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Please Remind Me of Anamnesis: A Double-Entendre in Plato's *Phaedo*

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Meno 98A 3-4 αἰτίας λογισμῶ¹ is widely assumed nowadays to refer to some type of discursive procedure, though this interpretation is neither linguistically necessary nor is it consistent with Plato's otherwise severely realistic epistemology and metaphysics. It is not even consistent really with *Phdr.* 249BC, which contains a quite obvious and deliberate reference back to *Meno* 98A.² Indeed, if we may trust in the *Phaedo*, it is precisely the εἶδος or ἰδέα that is the object of *anamnesis* (see esp. 72E-77A).

Now, Plato does not allow his vocabulary to harden into a technical terminology. For various reasons, he prefers to use common idioms to express even the most abstruse concepts, and then to allow that same vocabulary to slip back into its common garb. This tendency keeps his thought alive and his readers alert, and it helps to focus our attention away from the iridescent glint of the language itself to the underlying realities that language denotes. As such, he often toys irreverently with his most technical vocabulary in a deliberately playful fashion that perfectly exemplifies that semi-jocular seriousness ("le jeu sérieux"), that *Ernst und Spiel* (παιδιά/σπουδή) that the commentators often note.³ There is just such a

1. See 98A 1-5 πολὺν δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν, ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὥστε οὐ πολλοῦ ἀξιαί εἰσιν, ἕως ἄν τις αὐτὰς δῆσῃ αἰτίας λογισμῶ. τοῦτο δ' ἐστίν, ὃ Μένων ἐταίρε, ἀνάμνησις, ὡς ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἡμῖν ὠμολόγηται.

2. Esp. B 6ff. δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὼν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῶ συναφοῦμενον τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ἀνάμνησις ἐκείνων ἃ ποτ' εἶδεν ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῆς κτλ. This passage of the *Phaedrus* gives additional proof (if such were needed) against the αἰτία λογισμοῦ reported by *P. Berol.* 9782 (*Anon. Comm. in Pl. Tht.*); on this whole question, see A. Carlini, 'Plato, *Meno* 98a3 (αἰτίας λογισμῶ/αἰτία λογισμοῦ: *utrum in alterum?*)', in *Studia classica Iohanni Tarditi oblata* II, Milano 1995, 1017-1027, who rightly infers that the reading of *P. Berol.* is most likely the result of mechanical error (*pace CPF* III, Firenze 1995, 485).

3. For this παιδιά/σπουδή, see P. Shorey, *Plato. Republic* II, Cambridge 1935-1937, 227n.d.; R. Schaerer, *La Question platonicienne*, Neuchâtel 1969², 19-23; G. J. de Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato*, Amsterdam 1969, 18-20; L. Tarán, *Academica: Plato, Philip of Opus, and the Pseudo-Platonic Epinomis*, Philadelphia 1975, 349 ad 992B 2-3; S. Tsitsi-

play in the *Phaedo*, a dialogue to which the *Phaedrus* makes direct allusion (242B3), and precisely in that section where the *Phaedo* itself alludes to the *Meno* (cp. *Phd.* 73A 7-B 2 with *Meno* 81C-86C), and precisely to the *Meno*'s discussion of *anamnesis*.

The pre-existence of the soul, which had been indicated by the fact that everything that comes-to-be comes to be from contraries (70C-72D),⁴ is confirmed, Cebes adds, by the familiar doctrine (ὄν σὺ εἰώθας θαμὰ λέγειν) of *anamnesis* (72E). Simmias, humorously, cannot recall the doctrine and asks for assistance (ὑπόμνησόν με· οὐ γὰρ σφόδρα ἐν τῷ παρόντι μέμνημαι - 73A 5f.). Cebes rehearses the argument (λόγῳ) of the *Meno* (73A 7-B 2), whereupon Socrates adds another (cp. B 3f.), lest the first fails to persuade. He begins by describing recollection in its familiar form, adducing instances first from dissimilars and then from similars, in a passage that serves to set the stage for a discussion of the theory of Ideas (74A-77A), not just the Ideas of Equal (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον - 74A 11f., C 1, 4f., 78D 3f., etc.), Beauty (αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ - 75C 11), Goodness (αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ), and the like, but περὶ ἀπάντων οἷς ἐπισφραγιζόμεθα τοῦτο, τὸ "ὄ ἐστι" (75D 1-2).⁵ And there, in the context of this discussion of similars and dis-

ridis, *Platons Menexenos* Stuttgart-Leipzig 1998, 89f.; G. Press (ed.), *Who Speaks for Plato?*, Lanham 2000, 31 n. 15.

4. Everything, that is, that has a contrary; for the qualification, see 70E 1-2 (with J. Burnet, *Plato's Phaedo*, Oxford 1911, *ad loc.*), E 5, 71A 10, C 6f., D 6-9. As is usual, Plato never forgets the assumption on which the argument rests; see P. Shorey, *What Plato Said*, Chicago 1933, 458 ad 7D, 471 ad 376B.

5. The theory of Ideas, of course, had been referred to earlier in Socrates' account of the way in which philosophy is a rehearsal for death. For it is only when the soul (αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν - 65D 1f.) is separated from the body that it can grasp (ἀπτομένη ὀρέγεται - C 9) its own proper objects. These objects, distinct from the objects of sense (see 74A 9-12, B 4-C 6, 78B-79E, etc.), are the Ideas: 65C 2-3 ἄρ' οὖν οὐκ ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι εἴτερ που ἄλλοθι κατάδηλον αὐτῇ γίνεται τι τῶν ὄντων, with C 5-9; D4f. φαμέν τι εἶναι δίκαιον αὐτὸ ἢ οὐδέν; D 13f.; E 3 αὐτὸ ἕκαστον; 66A 1-3 ἀλλ' αὐτῇ καθ' αὐτήν εἰλικρινεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ χρώμενος αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἰλικρινές ἕκαστον ἐπιχειροῖ θηρεῦειν τῶν ὄντων; E 1-2 αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα; 67B 1; and cp. 74A-77A. For αὐτός (with or without concord) of the Ideas, see Fr. Ast, *Lexicon Platonicum* I, Lipsiae 1835-38, 313f.; É. DesPlaces, *Études platoniciennes 1929-1979*, Leiden 1981, 56-59 (orig. 1962); *Platon. Oeuvres complètes* xiv. *Lexique*, Paris 1964, 88-90; R.S. Bluck, *Plato's Meno*, Cambridge, 1964, 223f.; G. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Ithaca 1991, 73 n. 126. For Aristotle's discussion of this distinctively Platonic usage, cp. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, Berlin 1870, 124B 52-125A 14; also H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore 1944, 201-203, 308-312, 577f. Though Burnet and Robin proposed (quite elegantly) τὸ "αὐτὸ ὄ ἐστι" at 75D 2 (cp. 74B 2, D 6, 78D 3-4, *Crat.* 389D 6f., etc.; see W.D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* II, Oxford 1953, 464), Verdenius ('Notes on Plato's *Phaedo*', *Mnemosyne* S. IV 11, 1958, 211) defends the vulgate's τοῦτο "ὄ ἐστι", which appears to be the reading of all the mss. (see E.A. Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, Oxford 1995, *app. crit. ad loc.*; *pace* Burnet, the ms. tradition is rather supported by *Iambli. Protrep.* 63,3 Pistelli καὶ πάντα οἷς ἐπισφραγιζόμεθα τὸ ὄ ἐστιν; on this passage of the *Protrepticus*, see R. Loriaux, *Le Phédon de Platon* I, Namur 1969-75, 151; DesPlaces 1981, 57; for

similarly, Socrates states, in what can only be seen as a slyly deliberate play with the initiated reader, that the sight of the beloved's lyre allows one to recollect the form of the beloved (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ παιδὸς οὗ ἦν ἡ λύρα; τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ἀνάμνησις κτλ. - 73D 7-8; cp. nn. 1-2 *supra*), and that seeing a portrait of Simmias will remind one of Simmias himself (καὶ Σιμμίαν ἰδόντα γεγραμμένον αὐτοῦ Σιμμίου ἀναμνησθῆναι - E9-10).

Εἶδος, to be sure, has not been used thus far in the *Phaedo* of the Ideas, and so the *double-entendre* at 73D 7-8 will only be grasped by the reader who knows of the dialogue's outcome.⁶ But there is something more going on here than mere punning on εἶδος. This term is used (as is often the case with Plato) in a non-technical fashion several times⁷ before it is introduced as a term of art of the fully developed theory,⁸ whereupon it is allowed to slip back into a more pedestrian usage near the end of the dialogue, in what we might call a 'geographical' context (110D 1-2). A similar arc can be seen with ἰδέα.⁹ This non-technical use of our chosen terms, especially the delightfully ambiguous appearance of εἶδος and αὐτός at 73D 7f. and E 9, thus helps to prepare the reader, by a type of compositional anticipation or 'prolepsis' found in abundance on nearly every page of the *Corpus*, for the developed theory of Ideas that is soon to be presented.¹⁰ And it helps to confirm, to return to our initial point, albeit in

Iamblichus in the indirect tradition, see C. Cobet, 'Platonica', *Mnemosyne* N.S. 2, 1874, 261-282, who showed that the ancient Plato mss. used by Iamblichus already contained "insignia quaedam et turpiora scribendi vitia"; see further P. Vicaire, *Platon, Phédon*, Paris 1983, LXXXVII n. 4). δὲ ἐστὶν (Shorey [1935-37], II, 97 n.d, 426 n.a; DesPlaces, 52f.) is commonly used by Plato (as is αὐτός) precisely to indicate the essential 'ideality' of each Idea (cp. Cherniss, 'Parmenides and the *Parmenides* of Plato', *Am. Journ. Philol.* 53, 1932, 136 n. 43, with 'The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues', *ibid.* 78, 1957, esp. 247-263).

6. Fortunately, the existence of such an omniscient reader or auditor need not be simply hypothesized; we actually have him in *Phaedo*.

7. Often, curiously, in a quite similar context: ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ εἶδει (73A 1-2, 76C 12, 87A 2, 92B 5). Other non-technical uses are at 79B 4, D 9, 91D 1, 98A 2.

8. And even then, only as the *anchor* of a periphrasis: cp. 100B 3-7, esp. τῆς αἰτίας τὸ εἶδος δὲ πεπραγμάτευμαι, καὶ εἶμι πάλιν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνα τὰ πολυθρόλητα κτλ.; then 102B 1 (but this, in the mouth of *Phaedo*!), 103E 3, 104C 7, 106D 6.

9. First, used technically (104B 9, D 2, 6, 9, E 1, 105D 13); then 'geographically' (108D 9, 109B 5). Compare the astute observations of É. DesPlaces 1981, 38: "D'une manière générale, Platon emprunte à la langue courante des mots qu'il charge de sens neufs; c'est une forme de la transposition décrite par A. Diès.... [S]ans écarter l'acception courante, il les a élevés à l'ordre métaphysique" (also 55); and for the largely 'popular' origins of εἶδος/ἰδέα, see (alongside the well-known debate between Taylor and Gillespie [Röss. I, xl-viii, with comm. ad 987B 8]), Festugière's valuable note at *Hippocrate. L'ancienne médecine*, Paris 1948, 47-53.

10. Shorey noted this trick long ago: e.g., 'The Question of the Socratic Element in Plato' (1927), in *Selected Papers* I, ed. L. Tarán, New York 1980, 317f.: "In Plato the termi-

none too serious a fashion, that it is indeed the εἶδος itself that is the object of *anamnesis*.¹¹

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ology that dramatically explains to an interlocutor innocent of logic what a definition is, passes into the terminology of the transcendental idea by such insensible gradations that it is impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins".

11. I do not wish at this point to enter into any controversies concerning the relationships between individual dialogues or groups of dialogues. Ch. Kahn's recent use of the term 'prolepsis' (e.g., *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, Cambridge 1996) thus has a broader reach than is intended here. But it should be obvious to any reader of the Greek that Plato likes to verbally anticipate the major doctrines or themes of a given dialogue early on in innocuous ways. I append a small sample, though the list could be extended indefinitely: *Meno* 71C 8-D 2 οὐ πᾶν εἰμι μνήμων, ...ἀνάμνησον οὖν με, 73C 7 εἰπεῖν καὶ ἀναμνησθῆναι, 76B 1, etc., with 81C-86C (R. Weiss, *Virtue in the Cave*, Oxford 2001, 68f.); 85C 6-7 ἀληθεῖς δόξαι, with 96E-fin.; *Symp.* 174A 9 καλός (R.G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, Cambridge 1932 e lxxv; also lx-lxiv); cp. 175E 7 ὕβριστης, with 219C 5; *Phd.* 60C 6 ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ, with 67D 1f.; 92D 6 δι' ὑποθέσεως (93C 3, 10, 94B 1), with 100AB and 101D-E; *Resp.* 498D, with 608C ff. (A. Diès, *La République*, Paris 1932, 'Introduction', cxvif.); *Phdr.* 243C 2 τῷ λόγῳ, οὗτός τε καὶ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ βιβλίου ῥηθεῖς, with 275D 4-276A 9, 277D 1-278B 4 (cp. 262C 5f.); 263B 7 διηρησθαι (De Vries, *ad loc.*; also R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus*, Cambridge 1952, 132 n. 3), with 265E ff., 277B; *Soph.* 217A 6-8 διαρούμενον (cp. 220A 8-9), with 253C-254B; 232A 1ff. φαίνεται/ τὸ φάντασμα, with 236B f. and 264C ff. (F. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, London 1935, 189 n. 2); 248AB κοινωνεῖν (cp. 250B 9f.), with 251A-259D; *Tim.* 50B 2 τρίγονον, with 53Cff. (Cornford's objection [*Plato's Cosmology*, London 1937, 182f.; cp. 1935, 239 n. 1] is thus entirely beside the point; note the instance which he himself adduces at [1937], 268 n. 3); *Tht.* 156DE (καὶ ἐγένετο οὐ λευκότης αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ λευκόν; also 159E), with 182A ἡ ποιότης, is essentially of the same type. So, to broaden slightly, the close similarity between *Apol.* 19A-24B and the formal antomosis of 24B 8-C 1 is, whatever its historical value, stylistically true to form.