

# Plato's *Phaedo*

## PHIL 310 – Syllabus

Instructor: Willie Costello

Winter Quarter. Meetings on Wednesdays from 15:00 to 17:50 in Bldg 20 Rm 21G. Office hours on Tuesdays from 13:30 to 15:00 in Bldg 100 Rm 102M, or by appointment (email [williec@stanford.edu](mailto:williec@stanford.edu)). Course readings available from <http://bit.ly/phaedobox>.

### *Course description*

This course is dedicated to a slow and close reading of the *Phaedo*. This dialogue, undoubtedly one of the greatest in Plato's oeuvre, showcases the full range of his philosophical thought, touching on issues in ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, physics (or natural philosophy), psychology (in the literal sense of the word), philosophical methodology, and even the philosophy of language. The dialogue is also a literary masterpiece, featuring discussants with genuine personalities, a substantial frame dialogue which keeps reappearing throughout the work, various religious and cultic overtones, an evocative closing myth, and a final scene of as much pathos as any in Greek drama. On top of all this, the *Phaedo* is arguably the most "Platonic" of the dialogues; nowhere else in the corpus do we find as clear a statement of the theory of Forms and the immortality of the soul – the "twin pillars" of Platonism, as F. M. Cornford once called them.

And yet, for all this, the *Phaedo* remains a perplexing work. For one thing, its arguments for the soul's immortality are all generally thought to be failures; even some of the dialogue's own participants remain not entirely convinced at the end. The basic conception of the soul on which it tacitly relies (viz., the conception of the soul as a simple particular substance) is not generally thought to be credible, either, and does not sit well with Plato's tripartite analysis of the soul elsewhere (not to mention Aristotle's subsequent hylomorphic analysis). And its use of Forms is just as vexed: we're given very little indication as to why we should believe in such entities (the existence of Forms is assumed rather than argued for throughout the dialogue), and the conception of Forms we find employed in the *Phaedo* seems very much like the conception of Forms which Plato himself criticizes in the first part of the *Parmenides*.

How, then, should the *Phaedo* be read? As a series of failed and question-begging arguments? Or are the arguments better than has generally been supposed? Or are the arguments themselves

beside the point? Is the dialogue better read as protreptic, intended merely to set readers on the right ethical course? Or is it first and foremost a portrait of the correct attitude to have towards one's life? Can it be all these things at once? These are the questions we will explore in this seminar, through careful consideration of all facets of the text.

No particular background in Plato or ancient philosophy is assumed (nor any command of Greek); but reference will be made as appropriate to various other ancient works, including those of the Presocratic natural philosophers (especially Anaxagoras), the Hippocratic medical writers, Plato's *Meno*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*, and Aristotle's *De Anima*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*. Students whose background is minimal or rusty would do well to (re)read the *Meno* and *Republic* IV–VI. Everyone should read the whole of the *Phaedo* in English before the start of the course.

### *Evaluation*

<i>Component</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Due date</i>
Five response pieces (350 words each)	10%	Wednesday morning of each week
In-class discussion-lead (45 minutes)	10%	(to be arranged with student)
Term paper prospectus (750 words)	20%	February 21
Term paper (3000 words)	60%	end of term

- » **Response pieces:** You are to hand in a total of five response pieces over the course of the term. A response piece is a short reflective essay responding to some part of the week's assigned readings. Each response piece should be at least 350 words in length, though you are welcome to write more if you feel inspired. Each response piece should explore a single, original idea you had in response to the week's reading. Response pieces should not be mere summaries of the readings, or any part of the readings; you must do some analysis or synthesis of the assigned material. The purpose of these response pieces is: (a) to enhance our classroom discussion of the readings; and (b) to help you come up with and develop ideas for your term paper.

Response pieces should be emailed to me by Wednesday morning (6 A.M.), preferably in PDF format. You may hand in up to one response piece per week. Ideally, these will be completed between weeks two and seven, before your term paper prospectus is due, but you may hand in response pieces between weeks eight and ten. Each response piece is worth 2% of your final grade, and will be graded on a credit/no-credit basis.

- » **Discussion-lead:** You are to lead one in-class discussion at some point during the term, on a week and topic of your choosing. This is not supposed to be a lecture, or a presentation; think of it rather as a tutorial with your fellow classmates. You are to lead the class in discussing

some specific issue from the week's readings (either primary or secondary), for approximately 45 minutes. You should begin with a short (ten- to fifteen-minute) introduction to the issue, just to get everyone up to speed, and then raise some questions that you are interested in working out, and guide the class in discussing them. The purpose of these discussion-leads is: (a) to diversify our classroom discussion of the readings, so it's not just me setting the agenda; and (b) to give you practice leading a classroom discussion.

- » **Term paper prospectus:** Midway through this course, between weeks seven and eight, you are to hand in a prospectus/"think-piece": a preliminary investigation into the issue you intend to explore further in your term paper. Your prospectus should be at least 750 words in length. It should not be merely an outline of your term paper. It should present an original and in-depth analysis of a particular idea, issue, or argument, which will serve as the basis for your eventual term paper. The purpose of this prospectus is: (a) to give you a head-start on your term paper; and (b) to give you some early feedback on your ideas, so that you have some guidance on how to develop them in the weeks to come.

Your prospectus should be emailed to me by end of day February 21 (or, for all you night owls, by 6 A.M. February 22 at the latest), preferably in PDF format.

- » **Term paper:** The major assignment for this course is a term paper. It should be a focused, argumentative essay, defending a specific and original thesis about some aspect of the *Phaedo*, sensitive to (though not defined by) the existing literature on the topic. It should be approximately 3000 words in length, and not much longer; I've set this word count deliberately low so as to challenge you to be concise and economical in your argumentation, and to leave you with a term paper which can easily be submitted to conferences for presentation.

### *Texts*

The only text that is required for this course is a translation of Plato's *Phaedo*. If you don't already own a translation, I would recommend:

- Sedley, D. and Long, A., 2010. *Plato: Meno and Phaedo*. Cambridge University Press

It would also be beneficial to have a copy of both Plato's and Aristotle's complete works handy, for various cross-references. The standard editions are:

- Cooper, J. M. and Hutchinson, D. S. (eds.) 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing Company
- Barnes, J. (ed.) 1984. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press

Those planning to read or refer to the dialogue in Greek should be looking at the Oxford Classical Texts edition (either Duke et al. (edd.) or Burnet (ed.)), and may also be interested in the following two stand-alone editions of the Greek text (each of which includes a full textual commentary), as well as the following article of assorted textual notes:

- Rowe, C. J., 1993b. *Plato: Phaedo*. Cambridge University Press
- Burnet, J., 1911. *Plato's Phaedo*. Clarendon Press
- Verdenius, W. J., 1958. "Notes on Plato's *Phaedo*." *Mnemosyne* 11(3): 193–243

There are also a number of modern commentaries on the *Phaedo*, as well as two ancient (Neoplatonic) commentaries which have been translated into English (and one modern commentary on those ancient commentaries), all of which may potentially be of interest:

- Gallop, D., 1975. *Plato: Phaedo*. Clarendon Press
- Ebert, T., 2004. *Platon: Phaidon*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht
- Frede, D., 1999. *Platons Phaidon: Der Traum von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele*. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft
- Dixsaut, M., 1991. *Platon: Phédon*. Flammarion
- Bostock, D., 1986. *Plato's Phaedo*. Clarendon Press
- Burger, R., 1984. *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth*. Yale University Press
- Dorter, K., 1982. *Plato's Phaedo: An Interpretation*. University of Toronto Press
- Bluck, R. S., 1955. *Plato's Phaedo*. Routledge
- Hackforth, R., 1955. *Plato's Phaedo*. Cambridge University Press
- Westerink, L. G. (ed.) 2009a. *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo: I – Olympiodorus*. The Prometheus Trust, 2nd edn
- Westerink, L. G. (ed.) 2009b. *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo: II – Damascius*. The Prometheus Trust, 2nd edn
- Gertz, S. R. P., 2011. *Death and Immortality in Late Neoplatonism: Studies on the Ancient Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*. Brill

## Basic Schedule

DATE	TOPIC(S)	READING
1/6	General overview   Proem	start–61e
1/13	Socrates' Defense   A philosopher's death (pt. 1)	61e–69e
1/20	The Cyclical Argument	69e–72d
1/27	The Recollection Argument	72e–77a
2/3	The Affinity Argument   A philosopher's death (pt. 2)	77a–84c
2/10	The Attunement Argument	84c–95a
2/17	The Aitia Argument: Socrates' intellectual autobiography   First voyage	95a–99d
2/24	The Aitia Argument: Second voyage   The method of hypothesis	99d–102a
3/2	The Aitia Argument: Platonic causes	102a–105e
3/9	The final proof   Myth & denouement	105e–end

## Detailed Schedule with Reading Questions & Secondary Readings

Reminder: All the readings listed below can be downloaded from: <http://bit.ly/phaedobox>

1/6	General overview   Proem	start–61e
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### Questions

- » Why is the dialogue called the “Phaedo”? All the other eponymous dialogues are named after either their main interlocutor or their main speaker; Phaedo, in contrast, is merely the *Phaedo*'s narrator. Are the actual Phaedo of Elis's philosophical views here relevant? (Cf. Boys-Stones (2004))
- » What is the *skopos* ('interpretive goal') of the dialogue? The immortality of the soul? The life and death of the philosopher? The purificatory virtues? The theory of Forms? (Cf. Gertz (2011, Introduction))
- » Pythagoras is a known Presocratic proponent of the immortality of the soul, and the *Phaedo*'s main cast of characters – Simmias, Cebes, and also Echekrates – are all known Pythagoreans. What is the relationship between Pythagoreanism and the *Phaedo*? (Cf. Sedley (1995))
- » At 60e–61c Socrates explains that throughout his life he has been visited by a dream instructing him to “compose music and work at it” – a dream which he had previously taken as an exhortation to philosophize, but which he is now interpreting more literally as an exhortation to compose poems and stories, not arguments. What is the significance of this dream for the rest of the dialogue? Is Socrates' closing myth one such “story” (*muthos*)? Should the entire dialogue be read as a “story” by Plato?

### Recommended readings

- Sedley, D. and Long, A., 2010. *Plato: Meno and Phaedo*. Cambridge University Press [Introduction]

### Additional readings

- Boys-Stones, G., 2004. "Phaedo of Elis and Plato on the Soul." *Phronesis* 49(1): 1–23
- Sedley, D., 1995. "The Dramatis Personae of Plato's *Phaedo*." In T. Smiley (ed.) "Philosophical Dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein," 3–26. Oxford University Press
- Burnyeat, M. F., 2012. "First words." In "Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy," vol. 2, 305–325. Cambridge University Press
- Huffman, C., 2012. "Philolaus." In E. N. Zalta (ed.) "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy," The Metaphysics Research Lab, summer 2012 edn.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/philolaus/>
- Ebert, T., 2001b. "Why is Evenus Called a Philosopher at *Phaedo* 61c?" *The Classical Quarterly* 51(2): 423–434
- Clay, D., 1992. "Plato's First Words." In F. M. Dunn and T. Cole (eds.) "Beginnings in Classical Literature," 113–130. Cambridge University Press
- Nails, D., 2002. *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Hackett Publishing Company [for the *Phaedo*'s characters]

### Questions

- » The body is strongly condemned throughout this passage: it is said to be, among other things, an impediment to wisdom, a distraction from philosophy, comparable to a prison, and the cause of all wars. Is this extreme denigration justified? Why can't the body play any part in the philosopher's pursuit of wisdom and virtue? Or can it?
- » Why are appetitive pleasures and desires (for food, drink, clothes, etc.) described as "bodily" in this passage? How does this description square with the more familiar Platonic analysis of such pleasures and desires as being associated with the appetitive or nonrational part of the *soul*? (Cf. Boys-Stones (2004) from last week)
- » Socrates assumes (and Simmias concurs) at 64c that death is "the separation of the soul from the body", an assumption which is never challenged for the remainder of the dialogue, and seems to stand behind all of the subsequent arguments. Is this assumption warranted? Or is this assumption somehow backed up by the rest of "Socrates' defense"? (Cf. Pakaluk (2003))
- » The Forms (or something like them) make their first appearance in the dialogue at 65d. What sort of entities are these Forms supposed to be, and why does Simmias so readily agree to their existence?

### Recommended readings

- Woolf, R., 2004. "The Practice of a Philosopher." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26: 97–129

### Additional readings

- Pakaluk, M., 2003. "Degrees of Separation in the *Phaedo*." *Phronesis* 48(2): 89–115
- Palmer, J., 2016. "Presocratic Interest in the Soul's Persistence after Death." In J. Sisko (ed.) "History of the Philosophy of Mind: Pre-Socratics to Augustine," vol. 1. Routledge [PREPUBLICATION VERSION :: DO NOT CIRCULATE OR CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR]
- Weiss, R., 1987. "The Right Exchange: *Phaedo* 69a6–c3." *Ancient Philosophy* 7: 57–66
- White, F. C., 2006. "Socrates, Philosophers and Death: Two Contrasting Arguments in Plato's *Phaedo*." *The Classical Quarterly* 56(2): 445–458
- Pakaluk, M., 2004. "Socratic Magnanimity in the *Phaedo*." *Ancient Philosophy* 24(1): 101–117
- Miles, M., 2001. "Plato on Suicide (*Phaedo* 60c–63c)." *Phoenix* 55(3/4): 244–258
- Strachan, J. C. G., 1970. "Who *Did* Forbid Suicide at *Phaedo* 62b?" *The Classical Quarterly* 20(2): 216–220

## Questions

- » This argument aims to vindicate the “ancient saying” that the souls of people who have died exist in Hades, and it does so by assimilating death (i.e., a person’s coming-to-be dead) into a more general analysis of coming-to-be. What is the motivation behind this assimilation strategy? Can death be analogized to other types of coming-to-be? Does such analogizing rely on a certain conception of death (roughly, to adopt Aristotelian terminology, as a qualified rather than an unqualified coming-to-be?)
- » This argument relies on a general principle that opposites come-to-be from their opposites (e.g., anything which comes-to-be hot comes-to-be hot from being previously cold). But how plausible is this as a general principle about coming-to-be? It would seem open to some fairly obvious counterexamples, at any rate: for example, someone who comes-to-be poor was not necessarily previously rich (they may have been merely of modest means, neither rich nor poor); a couple who comes-to-be married was not necessarily previously divorced (even though the reverse is true). Do such counterexamples invalidate the argument? Or are “opposites” being conceived in such a way as to rule out such counterexamples? And however opposites are being conceived, will ‘living’ and ‘being dead’ also count? (Cf. Sedley (2012))
- » This argument is tacitly working with the conception of life and death at 64c, as the association and disassociation of soul and body, respectively. But should these two poles be thought of as the dis/association of two independently existing substances (viz., the soul and the body), or as a single substance (viz., the soul) taking on different accidents? (Cf. Syrianus for the former view and Damascius for the latter, as reported in Gertz (2011, Chapter 3).)

## Recommended readings

- Gallop, D., 1982. “Plato’s ‘Cyclical Argument’ Recycled.” *Phronesis* 27(3): 207–222

## Additional readings

- Aristotle: *Physics* 1.5–7
- Sedley, D., 2012. “Plato’s Theory of Change at *Phaedo* 70–71.” In R. Patterson, V. Karasmanis, and A. Hermann (eds.) “Presocratics and Plato: Festschrift at Delphi in Honor of Charles Kahn,” 147–163. Parmenides Publishing
- Barnes, J., 1978. “Critical Notice: *Plato: Phaedo* by David Gallop.” *Journal of Philosophy* 8(2): 397–419

## Questions

- » At 73c–74a Socrates introduces the concept of ‘recollection’ by means of a series of mundane examples (e.g., being reminded of one’s beloved upon seeing one of their possessions, being reminded of a friend upon seeing their picture, etc.). Why does Socrates begin with such mundane examples? What is their significance? And how do they map onto the case of recollecting Forms?
- » The short argument at 74a–c is one of the most controversial in the entire Platonic corpus, and contemporary scholars have debated how nearly every step of the argument should be interpreted. For example: Why does Simmias so readily agree at 74b to the existence of “the Equal itself”? Why does he so readily agree immediately thereafter that we also “know what it is”? Who is the ‘we’ who knows the Equal itself – we philosophers, or we (ordinary) people? In what sense do equal sticks and stones “appear” unequal? In what sense does the Equal itself *not* “appear” unequal? Why does Socrates switch at 74c to using the plural “the

Equals themselves”, and the abstract nouns “equality” and “inequality”? In the end, what is the argument meant to establish? How is its explicit conclusion, that the many equal things and the Equal itself are “not the same thing”, not already assumed from the start, in Simmias’s acceptance that there is an Equal itself “besides” or “in addition to” (*παρά*) all the many equal things? (Cf. Sedley (2007) for a helpful summary and walkthrough of each of these controversies.)

- » Why are equal sticks and stones “deficiently” equal (i.e., why are they said to “fall short” of the Equal itself)? Because they are merely *approximately* equal? Because they are not equal to *everything*? Because they do not appear equal to *everyone*? Because they are not equal in every *context*, at every *time*? (Cf. Nehamas (1975))
- » Even if we grant that the arguments about Forms and recollection work as they are meant to work, do these arguments establish what they are meant to establish about the soul? What does the Recollection Argument contribute to the overall argument of the *Phaedo* anyway?

#### Recommended readings

- Kelsey, S., 2000. “Recollection in the *Phaedo*.” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 16: 91–121

#### Additional readings

- Plato: *Meno* 80d–81e (on recollection); *Republic* VII 523a–525b and *Theaetetus* 184b–186e (on perception)
- Sedley, D., 2007. “Equal Sticks and Stones.” In D. Scott (ed.) “*Maieusis*: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat,” 68–86. Oxford University Press
- White, N. P., 1987. “Forms and Sensibles: *Phaedo* 74b–c.” *Philosophical Topics* 15(2): 197–214
- Scott, D., 1987. “Platonic Anamnesis Revisited.” *The Classical Quarterly* 37(2): 346–366
- Lee, D. C., 2013. “Drama, Dogmatism, and The “Equals” Argument in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 44: 1–39
- Ademollo, F., 2007. “The Equals, the Equals Themselves, Equality, and the Equal Itself.” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 28: 1–20
- Sedley, D., 2006. “Form–Particular Resemblance in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106: 311–327
- Woolf, R., 2000. “Commentary on Kelsey.” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 16: 122–131
- Osborne, C., 1995. “Perceiving Particulars and Recollecting the Forms in the *Phaedo*.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 95: 211–233
- Scott, D., 1995. *Recollection and Experience: Plato’s Theory of Learning and its Successors*. Cambridge University Press [Section I]
- Smith, N. D., 1980. “The Various Equals at Plato’s *Phaedo* 74b–c.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 18(1): 1–7
- Nehamas, A., 1975. “Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12(2): 105–117
- Ackrill, J. L., 1973. “*Anamnesis* in the *Phaedo*: Remarks on 73c–75c.” In E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelates, and R. M. Rorty (eds.) “*Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*,” 177–195. Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V

## Questions

- » This argument seems obviously invalid and unconvincing. (In short, it goes like this: the soul is similar to that which always stays in the same state and condition; things which always stay in the same state and condition are least likely to be disintegrated; therefore, the soul is incapable of being disintegrated.) Why, then, is this argument here? What, if anything, is it actually accomplishing? (Cf. Elton (1997), Apolloni (1996))
- » What can we glean from this argument about Plato's conception of ordinary sensible things, and of ontology more generally? (Cf. Mann (2000) and McCabe (1994))
- » At 80e–84b, Socrates repeats many of the same conclusions he first came to at 64c–69e. In what ways, if any, are these conclusions different than before? Have these conclusions now acquired a new force? If so, how?
- » Is the civic virtue described at 82a–b the same as the slavish virtue described at 68d–69c, or different? How do both compare to true, philosophical virtue? And how does the *Phaedo's* taxonomy of kinds of virtue compare to the *Republic's*? (Cf. Vasiliou (2012))

## Recommended readings

- Mann, W.-R., 2000. *The Discovery of Things*. Princeton University Press [II.7–9, 14, esp. §7]

## Additional readings

- Denyer, N., 2007. "The *Phaedo's* Final Argument." In D. Scott (ed.) "Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat," vol. 87-96. Oxford University Press
- Elton, M., 1997. "The Role of the Affinity Argument in the *Phaedo*." *Phronesis* 42(3): 313–316
- Apolloni, D., 1996. "Plato's Affinity Argument for the Immortality of the Soul." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34(1): 5–32
- McCabe, M. M., 1994. *Plato's Individuals*. Princeton University Press [Chapter 2, esp. §4]
- Vasiliou, I., 2012. "From the *Phaedo* to the *Republic*: Plato's tripartite soul and the possibility of non-philosophical virtue." In R. Barney, T. Brennan, and C. Brittain (eds.) "Plato and the Divided Self," 9–32. Cambridge University Press

## Questions

- » Simmias's suggestion that the soul is a sort of "attunement" is meant to point out a respect in which Socrates' arguments thus far are still insufficient. However, as Socrates shows at 92a ff., Simmias's suggestion is at odds with various points established by or agreed to in the preceding discussion. Why, then, is Simmias's suggestion at all plausible in the first place? Or is it? What other work might the suggestion be doing, if not serving as a straightforward objection?
- » Why does Socrates give three separate refutations of Simmias's suggestion? Each seems individually sufficient to refute the suggestion, and no indication is given that they are meant to be combined. So why are they all here? (Cf. Taylor (1983))
- » What is the significance of Echecrates' interruption at 88d? (It is rare for a frame dialogue to reinsert itself.) Cf. Echecrates' second interruption at 102a.

- » What is the significance of Socrates' warning against "misology" (hatred of argument) at 89d–90e? How does it relate to what has come before and what is to come after? (Cf. Miller (2015))
- » Looking ahead: In what sense is Simmias's suggestion a "hypothesis", as it is described at 93c and 94b? What can this tell us about the method of hypothesis which Socrates will soon endorse at 100b?

#### Recommended readings

- Taylor, C. C. W., 1983. "The Arguments in the *Phaedo* Concerning the Thesis That the Soul Is a *Harmonia*." In J. P. Anton and A. Preus (eds.) "Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy," vol. ii, 217–231. State University of New York Press

#### Additional readings

- Aristotle: *De Anima* 1.4
- Miller, T., 2015. "Socrates' Warning Against Misology (Plato, *Phaedo* 88c–91c)." *Phronesis* 60: 145–179
- Woolf, R., 2007. "Misology and Truth." *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 23: 1–16
- Warren, J., 2006. "Psychic Disharmony: Philoponus and Epicurus on Plato's *Phaedo*." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30: 235–259
- Caston, V., 1997. "Epiphenomenalisms, Ancient and Modern." *The Philosophical Review* 106(3): 309–363
- Barker, A., 2004. *Greek Musical Writings: II: Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*, vol. 2. Cambridge University Press [Introduction]
- Young, D. J., 2013. "Soul as Structure in Plato's *Phaedo*." *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 46(4): 469–498
- Gottschalk, H. B., 1971. "Soul as Harmonia." *Phronesis* 16(2): 179–198
- Hicken, W. F., 1954. "*Phaedo* 93a11–94b3." *The Classical Quarterly* 4(1/2): 16–22

#### Questions

- » Why does Socrates dismiss the first approach to discovering causes, outlined at 96c–97b? What exactly is it that he finds confusing and unpersuasive about it? (Cf. Menn (2010); Mueller (1998))
- » How does the first approach to discovering causes relate to the methods of Socrates' actual natural philosopher predecessors? Is he meaning to criticize certain of his predecessors in particular, or the whole lot of them? In either case, how accurate is his portrayal? (Cf. Hankinson (1998); Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A; Furley (1976); von Staden (1998))
- » The next approach to discovering causes which Socrates considers, at 97c–98b, relies on discovering how it is *best* for each thing to be. (This is the so-called "first voyage"; it is also sometimes referred to as Socrates' "teleological *aitia* / explanation".) How exactly is this approach supposed to work? How does it relate to the approaches which come before and after it? Why are its causes, unlike those of the first approach, accepted as "real" or "true" causes (98e)? (Cf. Wiggins (1986); Sedley (2008); Henry (2013))

#### Recommended readings

- Hankinson, R. J., 1998. *Cause and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought*. Clarendon Press [Chapters 1–3]
- Wiggins, D., 1986. "Teleology and the Good in Plato's *Phaedo*." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4: 1–18

## Additional readings

- Plato: *Timaeus* 27d–29d (ff.); *Philebus* 23b–27c (on teleological explanations in natural philosophy)
- Aristotle: *Metaphysics* A.3–7 (on the history of natural philosophy and metaphysics)
- Menn, S., 2010. “On Socrates’ First Objections to the Physicists (*Phaedo* 95e8–97b7).” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 38: 37–68
- Mueller, I., 1998. “Platonism and the Study of Nature (*Phaedo* 95e ff.)” In J. Gentzler (ed.) “Method in Ancient Philosophy,” 67–89. Clarendon Press
- Furley, D., 1976. “Anaxagoras in Response to Parmenides.” In J. King-Farlow and R. A. Shiner (eds.) “New Essays in Plato and the Pre-Socratics,” Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume 2, 61–85. Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy
- von Staden, H., 1998. “Dynamis: The Hippocratics and Plato.” In K. J. Boudouris (ed.) “Philosophy and Medicine,” vol. II, 262–279. International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture
- Sedley, D., 2008. “Socrates’ Place in the History of Teleology.” *Elenchos* 29(2): 317–334
- Henry, D., 2013. “Optimality and Teleology in Aristotle’s Natural Science.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 45: 225–264
- Horky, P. S., 2013. *Plato and Pythagoreanism*. Oxford University Press [Chapter 5]
- Furley, D., 2002. “Anaxagoras, Plato, and the Naming of Parts.” In V. Caston and D. Graham (eds.) “Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of A. P. D. Mourelatos,” 119–126. Ashgate
- Strange, S. K., 1985. “The Double Explanation in the *Timaeus*.” *Ancient Philosophy* 5: 25–39
- Mourelatos, A. P. D., 1973. “Heraclitus, Parmenides, and the Naive Metaphysics of Things.” In E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty (eds.) “Exegesis and Argument,” 16–48. Van Gorcum

## Questions

- » Socrates describes the approach of his “second voyage” in search of the cause as attempting to look into the truth of things in “theories and arguments” (*logoi*, 100a). What does this mean? How does it relate to his method of hypothesis, and to his subsequent acceptance of the Forms as causes? (Cf. van Eck (1994))
- » What is the method of hypothesis described at 100a and 101d–e? What is it for a claim to “harmonize” with a hypothesis, and thus be set down as true? What is it for a claim *not* to “harmonize” with a hypothesis, and thus be set down as false? What does it mean for Socrates to hypothesize whatever theory he deems “most robust” or “strongest”? What is the “safe part of the hypothesis” alluded to at 101d? Why does it matter that the “consequences” of a hypothesis “harmonize” with each other? How general is this method meant to be, and where else might we find it? (Cf. Gentzler (1991); Benson (2015); Plato, *Meno*)
- » On what basis are the Forms accepted as causes at 100c? What is the relation between this identification of Forms as causes and the hypothesis that the Forms exist at 100b? Is that latter claim entailed by the former? Added to it? Included in it? Recommended by it? (Cf. Kanayama (2000))
- » Socrates describes his identification of Forms as causes as “safe”, “amateurish”, and “simple-minded”. What do these various descriptions mean, and why does Socrates go out of his way to include them?

## Recommended readings

- On the second voyage

- van Eck, J., 1994. “Σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγους: On *Phaedo* 99d–103c.” *Ancient Philosophy* 14(1): 21–40
- On the method of hypothesis
  - Gentzler, J., 1991. ““συμφωνεῖν” in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Phronesis* 36(3): 265–276

#### Additional readings

- On the second voyage
  - Plato: *Timaeus* 47e–52d (on formal explanations in natural philosophy)
  - Aristotle: *On Generation and Corruption* II.9; *Metaphysics* A.9 (on criticisms of Forms as causes)
  - Kanayama, Y., 2000. “The Methodology of the Second Voyage and the Proof of the Soul’s Indestructibility in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18: 41–100
  - Rowe, C., 1993a. “Explanation in *Phaedo* 99c6–102a8.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11: 49–69
  - van Eck, J., 1996. “Resailing Socrates’ Δεύτερος Πλοῦς: A Criticism of Rowe’s “Explanation in *Phaedo* 99c6–102a8”.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 14: 211–226
  - Rowe, C., 1996. “A Reply to van Eck.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 14: 227–240
  - Fine, G., 1987. “Forms as Causes: Plato and Aristotle.” In “Mathematics and Metaphysics in Aristotle/Mathematik und Metaphysik bei Aristoteles,” 69–112. Haupt
  - Denyer, N., 1983. “Plato’s Theory of Stuffs.” *Philosophy* 58(225): 315–327
  - Moline, J., 1981. *Plato’s Theory of Understanding*. The University of Wisconsin Press [Chapter 4]
- On the method of hypothesis
  - Plato: *Meno* 86c–87d ff.; *Republic* VI 510b–511e
  - Benson, H. H., 2015. *Clitophon’s Challenge: Dialectic in Plato’s Meno, Phaedo, and Republic*. Oxford University Press [Chapter 7]
  - Sharma, R., 2015. “*Phaedo* 100b3–9.” *Mnemosyne* 68: 393–412
  - Bailey, D. T. J., 2005. “Logic and Music in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Phronesis* 50(2): 95–115
  - Ebert, T., 2001a. “Sokrates Über Seinen Umgang mit Hypotheseis (*Phaidon* 100a): Ein Problem und ein Vorschlag zur Lösung.” *Hermes* 129(4): 467–473

#### Questions

- » It would seem that, from 100b to the end of this passage, Socrates is endorsing and elaborating a particular conception of what a cause is, under which fall: the Forms of 100b–102a; the “Forms in us” of 102b–103c (such as the bigness in Simmias and the smallness in Socrates); and the “bearers” of 103c–105e (such as fire, snow, threeness, and soul). What exactly is this conception of causation, and does it make any sense? How does it relate to the conceptions of causation which appeared before it in the *Phaedo*? How does it relate to other ancient and modern conceptions of causation? (Cf. Sedley (1998); Aristotle, *Physics* II.3; Hankinson (1998) from week 8)
- » What, metaphysically, are “Forms in us”? Immanent Forms? Tropes? Form copies? Something else? How exactly do they differ from the Forms “in nature”, i.e., the Forms introduced at 100b? (Cf. Devereux (1994); Fine (1999/1986))

- » At 103c–105e, Socrates establishes that, in addition to the “safe” answers he endorsed at 100b–102a, there are also “subtler” (or “cleverer” or “more ingenious”) answers that may be given. (For example, while the safe answer to the question ‘What makes a body hot?’ is hotness, the subtler answer is fire.) How are the causes of these two answers related? Are they in competition? (If not, why not?) And if a subtler answer can be given, is a safe answer still necessary? What does this mean for the Forms’ status as causes? (Cf. Bailey (2014))

#### Recommended readings

- Sedley, D., 1998. “Platonic Causes.” *Phronesis* 43(2): 114–132
- Devereux, D. T., 1994. “Separation and Immanence in Plato’s Theory of Forms.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 12: 63–90

#### Additional readings

- Aristotle: *Physics* II.3 (on Aristotelian causes)
- Bailey, D. T. J., 2014. “Platonic Causes Revisited.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52(1): 15–32
- Ebrey, D., 2014. “Making Room for Matter: Material Causes in the *Phaedo* and the *Physics*.” *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 47(2): 245–265
- Politis, V., 2010. “Explanation and Essence in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” In D. Charles (ed.) “Definition in Greek Philosophy,” 62–114. Oxford University Press
- Sharma, R., 2009. “Socrates’ New *Aitia*: Causal and Metaphysical Explanations in Plato’s *Phaedo*.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 36: 137–177
- Kelsey, S., 2004. “Causation in the *Phaedo*.” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85: 21–43
- Makin, S., 1990–1991. “An Ancient Principle about Causation.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 91: 135–152
- Fine, G., 1999/1986. “Immanence.” In “Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays,” 301–325. Oxford University Press
- Bestor, T. W., 1978. “Common Properties and Eponymy in Plato.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 28(112): 189–207
- Nehamas, A., 1973. “Predication and Forms of Opposites in the *Phaedo*.” *The Review of Metaphysics* 26(3): 461–491
- Vlastos, G., 1969. “Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*.” *The Philosophical Review* 78(3): 291–325

#### Questions

- » To complete his final proof, Socrates must show that the soul, because it is immortal (in the sense of never admitting death, i.e., never becoming dead), is thereby indestructible. How does Socrates attempt to affect this transition? Does his attempt work? Why or why not? And if not, why does Plato end the argumentative section of the dialogue here? (Cf. Frede (1978); Sedley (2009))
- » Why does Simmias still have some doubt in mind after all that’s been said? What is the significance of this detail’s inclusion?
- » What does Socrates mean when he exhorts his companions to consider the “first hypotheses” more clearly, and why does he do so?

- » Why does Socrates not end the discussion with the final proof, and instead go on to tell a myth about the afterlife? And why does this myth include so much geographical and cosmological description of the “true earth”? (Cf. Betegh (2006); Sedley (1990); Clay (1985))
- » What is the significance of Socrates’ last words? (“We owe a cock to Asclepius. All of you must pay the debt and not overlook it.”) (Cf. Most (1993))

#### Recommended readings

- Frede, D., 1978. “The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato’s *Phaedo* 102a–107a.” *Phronesis* 23(1): 27–41
- Betegh, G., 2006. “Eschatology and Cosmology: Models and Problems.” In M. M. Sassi (ed.) “La costruzione del discorso filosofico nell’età dei Presocratici / The Construction of Philosophical Discourse in the Age of the Presocratics,” 27–50. Edizioni della Normale

#### Additional readings

- On the final proof
  - Plato: *Republic* x 608d–611b; *Phaedrus* 245b–e; *Laws* x 895c–896b (for other immortality proofs)
  - Sedley, D., 2009. “Three kinds of Platonic immortality.” In D. Frede and B. Reis (eds.) “Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy,” 145–161. Walter de Gruyter
  - Pakaluk, M., 2010. “The Ultimate Final Argument.” *The Review of Metaphysics* 251: 643–677
  - Prince, B. D., 2011. “The Form of Soul in the *Phaedo*.” *PLATO, The electronic Journal of the International Plato Society* 11: 1–34
  - O’Brien, D., 1967. “The Last Argument of Plato’s *Phaedo*. I.” *The Classical Quarterly* 17(2): 198–231
  - O’Brien, D., 1968. “The Last Argument of Plato’s *Phaedo*. II.” *The Classical Quarterly* 18(1): 95–106
- On Socrates’ myth
  - Plato: *Gorgias* 523a–527a; *Republic* x 614a–621d (for other eschatological myths)
  - Betegh, G., 2009. “Tale, theology and teleology in the *Phaedo*.” In C. Partenie (ed.) “Plato’s Myths,” 77–100. Cambridge University Press
  - Morgan, K. A., 2000. *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge University Press (Chapters 6–7)
  - Kingsley, P., 1995. *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*. Clarendon Press (Chapters 7–9)
  - Most, G. W., 1993. ““A Cock for Asclepius.”” *The Classical Quarterly* 43(1): 96–111
  - Sedley, D., 1990. “Teleology and Myth in the *Phaedo*.” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 5: 359–383
  - Clay, D., 1985. “The Art of Glaukos (Plato *Phaedo* 108d4–9).” *The American Journal of Philology* 106(2): 230–236