Socrates' Sailings: Philosophy in the *Phaedo*

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Abstract
In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates recount his "intellectual biography," moving from an early fascination with the study of nature to a consideration not only of physical conditions and explanations to account for things, but an interest in true causes (*aitia*). This introduces the notion of the Forms, a metaphysical presupposition which is what allows him to deal with speculation on ethical concern, such as the question of the soul's immortality. Ultimately, however, this will be trumped by a story: the myth at the end of the dialogue. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate on how we can read the *Phaedo* as presenting a dynamic of thought from "science" into "metaphysics" and towards "poetry." The path of natural philosophy is forsaken by Socrates for a "second sailing" or voyage to metaphysical speculation as the way to address our actual concerns; a further "sailing" into myth discloses why this is an existential preoccupation. Perhaps such diverse voyages into discourse (*logoi*) are what will keep them from "dying," as they are taken up anew in myriad forms, and so the spirit of philosophizing can be just as indestructible as the immortal soul. The fear, then, of a "death of philosophy" can be allayed by recognizing how the limits of each form of discourse do not exhaust the *possibilities for* discourse, that what we are called on then is to be "poets," not in a narrow literary sense, but in the wider sense of crafting the words as would be best for our continued seeking and striving.

Keywords: Plato, Socrates, *Phaedo*, philosophizing, discourse

It is commonplace to view the *Phaedo* of Plato as a thematic work presenting to the reader some (admittedly problematic) proofs for the immortality of the soul, in addition to other obscure Platonic notions such as the "Theory of Forms" or "Recollection." As a narrative, the text is also often regarded as a portrait of a man sentenced to die, indeed, of a veritable martyr for the philosophical cause, as Socrates bravely chooses not only to die rather than renege on his principles, but furthermore, spends his last mortal hours engaged in philosophizing. What I wish to discuss here is

how some points raised in the *Phaedo* – particularly Socrates' account of his philosophical journey – may give us some insight both on what this task might involve, and why it might be said that this task is "deathless."

In trying to see in the *Phaedo* a sense of what philosophizing is about, one might begin simply by construing that Plato's presentation of Socrates – philosophizing on the day that he is to be executed – is itself already the exhortation. We are made to marvel, alongside our narrator Phaedo and his companion Echecrates, at Socrates, from beginning to end. Phaedo describes Socrates as follows: "Happy the man seemed to me, in his bearing and his words, fearlessly and nobly confronting death" (εὐδαίμων γάρ μοι ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, καὶ τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως ἐτελεύτα – 58e); it is not, it seems, accidental that we are reminded that Socrates is a man (*anér*), to emphasize his manliness, or courage. And again, in the very last line of the dialogue, it is reiterated that "this man is, among all we have known, the best and wisest and most righteous" (ἀνδρός, ὡς ἡμεῖς φαῖμεν ἄν, τῶν τότε ὧν ἐπειράθημεν ἀρίστου καὶ ἄλλως φρονιμωτάτου καὶ δικαιοτάτου – 118a). And so, we seem to have the simple call to live as Socrates did.[1] However, much as the heroism of this thinker might inspire us, there are concerns: *why* should one choose this kind of life? Why should one care about his soul, if one doesn't end up convinced that the soul is imperishable? Given the weaknesses of the proofs for the immortal soul and the twists and turns taken by philosophy in this text, can we go further?

Again, one might instead note that early on in the dialogue (in 64a) philosophy is roughly defined as nothing else than a matter of studying dying and being dead: ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνήσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι. Simmias remarks with a laugh that many people will agree that philosophers are obsessed with death, and, moreover, dearly deserve it. What follows in the next pages (64a-67e) is an explanation of how, if we are to understand by death the separation of soul from body, we can certainly say that the philosopher "trains" for death. He strives to distance himself from all that is corporeal, physical and perishable, and attunes himself to what is eternal and immutable, and does so by properly preparing his soul, by denying the bodily senses and bodily pleasures and pains, and thus freeing that part of himself which is most akin to the non-sensible truths, the essence of things. These all suggest a certain retiring and even ascetic view of philosophy, wherein the untouched and untouching thinker shuns the world as he turns his eyes toward the other-worldly. We might find

[1] "Life with Socrates is not only life with a philosopher but life as a philosopher because Socrates' life, the examined life, is deathless; it is deathless because the examined life is a life recalled, made present, relived, still available, a life of participation in eternal logos." Paul Trainor, "Immortality, Transcendence and the Autobiography of Socrates in the *Phaedo*," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (1983): 596.

ourselves agreeing with a Nietzschean condemnation of Platonic philosophy which would understand this as a form of ivory-tower intellectualism, for perhaps we might have a sense that such a useless theoretical exercise rightly deserves to die.

Of course, we might consider both these points together: perhaps it could be said that in Socrates we find personified this transcending of the mortal self, and so we are not only *told* of the way of philosophy but are given a picture of someone to emulate it.[2] Again, though, the same questions surface: is *this* how we want to understand what philosophy is, and if so, why would we want to engage in it?

I want to go beyond this picture and focus on Socrates' own account (*logos*) of his philosophical journey. And the word "journey" here is used deliberately, for the idea of philosophy as a daring trip is in Plato's text itself.

Let's start with a passage in 85c-d: Simmias speaks of the difficulty in acquiring knowledge about such difficult matters as they are discussing (on the immortal soul, etc.), but also of the necessity to still try to do so. In the absence of something like a divine truth (λόγου θείου τινός) one must make use of whatever is best and trustworthy and undisputed in human knowledge (τὸν γοῦν βέλτιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων λαβόντα καὶ δυσεξελεγκτότατον), and to ride this like a raft, and daringly dive into life (ἐπὶ τούτου ὀχούμενον ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σχεδίας κινδυνεύοντα διαπλεῦσαι τὸν βίον).

One might see in this a certain pragmatic or even pessimistic skepticism that is resigned to the reality of our never coming to knowledge. However, we can fruitfully consider how Socrates will echo – perhaps more positively – the sensibility of finding "the next best way"; indeed, he even echoes the nautical metaphor. The continuation of the image is to be found in the intellectual biography Socrates provides in 96a-102a. He mentions here (in 99d-e) a "second sailing" (δεύτερος πλοῦς).

Socrates recounts (starting at 96a) that in his youth, he was fascinated by questions concerning nature (νέος ὢν θαυμαστῶς ὡς ἐπεθύμησα ταύτης τῆς σοφίας ἣν δὴ καλοῦσι περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν). He speaks of a desire to understand the *aitia* of each thing: why did it become, why did it perish, why *is* it (εἰδέναι τὰς αἰτίας ἑκάστου, διὰ τί γίγνεται ἕκαστον καὶ διὰ τί ἀπόλλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἔστι). He then notes, in a series of some difficult examples, that this had led him to confusion, as subtle arguments (on what really does cause what), had led him astray from a simpler, more commonsensical way of thinking.

[2] "What is Socrates doing when he narrates his life? He is not telling his companions about his seventy or so years on this earth. He is telling how he overcame the shifting, changing unrealities of a way of thinking that inhibited intellectual and moral stability and how he was able to attain stability by participating in a timeless, an absolute, reality." Ibid., 606.

The problem that Socrates had with his attempt at natural philosophy will become clearer with his description of his next disappointment. He recalls, in 97b-d, how he had been hopeful for a new way of explaining things given this new thought from Anaxagoras that mind governs all, for *that* then would be sufficient as *aition*, to understand how there would be *reason* to guarantee that there is a *reason* that all is for the best: ἆρα νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος, ταύτῃ δὴ τῇ αἰτίᾳ ἥσθην τε καὶ ἔδοξέ μοι τρόπον τινὰ εὖ ἔχειν τὸ τὸν νοῦν εἶναι πάντων αἴτιον, καὶ ἡγησάμην, εἰ τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, τόν γε νοῦν κοσμοῦντα πάντα κοσμεῖν καὶ ἕκαστον τιθέναι ταύτῃ ὅπῃ ἂν βέλτιστα ἔχῃ. He then expressed disappointment when he realized that Anaxagoras does not actually make use of the mind, but only reverts once again to confusing physical notions to explain *aitia*. He then gives an example of how one might foolishly talk about his corporeal self – bones and muscles and sinews – that the fact that they happen to be there explains the reason why Socrates is there in prison. This disregards the *reason* for his being there: the verdict and sentence placed on him by the jury for his supposed crimes. And so, in 98c-99c, Socrates complains of the confusion between identifying real causes (*aitia*) and those things which are merely conditions for causes to be so. He further points out that such a way of thinking fails to take sight of how the good holds all things together (99c).[3]

It is here that he then introduces the "second sailing."

The second sailing seems then to be a response to the failed attempts at knowing the true causes of things, and the method presented here (in 99e-100a) speaks of beginning by moving away from phenomena and instead starting from *logoi*, and trying therein to find truth: ἔδοξε δή μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν – 99e.[4]

He elaborates on this by stating that he begins by taking the strongest possible principle or hypothesis and using this as a basis, considering as true what agrees with it and untrue whatever doesn't agree with it: ἀλλ' οὖν δὴ ταύτῃ γε ὥρμησα, καὶ ὑποθέμενος ἑκάστοτε λόγον ὃν ἂν

[3] "...though all our opinions are derived initially from sense-experience, and involve notions of realities (and these opinions may be true or false), it is only by means of a certain technique of employing *logoi* – [*peri tous logous techne*] (90b), that our minds can form true opinions and subsequently convert these true opinions into knowledge by completely recollecting the Forms involved in a particular dialectical enquiry." J.T. Bedu-Addo, "The Role of the Hypothetical Model in the *Phaedo*," *Phronesis* 24, no. 2 (1979): 113-114.

[4] It is suggested that the reason at work behind this is that "observation of things" requires a discourse that will make sense of it. Bedu-Addo, 113-114. In addition: It is not a question, then, in the *Phaedo* of turning from physical problems, as either too obscure or too unimportant, to the study of pure forms, but of using ideal thought in order to understand physical facts." N. R. Murphy, "The Δεύτερος Πλοῦς in the *Phaedo*," *The Classical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1936): 45.

κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι, ἃ μὲν ἄν μοι δοκῇ τούτῳ συμφωνεῖν τίθημι ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα, καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων των ὄντων, ἃ δ' ἄν μή, ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ – 100a.

This leads him then to the safe,[5] if simple, way of talking about causes, which is to say something like this: the cause of a beautiful thing's being beautiful is its participation in beauty itself: σκόπει δή, ἔφη, τὰ ἐξῆς ἐκείνοις ἐάν σοι συνδοκῇ ὥσπερ ἐμοί. φαίνεται γάρ μοι, εἴ τί ἐστιν ἄλλο καλὸν πλὴν αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, οὐδὲ δι' ἓν ἄλλο καλὸν εἶναι ἢ διότι μετέχει ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ: καὶ πάντα δὴ οὕτως λέγω – 100c.

And again, the point is reiterated in 100d, that in whatever way still unexplained, only through some presence or communion with the Form of Beauty can anything be called beautiful: ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλο τι ποιεῖ αὐτὸ καλὸν ἢ ἡ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία εἴτε ὅπῃ δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη: οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διισχυρίζομαι, ἀλλ' ὅτι τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλά.

And so we have the presupposition here presented of that which is in itself (*kath auto*), or, in a word, the Forms.

It is my hope that perhaps one of the things this presentation provides us is a clarification of a rationale for the Platonic Forms. It is thought by many students (and not a few teachers) that Plato came up with these useless entities called Forms that he located in an Ideal world for no apparent reason, and thereby creating a metaphysical conundrum that has been a burden to all subsequent philosophy. What we might see then here is that just on the level of thinking, something like clear logical concepts that would not allow of their opposite (x cannot be not-x) is a necessity. Intelligibility itself requires the principle of non-contradiction, and so the presupposition of stable and unchanging ideas might be beneficial. It is, of course, highly debatable whether the Forms could be claimed to have any ontological status (and, in Plato, in fact, ontological priority). Indeed, even to speak of "participation" by which the Forms are deemed the cause of the particular thing seems terribly vague.[6] However, the modest point being made here is how the Forms are presupposed as a working hypothesis that allows us to proceed with the discussion of *aitia*.

This opens up to us two questions:

The first question: (a) Is the second sailing about the method of hypothesis or the Forms?

[5] "This answer is safe in that it states a necessary and sufficient condition for the possession of the property of being q; nothing can be q without sharing in q-ness, nor share in q-ness without being q." C.C.W. Taylor, "Forms as Causes in the *Phaedo*," *Mind* 70, no. 309 (1969): 47.

[6] See Shigeru Yonezawa, "Are the Forms αἰτίαι in the *Phaedo*?" *Hermes* 119, no. 1 (1991): 37-42, for a slightly different view, wherein it is argued that it is not the Forms themselves but the participation in the Forms that should be considered the real *aitia*.

Unfortunately, the text lends itself to two interpretations. On the one hand it seems that it is about the method of hypothesis itself, with the presupposition of the Forms as being only one example of what it means to make use of a hypothesis, and proceeding from there.[7] On the other hand, it could also be argued that the Forms are a necessary component in proceeding with a discussion.[8] The interpretation I want to use here is to maintain that what is of primary importance is the method presented of starting with the strongest *logos*. However, this is not to say that the Forms are *only* an example, and are unimportant. Insofar as they guarantee not only the possibility of proceeding in a discussion, but the very intelligibility of it, then it seems that maintaining this particular hypothesis is key. The importance of this will, I hope, be made apparent later.

The second question: (b) In what way is the second sailing a "second"?

If the notion of what is meant by "sailing" in the phrase is already in doubt, then all the more the qualifier "second" becomes problematic. But supposing here that we take "sailing" to be the method of hypothesis, as just stated, we can proceed to consider how this might be viewed as "second."

"Second" suggests "secondary," that is to say, it connotes inferiority; indeed, it has been recognized that even the phrase "second sailing" as a nautical term carries with it for the Greeks a sense of making do.[9] If we were to understand then this method Socrates is speaking of in light of Simmias' concern of finding a more stable basis, like a divine claim, then indeed this approach with its limitations and uncertainties is a poor substitute. On the other hand it is also suggested that "second" here, situated in the

[7] "The method described in the *Phaedo* consists in finding an indirect way of solving a problem by the assumption of a thesis of which the facts to be explained can be treated as a consequence. From a formal point of view, therefore, the cogency of the method turns on two factors, (i) the 'strength' or credibility of the thesis...and, (ii) the actual consecutiveness of the consequences asserted. And the method is not a way of establishing the truth of these theses, but of using them to establish particular conclusions. Plato is most careful to separate the two questions, (i) what does in fact follow from such and such a hypothesis, (ii) is the hypothesis true." Murphy, op cit., 41.

[8] "...Socrates' own initial hypothesis for his 'second voyage', described here as the 'strongest *logos*', and later referred to as 'that safe hypothesis' (101d), is a *general* explanation or account of generation, existence and destruction in terms of the participation of particulars in Forms." Bedu-Addo, op cit.,115.

[9] "...the phrase *deuteros plous*, a nautical term referring to a ship's taking to the oars when the wind fails, carries the connotation of a second-best course of action..." Donald L. Ross, "The Deuteros Plous, Simmias' Speech, and Socrates' Answer to Cebes in Plato's *Phaedo*," *Hermes* 110, no. 1 (1982): 20. Also: "On this point Socrates says (99c 6-d 2) that failing to find or to devise a satisfactory teleological account of phenomena, he resorted to the method of explanation in terms of Forms as a Δεύτερος Πλους; the best-attested sense of this nautical metaphor...is that it means rowing the ship when there is no wind, which involves getting eventually to your original destination by a longer and more laborious method." Taylor, op cit., 52.

biographical sketch, should be understood as chronologically coming after the studies of nature. But clearly this new way is not to be taken as inferior to the earlier natural studies.[10] It is further suggested that it is secondary to the teleological approach that failed for Anaxagoras.[11] So does that mean that Socrates is no longer looking for a teleological *aitia*? I'll return to this point later, but for now, it perhaps would be safe to say that "second" as next-best is given credence by the sense of a *logos* that remains concealed, and yet next-best, does and can mean *very good*, an approach which is viable and indeed is proper, and one which can provide us a *way* of knowing.

Shipton writes:

> The attitude of Socrates to the question of human ability to acquire knowledge has become increasingly confident. The *atrapos* of the defence speech has developed from the relative insecurity of a raft to carry us over the sea of life into the comparative safety of the method of hypothesis, a method second-best when compared with an impossible ideal, but capable of giving men the confidence that they have reached the ultimate clarity of which human beings are capable.[12]

This opens up to us the question: of what kind of knowing *are* we capable? Is there any point to engage in the effort of thinking?

We perhaps at this point have more than enough material for a few brief reflections on the topic of my paper: the death of philosophy.

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[10] "If I am correct in this identification, then it seems that there are two possible ways to interpret the *deuteros plous* passage: First of all, since Socrates' method using the 'safe' *aitiai* is decidedly superior to his efforts to find out and learn the truth, both of which resulted in failure, it is clear that to the degree to which the *deuteros plous* passage suggests that the later method is inferior to the earlier ones, it must be ironical." Ross, op cit., 22-23.

[11] "The δεύτερος πλους is called δεύτερος with respect to the disappointed hope of teleological explanations." Murphy, op cit., 42.

[12] K.M. W. Shipton, "A Good Second-Best: *Phaedo* 99b ff," *Phronesis* 24, no. 1 (1979): 43-44. In addition: "The whole force, then, of the expression δεύτερος πλους, is relative to the vision of 'the good' hastily conjured up and as hastily withdrawn by Anaxagoras—'a moment seen, then gone for ever.' In relation to the physical method the discursive is by no means a 'second best'; but Plato sees that such a misconception might arise from the context...and is therefore careful to guard against it (100 A). And even in its true application the δεύτερος πλους is only inferior in a qualified sense.... Here it may be observed that according to its original signification δεύτερος πλους indicates rather a change of *method* than a change of *goal*." W.S. Goodrich, "On *Phaedo* 96A-102A and on the δεύτερος πλους 99D, Part I," *The Classical Review* 17, no. 8 (1903): 382.

Points for Reflection

1. It is remarkable how, in his own way, Plato had prophetically anticipated the crisis of the modern age. While Socrates' studies on natural philosophy (i.e., studies of causes in nature) are a far cry from how we understand the modern scientific method, the concerns are eerily familiar: how, in a way of thinking that will only allow of physical and mechanistic forces as *aitia*, will there be any room for thoughts of purpose, for thoughts of what is good? And so modern science can tell us much about how the world works, and make all sorts of discoveries, and yet will have no thought as to *why* things might be that way; indeed, perhaps science will dismiss the question as meaningless. And at the same time, technological advancements move forward in leaps and bounds, with only the afterthought of: what purpose does it all serve? With the observation of chemical properties of substances, weapons may be made; and the unlocking of the secrets of the atom had unleashed the worst weapons man has (so far) ever made. But for what reason? Towards what end? The account of Socrates then that criticizes how studies in nature led him to purely mechanistic and physical explanations that failed in going beyond the facts[13] and failed in considering how "all might be to the good" is something which in a way echoes our sentiment.

However, there is a very big difference. For Socrates, there was a turn from natural studies to teleology, or, in other words, from science to metaphysics. Our distrust of the modern mindset has led, not to a sense of cosmos, but instead to the so-called post-modern condition characterized by a distrust of reason, a distrust of thinking, indeed a question of whether we have now come to the end of philosophy. Should we, naively, then return to metaphysics?

2. It has been suggested that the second sailing is the result of the failure to find a true teleological approach.[14] I wonder, though, if that means Socrates had given up on his teleological ambition; what I mean by this is: does he give up on the sense of *nous* governing everything, of reason being at work, of purpose? I recall here the notion of how, with the thought of reason at work, there is an assurance that all is for the best. The word for "best" (*beltistos*) is repeated a number of times in this part of our text, in 97d, 98a, 98b, 99b, and 99c. Socrates mentions what seems like an intuition on his part that it *seemed right* to him to think that mind is the cause of all: καὶ ἔδοξέ μοι τρόπον τινὰ εὖ ἔχειν τὸ τὸν νοῦν εἶναι πάντων αἴτιον

[13] And so I disagree with David Bostock, who fails, I think, to get the point here when he insists that the question "why" can only be properly answered by facts or entities. See David Bostock, *Plato's* Phaedo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 153-156.

[14] Gregory Vlastos, for instance, sees the second sailing as a search for something other than the teleological cause. Gregory Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*," *Hermes* 119, no. 1 (1991): 297.

– 97d. What do we make of this? Should we then simply suppose that there is some intrinsic order? Must philosophy return to metaphysics – or, even, theology – to recover its innocence?

I want to return to a point I made earlier that for Socrates, the failure of the natural philosophers only partially had to do with mistaking conditions for true causes, but perhaps more fatally lay in disregarding the thought of how all is arranged for the best. This sensibility – of how all things are for the best – I think is an undercurrent at work here in the second sailing, and is not disregarded, as other commentators would have it. This new method perhaps will not give us or even lead us to the teleological *aitia*, but a trust in how an intelligibility is at work seems to propel the venture. It is for this reason that the Forms are an integral part of the method, because they not only allow a way to speak more carefully and properly of the causes of nature, but there is now the possibility of speaking of purposes.

Davis writes:

> Socrates finds it good and to his mind that mind should rule all. What is the significance of this meeting of minds? What is accomplished by making mind the ruler of all? To really make mind order everything for the best would have two effects. It would immediately make a place for something like soul in a pre-Socratic cosmos, something not reducible to prepsychic elements and itself fundamental. Secondly, it would introduce what reductionist science can never give us, purposes, and thus open the way for an understanding of things as wholes.[15]

However, we are again brought to a conundrum: must we maintain that there *really* are these ontologically prior things called Forms, and/or that there is some mind – perhaps a divine intellect – at work in the cosmos? These are very large claims; what I think we can more modestly say is that we are called on to place our trust that there *is* intelligibility, not necessarily (or immediately) *out there* (i.e., metaphysically), but at the very least on the level of discourse. And the reason we can place our trust that in discourse there is some intelligibility is that inherent in our use of language is the presence of rules (such as the principle of non-contradiction) that govern

[15] Michael Davis, "Socrates' Pre-Socratism: Some Remarks on the Structure of Plato's *Phaedo*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 33, no. 3 (1980): 564. Also, for a view of how the notion of *aitia* opens up to notions of guilt and responsibility, or – in other words – to moral and political thought, see Paul Stern, *Socratic Rationalism and Political Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's* Phaedo (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 113-117.

intelligibility. We can then have some trust that there is a way to speak (*legein*) well and truly, if it is a true ordering and gathering.

3. But is not all speaking then an ordering? Does not all discourse suppose intelligibility? Is not all philosophizing based on this shared trust? Sadly, no.

Let us return briefly to the text. A digression in the discussion of the immortal soul starts at 88b, when Socrates' argument seems to be refuted, and the question is raised as to whether there is any proving or indeed any discussion that can actually work. Socrates quips (in 89b) that the real tragedy is not his imminent death but the possibility that the argument dies: ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ.

He further warns his companions (in 89c-d) that when one is caught in confusion, one must guard against the danger of becoming a misologist – a hater of discourse – as the worst thing that might happen. How does it happen that one ends up in misology? Socrates describes it as when one, strongly maintaining a certain belief, finds himself over and over again being disappointed when, rightly or wrongly, he becomes convinced that something he had maintained true seems to be rendered false. He then supposes that no discourse is trustworthy.

However, there is a further and more ominous result (that can be found in 101e): the misologist is not one who then no longer engages in discourse but instead is one who, caught up in the practice of disputation and debate, doesn't suppose anymore that anything means anything. That is to say, the misologist then cynically plays around, mixing things up for themselves or others, not really caring about the truth, but being very pleased with themselves for being clever.

As we engage in philosophy, it's possible for us to end up confused with the seemingly endless debates and profuse difficulties, that we give up, and end with a cynical and scornful stance that sees philosophizing as just a game, and end up sophistically wanting to win an argument, rather than pursue wisdom. Or, also problematically, we might find ourselves confronted by such persons. We can read then this passage from the *Phaedo* as a warning[16] for us to be on our guard against persons who would confound us, and also against ourselves being confounded. We can see then

[16] "Knowledge, for [Plato], could only, or at least best, be achieved by discussion between two or more people, and those who sought it must learn to play their part in such discussion. For this, psychological advice would be as important as purely methodological, and men must be fortified against the [*misologia*] which could descend so easily on those who were exposed to sophistic influences. Plato had unbounded faith in the powers of reason, properly used, but he knew how many obstacles there were to its correct use, and would employ any means, however simple, to help remove them." Pamela M. Huby, "*Phaedo* 99D-102A," *Phronesis* 4, no. 1 (1959): 14.

how the "second sailing" may be called a way of speaking safely.[17] It is in care that we are able to proceed with a minimal risk of getting confused, or being confused by others. But it is likewise in care that we prevent ourselves from abusing the "method of hypothesis" by just holding on to whichever *logos* it is we happen to prefer, whether strong or not.

We use what words there are, finding the strongest *logos*, and discuss, and revise, and discuss some more, recognizing that the dialogue never ends. Philosophy, then, is deathless for those who seek to try to understand why things are as they are; we should only fall into dismay if the discourse should die, by our choosing to end it in sophistry.

The second sailing then recommends to us a way, but only secondarily, of a technical approach to doing philosophy; more significantly it opens up an attitudinal approach, a frame of mind appropriate to philosophy,[18] a readiness to trust in the inherent intelligibility at work in discourse, and a sincerity in engaging in discourse to be worthy of such trust.

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[17] "The answer then to my original question, safe from what, is, safe from sophistical objections." Rosamond Kent Sprague, "Socrates' Safest Answer: *Phaedo* 100D," *Hermes* 96, no. 4 (1968): 634.

[18] "Correspondingly the *deuteros plous* is an acquisition of a cognitive state which does not bring with it a guarantee of completely indubitable truth but which nevertheless represents the closest approach to such truth to which human beings can attain." Shipton, op cit., 34. A similar point is raised by Stern when he speaks of our need to accept the limits of our knowing, but I have a problem with his overemphasis, in my view, of the idea that Socratic wisdom is about the acceptance of ignorance and the idea of starting from the particular, experiential self. See Stern, op cit., 128-143.

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