

Manumission at Death: Socrates as ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ / ΕΞΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ in Plato's *Phaedo*

Shortly after his friends join him for what will be their final day together, Socrates makes a curious statement: the true philosopher will be willing to die but may not choose to do so through self-murder (*Phaedo* 61c). This puzzling remark precipitates a second defense of Socrates (61d–69e) that serves as the point of departure for the remainder of the dialogue's key themes regarding the immortality of the soul. Missing from the scholarly discussion of this passage is the presence and use of slave language—especially regarding the connection to Aesop in the context of the dialogue's narrative (Taran-1966; Vlastos-1941 and 1968). In this paper, I explore Socrates' use of the slave metaphor in light of recent research on the social history of Greek slavery (du Bois-2003), particularly the manumission of slaves (Kamen-2013; Zelnick-Abramovitz-2005) and Athenian constructions of “freedom” (Hansen-2010). I argue that at death, Socrates is in fact figuratively both a slave and not a slave. On the one hand, he remains a willing *doulos* to the god, faithfully waiting for the moment of his permanent release from incarnate life (i.e. death). On the other hand, Socrates is already free from the slavery to the body, and thus remains in *paramone* (i.e. delayed manumission) until death, at which point he finally receives the freedom to go wherever he so chooses.

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