectively alleviating death anxiety.

Keywords: Plato; Death Anxiety; Eros; Logos; Emotional Psychology.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of death and death anxiety is a key thread in Plato's philosophy. (In the dialogue, Socrates and others mostly used the word "fears" to describe emotions. According to the basic emotion theory, fear, which refers to the emotional response of life when dealing with threats, is one of the basic human emotions. Anxiety is the deep helplessness of people in the face of fear. People anticipate a dangerous situation but cannot do anything, even understand and locate death and his fear. Plato is not only confronting death and fear, but also proposing achievable solutions to perspectives on death. Thus, he dealt with the death anxiety at the core of fear. For Plato, death anxiety is important in at least two respects. First of all, resolving death anxiety aims to reveal death itself from the shadows. To this end, he must hedge against two popular views of death in ancient Greece. First, most people think that after death, the soul dissipates with the body, and the existence of human life ends completely (Phaedo. 70a-b) [1], so they are anxious to die. Secondly, in *Republic*, the old man Cephalus expressed his worry about death. Before death approached, he also regarded the so-called hell after death as "stories he used to make fun of". However, "when someone thinks his end is near, he becomes frightened and concerned about things he didn't fear before" (*Republic*, 330d-e) [1]. He began to believe in the "stories" of karma, and believed that death was the moment when the gods accepted people's achievements in life. Most believers have no guarantee of being judged for good, and they are anxious all day long. Among them, the first view directly challenges Plato's core hierarchical dualism of soul and flesh, which regards the soul as something as mortal as the body. The second view has the same problem, which is manifested in focusing only good karma in worldly life.

Furthermore, death anxiety affects the living state of personal whole life, thus becoming the connection of Plato's philosophy. It is not a temporary consideration, but runs through one's life. When a man begins to exist, he begins to die, and death lurks in the shadows of all neurotic faculties. When a man embarks on thinking about philosophy, he starts to think about death, which has the ability to connect with all his philosophies. Death is associated with the most serious metaphysical concept proposed by Plato, that is, the dualism of metaphysics and epistemology as well as his most important argumentative goal [2]: philosopher's eudaimonism (εὐδαιμονισμός). In other words, the purpose of everything we do is to achieve good and happiness, and all philosopher's thinking and action, including those concerning death, can defend this happiness orientation. Moreover, the

philosopher's life has absolute superiority. "And the brave among them face death, when they do, for fear of greater evils?...it is fear and terror that makes all men brave, except the philosophers. Yet it is illogical to be brave through fear and cowardice" (*Phaedo*, 68d-e) [1]. Only the wisdom (σοφία), courage (ἀνδρεία), and temperance (σωφροσύνη) of philosophers are true, and the attitude towards death is the best touchstone.

On this basis, Plato needed to put forward a valuable scheme to subvert the concept of death featuring "end of life", revise the concept of goodness featuring "paying debts" and safeguard his own philosophy of life and death and even the whole philosophical system. With the help of Socrates' living images and words, he first deconstructed the so-called "terminal" situation. (The relationship between Socrates' and Plato's thoughts is an unsolved problem in academia. I study the thoughts expressed by Plato in *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, among which Socrates appeared as a dramatic role rather than a philosopher who expresses his own independent thoughts.) Death is the separation of soul and Form, and the soul will not disappear but be possible to return to a higher level, that is, the world of the Form. If the Form is immortal, it will be immortal after death. The body is annihilated, but life lasts forever. Moreover, he established the theory of eros (Ἔρως)-logos (λόγος) to demonstrate the operability of escaping the terminal situation and dispelling the death anxiety.

In fact, many studies on Plato's philosophy of death have also found the important role of eros or logos. Among them, the following discussion focuses more on logos and the application of logos in argumentation, with attention paid to the investigation of many arguments in *Phaedo*. For example, Yu Jiyuan combined the rational argumentation in *Phaedo* with the theory in *Republic* [3]; Wang Xiaoyang and Zhu Weilong focused on six rational arguments in *Phaedo*, pointing out their failures one by one [4]. The following studies focus on the excavation of eros. Trabattoni proposed that the final resolution of death anxiety needs to rely on the power of hope and love [2]. However, some scholars misunderstand eros as private sensibility. For example, Russell believed that Plato's whole theory of death serves his personal hobby of dual-world theory [5]; Wang Boyi attributed Plato's praise of the immortality of the soul to his fear and escape from death [6]. In addition to the above misunderstandings, some scholars have tried to integrate, balance and reinterpret these two concepts. Kuhn understood desire and reason as two aspects of the same soul [7]; Apart from the six arguments, Ding Ji found the "proof of the irrational law of faith" in *Phaedo* [8]. Friedlander affirmed Plato's mystical tendencies while firmly classifying him as a rationalist [9]. These attempts provide a rich resource of thought for the discussion in this paper.

Taking Plato's middle and late dialogues as the main text, whether the true and capable "death situation" shown by Socrates can dispel death anxiety will be explored. This situation refers to the immortality of the soul after death, accompanied by the divine Form. Under the dialectical action of eros and logos, the solution to dispelling death anxiety is ultimately philosophical. The limitations of this scheme (especially for contemporary generations) and incorporate contemporary emotional psychology research are analyzed. Finally, I try to defend the scheme, proposing that the "true death situation" is not only a cognition, but also a practice of death and survival. In other words, through philosophical life, individuals gain the tranquility of this life, thus effectively alleviating death anxiety.

2. The Basic Solution of Plato to Dispel Death Anxiety: "True Death Situation"

In *Phaedo*, Socrates in Plato's writing described his expectation of death before his departure, which is later questioned by two experienced rhetoricians. "But men find it very hard to believe what you said about the soul. They think that after it has left the body it no longer exists anywhere" (*Phaedo*, 70a-b) [1] Such popular opinions are the first challenge for Socrates who must prove that death is not a complete disappearance of the soul. The soul itself has the potential of immortality and can transform this potential into reality. Only in this way can we understand why he can show calmness and fearlessness in the face of death.

Why is the soul immortal? The Form is an invisible immortal existence, and the kinship between the soul and the Form gives the soul the possibility of immortality.

Socrates must take the lead in reiterating the arguments he mentioned in many places about the existence and immortality of Forms. In the *Phaedo* handed down under the name of *On the Soul*, these arguments are connected to the characteristics of the soul, that is, the ability of the soul to recall.

Recollection is defined as follows. “As long as the sight of one thing makes you think of another, whether it be similar or dissimilar, this must of necessity be recollection ...Whenever someone, on seeing something, realizes that that which he now sees wants to be like some other reality but falls short and cannot be like that other since it is inferior...the one who thinks this must have prior knowledge of that to which he says it is like, but deficiently so. ” (Phaedo, 74d-75a) [1] When you see two equivalent stones, you will think of the existence of equality itself behind it (αὐτὸτὸ ἴσον), that is, the Form of equality. The equal stones are the concrete vision, while the Form of equality is the perceived thing. Thus, it necessarily satisfies the characteristics of recollection, which is a preexistence that has been imitated. Meanwhile, we have acquired knowledge about it somewhere. By extension, the knowledge about all Forms exists and can be obtained.

Having proved that the Form is an independent existence, the next step is to demonstrate the kinship and cognitive power of the soul to the Form. Because the Equal-Form is superior to the concrete as its copy, and all perceptual functions can only obtain this secondary equality, Socrates concluded that people must have the knowledge of the Form before they acquire all kinds of feelings, that is, the soul has come to the Form. The closest relationship between them occurs before the soul is alive, and they can still keep certain contact after the soul is embodied (*Phaedo*, 74a-76b) [1]. In addition, the soul’s knowledge of Form is the key to this connection restoration. Because the two have a perfect fit in composition, sensibility, etc. “The soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, but always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same. ” (*Phaedo*, 80b-c) [1] The soul has the natural ability to approach what is close to it, that is, the Form, and enter the knowable world similar to it.

How is the soul immortal? In other words, it aims to explain how the soul’s recollection and rise to the rational world can be realized. If a philosopher wants to purify the soul and acquire knowledge, he must realize the gap between the soul and the body relying on the soul to get close to the gods and depending on the body to become ordinary people. Only by separating the two as much as possible as the state at the time of true death can the soul restore its pure state to the greatest extent and recall the Form acquired before birth. In fact, philosophy is training for death (*Phaedo*, 81a).

This assertion is a direct response to death anxiety. The soul will not end, but will be liberated. This liberation is particularly important in the philosophical practice. According to Socrates, if the road is correct, then death is not the disappearance of life, but the beginning of the sublimation of the soul.

Socrates is confident, but many ambiguities seem to show a complex attitude in his heart. To demonstrate the complex tension of this view of death, the starting point may be the simplest contradiction, which is also the opening of *Phaedo*. Since death is a good thing for philosophers, why didn’t Socrates commit suicide? Socrates replied that “it is not unreasonable that one should not kill oneself before a god had indicated some necessity to do so like the necessity now put upon us” (*Phaedo*, 62c-d) [1]. This reflects Socrates’ emphasis on the divinity of the soul and it is a divine being that must be permitted by God to return to the Form’s world. Undoubtedly, this religious consideration cannot completely convince the public nowadays, and we should consider the deeper implications.

Trabattoni explained that the essential contradiction brought by suicide to the concept of the immortality of death is that it cannot be integrated into eudaimonism, and the dilemma lies in:

(1) Death is better for a philosopher than living, but he can not do good to himself, that is, commit suicide. This undermines Socratic happiness.

(2) There is no situation where death is better than life, Socrates’ eudaimonism can be saved, but his philosophical beliefs about death and his life choices cannot [2].

It is regarded as a fake dilemma. The problem lies in the vacancy of the complete understanding of what truly good death is, which leads to the inaccuracy of the concepts in the above proposition. Philosophers must practice philosophically before they can return to God. If you do not train a soul that cannot be confused by the body, you will be dragged down by this heavy body element when you die. The soul is heavy and unable to rise, so you can only work hard in the afterlife. According to the reincarnation version of *Phaedo*, most souls who love the visible and fear the invisible can only linger on earth after death until the desire for body draws them back into one body again (*Phaedo*, 81d) [1] and cannot return to God. Therefore, if the end-of-death practice reached by philosophers step by step is true death, then true death is better than living in the sensible world placed by God, and “not committing suicide” is not a deviation from the goal of towards death. On the contrary, it is truly a good and happy thing to experience the living process of pursuing soul sublimation completely. If a person does not practice enough philosophy before his death, then death is bad. It means unstoppable chaos and being thrown into a hopeless cycle, which is far worse than feeling sensible things and living vividly. By cracking the quiet transformation of the meaning of “death” in (1) and (2), the concepts of suicide, happiness, death and life remain consistent.

This brings us to a key: a distinction between death. The soul who fails to distance himself from the body will still be thrown into the sensible world of false changes again after death, and the death situation he experiences is also false. The true death situation is the rise of the soul from the sensible world after abandoning the body, and the soul finally returns to God’s hometown. Those who firmly believe in this are calm and carefree. Then, what kind of life do you have to spend to achieve true death and realize the immortality of the soul?

In his rhetorical exploration, Socrates repeatedly shows the two antagonistic personality profiles of lover (ἐραστής) and thinker (σοφός), so as to blend eros with logos, advancing hard in the deep pool of life and death. Philosophers need to rely on the crazy drive of love and the guidance of rational wisdom at the same time to find the narrow path of the soul’s rise.

3. Attainment of True Death Situation: Two Profiles of Socrates

(1) Lover Profile of Socrates

In Plato’s works, eros is used in two ways: erotic desire or sexual appetite. The latter, combined with the appetite (ἐπιθυμία) of the trichotomy of the soul in the *Republic*, is reduced to “a barbaric force, a pair of hands that stretch out greedy indiscriminately” [10]. In the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, the work on eros introduced in this paper, Plato hoped that eros could develop into the former. Kuhn defined this eros as “desire directed by a rational concern for what is good” [11]. The smooth turn of eros can help the lover establish a deep connection with the truly good object, instead of involving their energy in the inferior object.

Socrates, whose classic image is a seeking ignorant, claims at the beginning of *Symposium* that the only thing I say I understand is the art of love (*Symposium*, 177e) [1]. Alan Bloom commented that Socrates was an expert in the knowledge of eros [12]. This small contradiction hides an important feasible way of life. Like the definition of EROS, eros is the search and desire (βουλεσθαι) for something beautiful that one does not possess, which one feels ignorant and wanted. Undoubtedly, Socrates was familiar with eros, because he pursued scarce knowledge all his life, pursued the purification of the soul and true death.

The above is the role of the eros in the power of death. Such power is not only an abstract theoretical explanation, but is truly realized in the practice of death climbing the ladder of love. At the feast in praise of the god EROS, Socrates told Diotima’s doctrine of mysteries of love: the way to ascend to the ladder of love. The starting point of the ladder is based on the pleasant attraction of the senses to individual beautiful body, and the second level rises to the interaction of the spirit, which produces the knowledge of the soul beauty of virtuous and wise people. Furthermore, lovers no longer only indulge in human beauty, but begin to appreciate abstract concepts and think about the beauty of knowledge until the only knowledge of beauty is discovered. The apex of eros is the observation

for Form of beauty, which is the eternal beauty beyond the sensory world, and the soul of the lover has also been sublimated and immortal. Socrates made it clear that “human nature can find no better workmate for acquiring this than love” (*Symposium*, 212c-b) [1]. But the more importance he hides here is that the terminal lover is no longer the mundane “human”, and he can only touch the real thing when he is separated from the body, incarnated as a pure soul through death. In other words, the culmination of eros is the arrival of true death.

On the surface, all classes of eros are essential. However, as they climb, the lover must make a choice. “Although we love the special and the universal, the ephemeral and the eternal... since they are necessarily separated, we must choose which one we prefer... and Socrates inevitably went from the special to the universal, and loved the latter more [13]. Bloom thought this trade-off is “unfortunate”, which was in disagreement with my view. For Socrates, there is no doubt about the better or worse of transient or eternal. Although physical love shows its strength and broadness on the road of eros, anyone who steps into a higher stage will think that it is the right decision to abandon the former and join the latter. Socrates returned to his criticism that “He (Lover) must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it.” “With the result that he will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance.” “He will be looking mainly not at beauty in a single example—as a servant who favored the beauty of a little boy or a man or a single custom (being a slave, of course, he’s low and small-minded)” (*Symposium*, ^{210b-e}) [1]. Thus, Socrates was constantly vigilant and even contemptuous of sensual desires and low-rank eros. As mentioned at the beginning, Socrates described by Plato did not forget that eros used to be the “inferior origin” of pure sexual desire. In the mythology of the soul carriage, we have divided each soul in three—two parts in the Form of horses and the third in that of a charioteer. One of the horses, we said, is good, the other not (*Phaedrus*, 253d-e) [1]. The charioteer is emblematic of reason (λογιστικόν), the good horse is emblematic of passion (θυμοειδής), and the latter is emblematic of appetite. The bad horse forcibly draws the soul of the lover to yield to **the sexual charm** stimulated by the beautiful boy’s body, driving the necessity (ἀνάγκη) of indulging in the pleasure and pain of sensual stimulation. If the lover yields to this, he would not be able to escape the cycle of this false world after the end of this life. “In this case, doesn’t such an experience tie the soul to the body most completely?... Because every pleasure or pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and to weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal, so that it believes that truth is what the body says it is... It is unable ever to reach Hades in a pure state; it is always full of body when it departs, so that it soon falls back into another body and grows with it as if it had been sewn into it. Because of this, it can have no part in the company of the divine, the pure and uniform.” (*Phaedo*, 83d-e) [1]

The charioteer must use words to persuade horses, as logos controls eros. Looking at the beautiful boy, the charioteer recalled the temperance and Form of beauty for an instant, and determined to work hard with the good horse to subdue the bad horse. At this time, he faced the beautiful boy with respect and fear like a god. “The beloved is not worthy of being loved for himself... the eyes of the lover pass through him to reach the universal truth of existence” [14]. The lower eros are dissolved and ascended to the higher ones. “The soul of the philosopher achieves a calm from such emotions; it follows reason and ever stays with it contemplating the true, the divine... Nurtured by this, it believes that one should live in this manner as long as one is alive and, after death, arrive at what is akin and of the same kind, and escape from human evils.” (*Phaedo*, ^{84a-c}) [1]

In short, the ladder of love is the necessary way for Socrates to die truly, and every object of love is endowed with the evaluation of “beauty”. However, the lower level of eros must be transcended, and the whole process of eros always needs supervision and vigilance. It is hard to say that Socrates took the position of pure lover in his life of practicing death, just because logos always watches and works from high.

(2) Thinker Profile of Socrates

Reason has emerged as one of the specific differences that define love, but the role of reason goes beyond that. Next, how the reason (logos) needed to dispel death anxiety will be explored, which is

not just a purely instrumental calculation (λογίζεσθαι), but rather leads and rules as an end, and whether it has successfully fulfilled its duties.

Logos connects the most divine and invisible part of the soul, which is a soul part above eros. The logos used in the pursuit of a speculative life of true death is also essential. First of all, the logos here is not just a minimal cognition implied in the lust for love or death, which is a minimal judgment made by the desire to move towards the object and act, and it cannot support speculative life. Secondly, logos cannot just be the second level of interest consideration and calculation. This is how Lucias' speech in *Phaedrus* uses logos to serve eros, where the lovers are for the benefit of a friendly life, and logos is the tool of decision-making [15]. Socrates also used reason in this way in *Crito*. Crito suggested that Socrates escaped from prison, while according to Socrates, "I am the kind of man who listens to nothing within me but the argument that on reflection seems best to me" (*Crito*, 46b-c) [1], using the rational justification to facing death. In the end, it was not the use of the two kinds of logos that made Socrates willingly choose death. According to Kuhn, "reason rules not only by fixing the ends to be pursued and guiding action towards these ends, but by constituting the goal of human life through its own philosophical activity." [11]

However, Socrates was not a perfect thinker in the practice of death. He used rational arguments to establish the goal of death and the action towards it, so as to depict a beautiful vision of true death. These arguments have many design flaws.

The most important thing is the existential argument of Form and the world of the Form. Yu Jiyuan proposed that the Form argument in *Phaedo* is an ontological proof, which started from the change or invariance of things and proved the change or invariance, truth or untruth of cognition and the dual world, while there is a begging the question, that is the premise and conclusion needed to prove each other. The epistemological proof in *Republic* begins with the difference of cognition, which is also in this cycle. Furthermore, the existence of Form and the immortality of the soul before and after death are linked by recollection and the rise of soul, which also contains begging the question. Soul recollection is the argument of the second appearance of *Phaedo*, which illustrates the proof of recollection:

P1: The soul exists before birth and has access to the Form.

C1: After the soul lands in the body, it can approach the Form again by perception of concrete things, that is, by recollection.

The proof of the soul's existence before his birth:

P2: We recognize Form in concrete things only because the soul has been exposed to them and then we recall them.

C2: The soul exists before his birth.

In addition, some scholars have systematically criticized all the arguments of the immortality of the soul in *Phaedo* based on domestic and foreign studies [6]. These arguments are all fallacious and cannot confirm the conclusion that the soul is immortal. Was Socrates, the extraordinary dialectist and the most famous thinker of Athens, really unaware of these flaws? Why did he still listen to the imperfect conclusion of rational reasoning and believe in the imperfect "true death"?

4. Rethinking the Death Situation and Death Anxiety: Re-practice of Philosophers Who Love Wisdom in the Contemporary Era

In the face of death, a last attempt was made to resort to the power of eros again, so as to finally determine who Socrates really is, a lover of wisdom (φιλεῖν) or a philosopher (φιλόσοφος). Looking back at all the arguments of rational speculation, Socrates reflected on the "road from ignorance", a road to true death, which unexpectedly ends with the mere and perceptual hope that when the soul is divorced from the body, it can acquire this certainty and witness the truth (*Phaedo*, ^{66d}) [1]. Trabattini commented that Socrates never believed in the certainty that once the soul is truly purified, the philosopher can truly attain wisdom. On the contrary, he started from a hypothesis that this attainment is generally never guaranteed. The philosopher is well aware of this fact that he is looking for

something that may not exist or be impossible to achieve [2]. But he is so thirsty for wisdom with abundant eros which goes towards the divine Forms, and the soul flies by myths to bridge the gap of reason. Thus, it can be finally found that the philosopher can join the company of gods after death (*Phaedo*, 82c) [1], and engage in “divine philosophy” (*Phaedrus*, ^{239b}) [1]. Had Socrates been merely a lover (ἐραστής), strong eros could not be guaranteed to be attached to an object truly worthy of love. If Socrates were only a thinker (σοφός), he would have no incentive to reach the truly unique object of cognition. As a philosopher, Socrates was a man of eros and logos, which enabled him to see and reach the true death situation, and the death anxiety vanished before him.

According to Zeller, “Only by keeping his eyes constantly on the transcendental eternal world did Plato gain the courage of radical reform... and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to teaching mankind to the supersensory, spiritual world of Form that can provide the only foundation for human society” [16]. The intention of Plato and Socrates, then, was certainly not to let one or two genius philosophers out of their predicament, but to help the whole population dispel the fundamental death anxiety. Thus, two major difficulties will be listed to demonstrate whether Plato’s scheme meets his requirements.

(1) The Controversy Between Modern Science and Myth: The Credibility of the True Death Situation

First, will contemporary people still believe in the true death situation described by Socrates? Friedlander notes that it is an attractive idea to regard Socrates described by Plato as a mystic [9]. During the painful journey towards eternity, philosophers believe in the existence of divine Form and infuse it with crazy eros. This supreme being can easily be classified as what Irvin Yalom called the “ultimate savior”, that is, “mankind has always believed in all kinds of gods... and it has always been there” [17]. For thousands of years, people have passionately engaged in creating transcendent shores that represent salvation and happiness, calming death anxiety in the delusion of security. Regardless of Plato’s intentions, he initiated the “external transcendence” tendency of western philosophy for nearly a thousand years, making western culture the most typical case of the “ultimate savior”. (“External transcendence theory” is a concept used by Yu Yingshi to compare the differences between Chinese and Western philosophies in the idea of divine transcendence. “... The western transcendent world is now fully embodied, and God is the creator of all things and the source of all values... For all individuals, this power always seems to come from the outside. Individuals practicing social values or moral values are also listening to God’s call. Details can be seen in Yu Yingshi, *Confucian Ethics and Merchant Spirit*, Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2004, p.7.) Therefore, after the power of the West swept the world, the final collapse of God caused a full-blown backlash. Without upward eros, it transforms into the happiness of running blindly in the material vortex, and Socrates’ death situation disappears. However, reason cannot stop thinking, which seeks certainty in vain, and only causes doubt and disbelief. Helpless anxiety seizes contemporary society. For contemporary people, the true death situation has indeed become a false myth tale.

Russell, a famous modern atheist who agreed with this view, accused that, “... his argument (Socrates described by Plato) was insincere and sophistry... He was using reason to prove the conclusions he liked, rather than applying reason to the selfless pursuit of knowledge... His bravery would have been greater if he died without believing that he was going to enjoy eternal blessing with the gods. Socrates is bent on proving that the universe conforms to his ethical standards. This is a betrayal of truth and the worst philosophical evil” [5]. What’s more, the mistake of Socrates’ argument is understood as Plato’s deep death anxiety. It is believed that Plato’s derogation of the sensible world and yearning for the other world in the middle and late texts is to cover up the erosion of his faith and to conceal the helplessness and anxiety about the finiteness of human beings [6]. Is Plato’s death situation not a gain of philosophy, but a sin of philosophy? Not the resolution of death anxiety, but its further projection? These viewpoints disconnect eros from logos, as well as the complex dualism between the sensible world and the knowable world founded on this connection. As mentioned earlier, Socrates did not regard the conclusion as the dogma of truth and God, but as rational hope. It is not the failure of the use of logos, but the touch of the boundary of intellectual

truth-seeking and the use of eros for transcendence. Such a scheme does not reflect Plato's anxiety out of sensibility. His overall rigorous scientific discipline, even geometry, which must be practiced in the process of loving knowledge, trusted and demonstrated the power of logos. "Plato, comprehending all aspects of the intellectual world, also accepted all human powers: love of the senses, precise thinking, highest aspiration" [9]. The sensible world and sensory feelings are the only way to go on the ladder of eros, and rational thinking is committed to avoiding all dangerous errors. Finally, after an investigation from a universally accepted perspective, Plato chose this "true and correct" death situation. The limitation of fate may last forever, but the pursuit of transcendence is always indispensable. The attraction of this scheme is to integrate the above possible contradictions within the theory and keep an understandable kindling of hope for immortality to dispel death anxiety.

(2) New Interpretation of Contemporary Emotional Psychology: Dispelling Anxiety in the Practice of Death and Survival

Plato's scheme still has to face a difficulty: if someone chooses to believe the true death situation, can the death anxiety really be dispelled? In *Phaedo*, Socrates laughed about the childish fears of death in front of him, and Gebe replied that "Perhaps there is a child in us who has these fears; try to persuade him not to fear death like a bogey." Socrates does it by "singing a charm" (*Phaedo*, 77d-78a) [1], that is, by articulating his philosophical discourse of the true death situation. For Plato, seeking truth and knowledge is so important that truth is the highest good, and the true restoration of the world is the first and dominates all other aspects. Specifically, the persuasion and correction of Gebe's cognition can lead to emotional changes. However, contemporary emotional cognitive theories have proved that this is not the case. In the absence of cognitive judgment, people can produce obvious emotional states. In the presence of a certain cognitive judgment, the emotions of different people at various moments may be completely different. It is often futile to adjust emotions through cognition [18]. Socrates described by Plato failed to fully realize this, probably as Kuhn said, "This unity of theory and practice is so fundamental in Plato's thought that he never makes Aristotle's distinction between σοφία and φρόνησις. The former is the theoretical wisdom exercised in contemplation, and the latter is the practical wisdom exercised in action and deliberation" [7]. Since Socrates' tradition of "virtue is knowledge", cognition-will-action has become a whole, "weakness of the will" is regarded as a false problem, and emotions are naturally in this chain without reflection. (weakness of the will, also known as akasia, means that the subject knows that it is reasonable to carry out an action, and he has enough reasons to fulfill this action, but he chooses to take other actions. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the corresponding actions can inevitably be derived according to the reasons for action.) Barrett's emotional psychological constructivism has been a promising emotional explanation theory in recent years. The theory puts forward that the core affect is the underlying state used by living bodies to represent the changing environment. In addition, "perceiving the core effect is the first step to experience emotions" [19], which can be understood as the contemporary living situation is the real basis for the formation of anxiety. Thrown into a rapidly changing world, people encounter absurd situations. Even if they recognize the true death situation described by Socrates and are willing to believe it, their anxiety is still rooted, and the resulting incomprehension and helplessness will even aggravate the death anxiety.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Plato, something more meaningful can be rediscovered behind cognition. Ding Ji expressed it as "seeing personally". "The immortality of the soul is not a superstition of childhood humans for Socrates, not the result of inference, but a 'seeing personally'" [8]. Human nature has limitations, and can only transmit incomplete thoughts through the logos of discourse. Plato did not want Socrates to tell a theoretical cognition, but to show the way philosophers live in practice. For sages who have certainty about the true death situation, they practice all their lives on the achievable middle path. "Plato is tracing a kind of middle path—for man in his mortal condition—between total ignorance of the Form and full and complete knowledge of them. Indeed, Socrates did not state that truth and knowledge are utterly foreign to the human experience. Rather, he admits that sometimes the soul can enter into contact with them (κοινωνῆ). [2] The partial temporary satisfaction of the philosopher's longing does not prevent him from continuing to desire

(or love)", but allows him to dispel his anxiety and maintain peace of expectation until death. Ordinary people living in contemporary society can experience such a philosophical practice, which is consistent with recent conclusions in emotional psychology. For Barrett's analysis, the core emotion is the basis for the formation of emotions. It and the environment are things we cannot change temporarily. However, the development of specific emotions from the core emotional state requires the process of "situated conceptualizations". Knowing the anxiety genes at the bottom of culture does not mean that we are helpless about anxiety, because every emotion is recreated in concrete examples. "These situated conceptualized things are not patterns and abstract examples. Instead, they are regenerations or simulations of sensory-motor states that occur with previous instances of this category" [19]. Situation is not an isolated and static existence, but a constant creation of each other in interaction with human practical activities. Perhaps people no longer believe in the existence of that death situation, but anyone can try to maintain moderate love, pursue upward wisdom, and live in a philosophical way. As long as you act, certainty will appear, and anxiety can slowly calm down in the multiple functions of cognition, will and action.

5. Conclusion

In the progress of reason in philosophy history, emotional sorrow is always at the neglected side. With the wave of reflection of reason sweeping up in contemporary society, this other part of human life should be revalued again. Plato's philosophy, a source of western rationalism, can emerge as the treasure of thought that takes care of emotions and tries its best to realize their harmony. The issue of death anxiety arises under this tension, which can connect many core categories in Plato's philosophy. Starting from the true death situation where the soul is immortal, he has shown his metaphysics of dual worlds, and his philosophical rising path is with eros and logos. Finally, it settles in the concern for dispelling death anxiety and harvesting eternal happiness. I indeed aim to prove that the warm care of Plato's philosophy still has its value to this day. Beyond the torrent of scientism and mysticism questioning, it is more important to explain why this true cognitive scheme can truly change emotions and lives. After reinterpretation of emotional psychology, it is found that the circular interaction of cognition-environment-emotion-will-action is implemented in Plato's philosophy. The practice of death is the true metaphor left by Plato with the death situation of Socrates, and this practice of death just happens in concrete survival. Practitioners may not be able to rise to the immortal heaven after death, but they can feel the peace and happiness of life. This is the answer by Plato's philosophy to dispel the death anxiety.

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