Then tell me, what must be present in a body to make it alive?
Soul.
Is this always so?
Of course.
So whenever soul takes possession of a body, it always brings life with it?
Yes, it does.
Is there an opposite to life, or not?
Yes, there is.
What?
Death.
Does it follow, then, from our earlier agreement, that soul will never admit the opposite of that which accompanies it?
Most definitely, said Cebes.
Well, now, what name did we apply just now to that which does not admit the form of even?
Uneven.
And what do we call that which does not admit justice, or culture?
Uncultured, and the other unjust.
Very good. And what do we call that which does not admit death?
Immortal.
And soul does not admit death?
No.
So soul is immortal.
Yes, it is immortal.
Well, said Socrates, can we say that that has been proved? What do you think?
Most completely, Socrates.
Here is another question for you, Cebes. If the uneven were necessarily imperishable, would not three be imperishable?
Of course.
Then again, if what is not hot were necessarily imperishable, when you applied heat to snow, would not the snow withdraw still intact and unmelted? It could not cease to exist, nor on the other hand could it remain where it was and admit the heat.
That is true.
In the same way I assume that if what is not cold were imperishable, when anything cold approached fire, it could never go out or cease to exist; it would depart and be gone unharmed.
That must be so.
Are we not bound to say the same of the immortal? If what is immortal is also imperishable, it is impossible that at the approach of death soul should cease to be. It follows from what we have already said that it cannot admit death, or be dead – just as we said that three cannot be even, nor can odd; nor can fire be cold, nor can the heat which is in the fire. But, it may be objected, granting, as has been agreed, that odd does not become even at the approach of even, why should it not cease to exist, and something even take its place? In reply to this we could not insist that the odd does not cease to exist – because what is not even is not imperishable – but if this were conceded, we could easily insist that, at the approach of even, odd and three retire and depart. And we could be equally insistent about fire and heat and all the rest of them, could we not?
Certainly.
So now in the case of the immortal, if it is conceded that this is also imperishable, soul will be imperishable as well as immortal. Otherwise we shall need another argument.
There is no need on that account, said Cebes. If what is immortal and eternal cannot avoid destruction, it is hard to see how anything else can.
And I imagine that it would be admitted by everyone, said Socrates, that God at any rate, and the form of life, and anything else that is immortal, can never cease to exist.
Yes indeed, by all men certainly, and even more, I suppose, by the gods.
Then since what is immortal is also indestructible, if soul is really immortal, surely it must be imperishable too.
Quite inevitably.
So it appears that when death comes to a man, the mortal part of him dies, but the immortal part retires at the approach of death and escapes unharmed and indestructible.
Evidently.
Then it is as certain as anything can be, Cebes, that soul is immortal and imperishable, and that our souls will really exist in the next world.
Well, Socrates, said Cebes, for my part I have no criticisms, and no doubt about the truth of your argument.