Introduction

I should make the usual disclaimers for the title at the outset. It's supposed, as you might have guessed, to allude to Wordsworth; there's no point to doing that over and above exemplifying the erudition appropriate to an *uomo universale*; and insofar as it is to be taken seriously, the genitive should be taken objectively and not subjectively (that is to say, it's about what implies immortality, not what immortality implies). So much for titles.

This paper began life about six years ago as an attempt to elucidate an extremely uncharacteristic section of Platonic argument, *Phaedrus* 245c-246a. Indeed it is uncharacteristic precisely because it *is* an argument, self-consciously arranged in the form of a succession of premises (the fact that the conclusion is stated at the outset is not of course a *logical* mistake). So unusual is it that anyone coming across this passage unseen might be forgiven for thinking that they were reading a piece of Aristotle. I shall not here be concerned with Plato's motives for engaging in this bizarre exercise: but it would be strange if there were not some particular reason for so doing in this, the most self-conscious of Plato's texts.¹ My aim in this paper is to offer an analysis of the argument as Plato presents it; to clear up, or if that sounds too implausible, at least to offer a reasoned reading of some of its unclarities and ambiguities; to acquit Plato of a straightforward modal fallacy of which he is sometimes accused; and to locate

¹. Just how self-conscious has been recently stressed in Ferrari 1987; see also the relevant sections of Nussbaum 1986; but neither of these authors devotes much time to our passage. As Richard Bett (1986) notes in what seems to be the only major recent contribution to scholarship on this issue, Nussbaum 1982 "dismisses it in literally a sentence."
the argument in part of a lengthy and highly influential tradi-
tion that embraces, albeit in different contexts, the disparate
figures of Parmenides, Aristotle and Epicurus.

1. First Steps

I shall begin by offering a translation of the whole passage,
labeling the individual steps with letters, and marking what I
consider to be independent stretches of argument with Roman
numerals; the translation will necessarily involve decision on a
number of textual and interpretative cruces, some of which I
shall then attempt to justify: although my reasons for resolving
them in the way I do will not be fully explained until later in the
course of the analysis (if at all).

[I] (a) Every soul ($\psi\chi\nu$) is immortal ($\alpha\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$). For (b) what
is always in motion ($\alpha\varepsilon\iota\kappa\iota\nu\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon\nu$) is immortal, and (c) if what
either moves something else or is moved by something else
ceases motion, then it ceases living.

[II] (d) Only that which moves itself ($\tau\omicron\ \alpha\nu\tau\omicron\ \kappa\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\nu$) does not
cease moving, since (e) it does not abandon itself ($\omicron\upsilon \\acute{\alpha}p\omicron\omega\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\omicron
\tau\omicron\upsilon\omicron$), and (f) it serves as a source ($\pi\gamma\eta$) and ori-
gin of motion ($\acute{\alpha}r\chi\eta \ \kappa\iota\nu\iota\sigma\omicron\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$) for the other things it moves.

[III] (g) An origin is ungenerable ($\acute{\alpha}\gamma\nu\eta\tau\omicron\upsilon$). For (h) it is nec-
essary that whatever comes to be comes to be from an origin,
but that (i) an origin does not come to be from anything. For
(j) if an origin came to be from something, it would no longer
be an origin.

[IV] (k) Since it is ungenerable, it is necessary that it be inde-
structible ($\alpha\delta\iota\omega\acute{\phi}\theta\omicron\rho\omicron\upsilon$). For (l) if the origin is destroyed, it
will be possible neither that (m) the origin comes to be from
anything, nor that (n) anything else comes to be from the ori-
gin, if (o) everything comes to be from an origin. So (p) the
self-mover is the origin of motion. (q) It is impossible for this
to be destroyed or generated, otherwise (r) all the heaven and
all becoming ($\gamma\acute{\nu}v\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\omega$) would fall into a standstill, and (s) it
would never again have anything from which it could begin
moving.