

## As Close as Possible Introductory Words

I inserted two words after the title...a sub-title of sorts...shortly after I began reading Plato's dialogue entitled the **Phaedo**. The reason? I've looked at that dialogue a number of times, in my opinion the best when it comes to putting our lives in perspective in the face of death. The distance of some 2,500 years between when it was composed and now is of no matter. It could have been written yesterday. Not only that, the **Phaedo** is bolstered significantly by what Socrates has to say about *anamnesis*, a vital faculty we have...are...but seldom are aware of it as active in our lives. Actually he deals with this timeless topic along with death in many ways just as good if not better than any Christian author. In fact you can see how the early church fathers Christian-ized the **Phaedo**. In light of this, it might be better to strip off the layers that had been put over the text and see what's underneath. Such is one motivation for this document.

This may be pushing it a bit, but there may be a parallel *anamnesis* has with the Judeo-Christian tradition of being made in God's image and likeness. I wanted to hone in on precisely where Socrates begins to speak of this within the **Phaedo** though it's mentioned in other dialogues. I was tempted to go through the whole text but decided to stop somewhere along the line. At first I hadn't a clear idea as to where and when, leaving that to happen on its own. Even before starting out somehow I believe I would recognized when to stop which turned out to be on target. Another reason as to why I favor the **Phaedo** is that it's a discussion between Socrates and his friends just hours before he's condemned to death. What's so remarkable is that what takes place in the prison hardly differs from his discussions throughout his life: no fear, no hatred. Instead, Socrates has an overwhelming desire to speak about what's so dear to him. And that can be summed up in *anamnesis*.

One unforgettable impression we get from the **Phaedo** is that Socrates speaks of *anamnesis* as though he had passed from both life and death. For him it's a living reality. To borrow words from Carl Jung which I've used on several occasions in several earlier essays, Socrates knows "that the psyche is real" whereas most of us think the opposite even when confronted with incontrovertible proof. Actually Socrates had come to this realization a long time ago which infers from the get-go he was never fully inserted into our space-time continuum. He had one foot in and the other out, right where he always had been from all eternity. The give-away? We find him in prison blabbing away merrily as he had throughout his long life. All Socrates wanted to do throughout his life was to make people aware of it as well. With

Socrates you could almost insert a coin, turn the dial, and off he goes. So when reading him the distance of some 2.500 years simply doesn't enter your mind. In fact, we can be certain that right now Socrates is holding court with those capable of accessing their inbuilt capacity for *anamnesis* whether they lived in the distant past, are alive now or will be born in the distant future.<sup>1</sup>

The way Socrates comports himself is indeed necessary to appreciate the man. In the process of trying to understand him, Scholars have provided valuable insights yet seem to have gotten stuck in the mechanics of the text regardless of the brilliance of their work. It's not unlike being with Socrates on that fateful day in the prison paying attention to every word he had uttered but not having a clue as to what he meant. That is to say, a person could provide a perfect, word-for-word transcription of all that had been said but completely missed the boat. And so the scholarly approach, helpful and vital in so many ways, runs the risk of falling short. Here is where the negative of Carl Jung saying quoted above applies: "The psyche is not real." More on that later.

At this point, a little diversion, if you will. I've come to consider this article and those before it not unlike chapters of a book. While the topics aren't diverse, all have a certain commonality that binds them together. I didn't see this early on, but it emerged on its own not long ago. Just two weeks ago a friend asked a poignant question which I hadn't thought of before. He was curious to know if one single theme could be singled out...something I didn't think of before...to which I keep returning to in one way or another.

At first I preferred to avoid my friend's question but later thought, good point. Thank you for asking. That made me turn attention to the article at hand which, as I look back, sums up many themes discussed elsewhere. For some blessed reason beyond me they all converge upon the **Phaedo** even if it had not been mentioned. That means, of course, that the topic of *anamnesis* never is far away. Lo and behold, I'd say, that all along *anamnesis* has been the underlying theme. Putting this in the most general terms possible, the One Common Thing may be described as exploring the relationship between what we regard as transcendent, and let's say everything else.

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<sup>1</sup> While *anamnesis* indeed has tremendous appeal, it's amazingly slippery. For instance, consider plain ol' memory. We might be enthralled by remembrance of something wonderful and resolve then and there to make it part of our lives. However, given a short time...often a very short time...and we've forgotten what had inspired us. Not only that, our resolve has virtually collapsed. This is a caveat that needs to be kept in mind when setting out on a project as the one at hand. The same forgetfulness applies with regard to *anamnesis*.

Frances Cornford detailed how the transcendent was woven into the very fabric of our human nature way back in the early twentieth century in his **From Religion to Philosophy**. Despite being well over a hundred years old, his book is a worthwhile read in conjunction with his **Before and After Socrates**. After going through both you come away with the impression that the transcendent turns out to be very much with us instead of usually relegated to a far-off distance land with no connection to daily life.

I venture to add a connecting point between the two extremes of transcendence and the world in which we live, one personally meaningful and noted already. That consists in the Greek word *anamnesis*, memory or recollection. The original is far more comprehensive than just recalling this or that. It's our very identity even though you'd get a blank stare should you go out and ask anyone. And so my interest in *anamnesis* developed on its own as a kind of intermediary between the two grand traditions. That, of course, is where the **Phaedo** comes in.

I guess there are multiple points from which you can take off and develop this theme. I single out the two dominant ones with which most of us are familiar, the Judeo-Christian tradition on one hand and on the other or more narrowly, Plato or let's say Socrates. Both have wonderful things to say, and I've spent considerable time looking at both. Actually one is not better than the other, but the two work hand-in-hand. However, pretty much the same time as writing this article I was finishing off Cornford's book mentioned above which happened to coincide with my interest in doing something about the **Phaedo**. Right away I was smitten by the way the author arranged the title **From Religion to Philosophy**. To have adopted that title so long ago indeed shows that Cornford was indeed gifted. Note the sequence of prepositions in the title deliberately underlined. First we have "from" signaling an origin followed by "to" signaling a destination. To the first belongs religion (as source) and to the second belongs philosophy (as destination). Between the two a considerable space is implied...mostly fuzzy...in which the transition was being made. Perhaps today we've exited this transition and have the advantage of having taken the first steps into new territory, albeit *terra incognita*.

I guess it's safe to say that religion will remain an important element in the lives of many people even though the form has altered considerably in a relatively short period of time, approximately two generations at the most. By its very nature philosophy has a broader appeal. Again referring to Cornford, it evolved from religion and spun off first to consider the physical world and later with Plato, how people relate with each other. Thus the title **From Religion to Philosophy** succinctly sums up

something that got rolling eons ago and has never stopped its forward momentum nor shows signs of stopping (fortunately for us).

Both the Hebrew scriptures and New Testament as religious documents obviously are the birth place of subsequent traditions as how to deal with death and supposedly what comes after it. A quick glance at the **Phaedo** show that it too has a lot to say about death perhaps in greater detail than any other Western document. You may not come away satisfied but at least at peace compared with the sword-of-Damocles feeling you often get from the religious point of view.

In the **Phaedo** we have front row seats with Socrates in prison and about to drink hemlock which will end his life. He's surrounded by close friends who try to persuade him to leave prison which indeed was possible, but no. Scholars have advanced a number of arguments about this but tend to overlook that fact that Socrates has already passed the distinction between life and death<sup>2</sup>. That is precisely why he's engaged in a lively discussion try to shake off his companions' concerns who essentially are both enthralled and horrified at what they are beholding. Thus it comes as no surprise that despite the fact that Socrates is literally practicing *philosophia*...friendship with wisdom...right before their eyes they are completely blind to it. Yet again, the inverse of Jung's statement? "The psyche is not real."

While this is absolutely important, I'm more interested in seeing if Socrates' words can tie in with the way we go about our daily lives. If it doesn't work there, forget-about-it. In other words, can we maintain an awareness that essentially remains the same both before and after death? That's the Sixty-Four Thousand dollar question. One of the main obstacles evoked here is that a kind of diffuse awareness—actually one that's opaque and seemingly constructed by our unconsciousness for our own protection—acts as a screen to prevent us from seeing the similarity with regard to the two states. Thus fear and ignorance are bound to govern our lives in contrast to Socrates who merrily sails along an hour or two before his death.

In a word, this condition is covered up pretty much all the time by reason of us by being hijacked in addition to the unconscious stepping in to protect us. I had introduced that situation several article ago and couldn't help but refer to it a number of times later on. The same applies here. It seems we can capitalize on this opaque awareness with two sides...the unconscious at work and us allowing ourselves to be hijacked...once we know how it came into existence or better, how it works for

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<sup>2</sup> Again, "The psyche is not real."

our own benefit even if harmful. Indeed, a very strange paradox but right there for us to witness. Once we recognize the mechanism at work we'll still be hijacked, no doubt about it. The only difference now is we know when we're hijacked and even better, are able to observe it as from the outside. Furthermore, being hijacked has no lasting effect. So this ability to observe something afflicting us *hic et nunc* is the only thing that distinguishes us from the shmuck next to us.

In other places I likened being aware of this situation to not just having won the lottery but having done so Big Time. Let's say we read in the local paper about such a person and decide to visit him or her. It may sound a bit odd, but in the back of our minds we assume that the winner is someone special or cut out from us mere mortals. Nothing could be further from the truth. He or she turns out to be no different from anyone of us. That's the huge paradox of being a shmuck and winning the lottery. To the way we're accustomed to think the two just don't go together no matter how hard we try. And so in the regular world it seems to boil to be a matter of statistics. This person simply has hit the jackpot compared wot everyone else.

I couldn't resist presenting all this as an extended introduction to the **Phaedo** excerpts which, of course, is the heart of the article at hand. Though Socrates' attitude towards death is central to this dialogue, the precise point where the rubber meets the road lies more with the deeper level of *anamnesis* as noted above. I may not be expressing it properly, but *anamnesis* seems to be a deathless part of ourselves. To be in contact with that is to be in contact life itself *sans* hijacking or better, even in the midst of being hijacked. And so I chose the following excerpts which hopefully center around this theme. In the process of picking them out and going through them, more than anything I was keen to get as close as possible...echoes of the title...to where Socrates comes up with his ideas. When someone is on the point of death and more importantly, remains fully conscious of his thoughts and actions unclouded by coercion or illness, it behooves us to pay close attention indeed.

The **Phaedo** is the source *par excellence* for an understanding not just as death...important as that may be...but for *anamnesis* which is intimately bound up with it or, if you will, is independent of death. That, I believe, is what Socrates is attempting to convey literally in a merry sort of way during his last hours of life. I was especially attentive to see where Socrates started talking about *anamnesis* in the **Phaedo** or at least give the hint of it. Once I did, the result is here, a sequence of passages followed by some notations. As you go along it's easy to see that Socrates has full grasp of what is about to happen when he dies. It's as evident as all get-out which is a sure sign that he's fully in charge of the situation or if we could ask him,

his *daimon*. Nevertheless, it's remarkable how freely he acknowledges this without being deterred in the least. Thus it's worth to keep this in mind, for we have right before us insight to the reality of death that just might be the closest one ever recorded at least in the West.

Personally I have some difficulty understanding what Socrates says about souls existing beforehand even though he doesn't mean incarnation commonly understood. That unfortunately has been the case. Nevertheless, through all his arguments which seems a bit forced in this case, his insights into *anamnesis* come across loud and clear. It is a faculty within us based upon being mindful of our origins. In light of this, keep in mind the preposition *ana-* prefaced to the root, that is, not just up but up as upon or upwards. Therefore *ana-* with the verbal root *mimnesko* is suggestive of ongoing action with regarding to where we came from. Would that it were appreciated today! Such a simple understanding would go a long way.

Though Plato lacked straight-forward words such as consciousness or better, awareness, *anamnesis* fits the bill nicely if not better. As for this access to our origin intimated in this document's title, more will be said after these remarks. First, we have to get through them.

A caveat of sorts. Despite my inability to comprehend some excerpts in a favorable manner which otherwise I would have inserted, I go ahead with the project at hand. Keep in mind that everything is quite amateur-ish but done out of genuine affection for the text of the **Phaedo**. Anyway, the key focus, of course, is upon the excerpts in and by themselves.

### Excerpts from the Phaedo Relative to *Anamnesis*

We recall an ancient theory that souls arriving there come from here, and then again that they arrive here and are born here from the dead. If that is true, that the living come back from the dead, then surely our souls must exist there, for they could not come back if they did not exist, and this is a sufficient proof that these things are so if it truly appears that the living never come from any other source than from the dead. 70c-d

I'd say this excerpt was key to getting the current article off the ground, notably the seemingly insignificant adjective *palaios* as ancient and also as venerable modifying the noun *logos*, generally word-as-expression. The reason, given these

being two modest words? “Ancient theory” means that Socrates had obtained information about the interplay between the dead and the living from a venerable though unidentified source which apparently early on in his life had a profound impact on his reflections concerning *anamnesis*.

*Palaios logos* is reminiscent of the way Frances Cornford in his **From Religion to Philosophy** treats the obscure origin of the Greek philosophical tradition which has deeper roots the concept of *phusis*, as general as all get-out. Instead of being some ominous dark background as the night sky is representative of an unknown apparently unbounded universe, *phusis* is very much present, something to which it seems Socrates would agree.

And so Socrates puts absolute faith in this “ancient theory” a few hours before he’s about to die. Inferred is that he’s already in the place to which he speaks of going, hence the talk about arriving there and once there, realizing that he had been born from the dead. Thus our souls exist there...before death...and came here. In sum, a back-and-forth process that doesn’t cease. At first it sounds like our common understanding of reincarnation. More, of course, on this a bit later.

Before moving on, following this excerpt we have talk about opposites, of how one comes from the other; not exactly convincing as far as the cycle of death-to-birth. Socrates gives one notable example from daily life, the alternation between being asleep and being awake. The conclusion? “Then our souls exist in the underworld.” The response to this statement is *eoiken* or likely but not exactly certain.

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Or must we provide a process of becoming opposite to dying? 71e

Two key words here, *apodidomai* and *enantian*, also to repay or to make correspond and that which is opposite or even contrary. This leads, as the words which follow show, from-the-dead -> to-the-living.

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If there is such a thing as coming to life again it would be a process of coming from the dead to the living. 72a

What Socrates describes here is a process, *genesis* similarly as a birth. It consists of *anabioskomai* or bringing to life again, *ana-* as literally up or upon life. In other words, it's a kind of mounting upon life or *bios* which presumably already is in existence. As for *bios*, it's more along the lines of a manner of life, a means of living compared with physical life or *zoe*. With this expanded idea in mind, we can say that a-manner-of-life moves from (*ek*) those who are dead literally into (*eis*) those who are living. How this is so isn't spelled out, perhaps deliberately. Perhaps this is where Socrates wishes we access our faculty of *anamnesis* which can take care of any transition.

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The living come from the dead in this way no less than the dead from the living and if that is so, it seems a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead must be somewhere whence they can come back again. 72a

The connecting point between living-from-dead to dead-from-living are the words *ouden htton* or something like not inferior. I.e., the transit is equal, not from bad to worse or visa-versa. Note that Socrates qualifies this: "if this is so" (*toutou de ontos*) along with *edokei*, "it seems." This double probability infers that Socrates isn't 100% certain which adds a bit of uncertainty and mystery to the **Phaedo**. As he puts it, the souls (*psuche*) of the dead have to be somewhere, *pou* also as anywhere indicating unknowability as to their location. Nevertheless, this indefinite-ness allows for a return, *houthen* and *palin*, from where and again.

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If the two processes of becoming did not always balance each other as if they were going round in a circle, but generation proceeded from one point to its opposite in a straight line and it did not turn back again to the other opposite or take any turning, do you realize that all things would ultimately be in the same state, be affected in the same way and cease to become? 72a-b

*Ta hetera* or "the opposites" for "two processes," that is, death-to-life and life-to-death. Both need to be in constant balance, *antapodidomai* also as to repay where the preposition *anti-* prefaced to the verb suggests a certain antagonism in addition to reciprocity. The image Socrates has in mind is advancing in a straight line which if it were followed through, all things would end up being in the same state or condition, *schema*. This singular movement may be outline as follows: generation or *genesis* followed (*eutheia*: adjective for straight, direct) the direction *ek* -> *eis* or from



-> into without deviation, *katantiku* and not *anakamtoi* (straight on and without bending or yielding in this direction).

This wouldn't apply to *anamnesis*. Instead, it would pertain to memory in the conventional sense where one remembrance follows another in a linear-like pattern. Such an images doesn't mean that *anamnesis* is circular, *ana-* as upon or above precluding that endless round.

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And if everything were combined and nothing separated, the saying of Anaxagoras<sup>3</sup> would soon be true, "that all things were mixed together." In the same way, my dear Cebes, if everything that partakes of life were to die and remain in that state and not come to life again, would not everything ultimately have to be dead and nothing alive? 72c-d

An interplay shown by the two prepositions *sug-* and *dia-* or with and through, each prefaced to the same verb *krino* or to combine. Both are foretold, if you will, by Anaxagoras and his use of *chremata*, a general term meaning basically thing. With this in mind, if everything endowed with life (*metalambano*, to receive-with & *zoe*, physical life) not just dies but remains in that condition or *schema* (state, form, character), it means being dead permanently. As a result, everything else ultimately is as such. I.e., there's no *anabioskoito* or coming back to life, this word containing not *zoe* but *bios*, inferring life as a state.

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I think, Cebes, said he, that this is very definitely the case and that we were not deceived when we agreed on this: coming to life again in truth exists, the living come to be from the dead, and the souls of the dead exist. Furthermore, Socrates, Cebes rejoined, such is also the case if that theory is true that you are accustomed to mention frequently, that for us learning is no other than recollection. According to this, we must at some previous time have learned what we now recollect. This is

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<sup>3</sup> Anaxagoras of Clazomenae was born at the beginning of the fifth century B.C. He came to Athens as a young man and spent most of his life there in the study of natural philosophy. He is quoted later in the dialogue (97c ff.) as claiming that the universe is directed by Mind (Nous). The reference here is to his statement that in the original state of the world all its elements were thoroughly commingled. (footnote from Cooper's edition).

possible only if our soul existed somewhere before it took on this human shape. So according to this theory too, the soul is likely to be something immortal. 72de-73a

This excerpt begins with *dokei*, Socrates inferring that what he's about to say seems to concur with reality and that we...those with him...aren't deceived, the preposition *ex-* or "from" prefaced to the verbal root *pateo* adding further certainty. The point at hand? It's true (*esti to onti*) that *anabioskomai* or coming to life is real and that *zao* or being alive indeed comes from those who have died. Again we have a distinction between *bios* and *zoe*, manner of life and physical life. It seems that the latter is situated in the former else it would not be life as Socrates means it, that is, applicable to human living. As for those who are dead, in light of what was just presented makes it clear that souls exist, *psuche* and *einai*, to be.

Cebes brings up a *logos* or word-as-expression with regard to something Socrates is accustomed to speak of, *eiiothes*. I.e., there exists the possibility that learning = recollection, *mathesis* = *anamnesis*. Note the phrase "for us" suggesting that this topic had been and remains a reality for those discussing it. The certainty of the two is reenforced by *ouk allo*, "none other." Cebes fleshes this out where at some other time (*protero* also as earlier) we've learned what we recollect. *Nun* or "now" is important insofar as this *manthano* and *anamimnesko* are active. It's real provided our soul or *psuche* existed somewhere before it assumed a shape which is human, an *eidos* (form, shape) which is *anthropinos*. The phrase *prin en tode* infers imperfect knowledge as to precisely where *psuche* exists. What's certain, however, is the possibility of recollecting it not to discover this so-called place but to make it active in our lives. Note use of *eoiken*, something as "likely" with respect to *psuche* being immortal. It's another word indicative of a combination of certainty and some hesitation.

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There is one excellent argument, said Cebes, namely that when men are interrogated in the right manner, they always give the right answer of their own accord, and they could not do this if they did not possess the knowledge and the right explanation inside them. Then if one shows them a diagram or something else of that kind, this will show most clearly that such is the case. 73a

*Apodeixeis* or argument, more as a setting forth (*apo-*) with regard to the questioning of men but in the right manner, the superlative of *kalos* being in a most beautiful manner. *Kalos* is a difficult concept to nail down since it has broad application, generally applicable to outward form. Also the adverbial form is used

with the manner they respond. This is possible because it so happens (*tugchano* also as to hit upon) that they have *episteme* and *logos* which is *orthos* or right, correct. The former also means acquaintance or skill represented by the preposition *epi-* or upon. <sup>4</sup>

Though I prefer not to insert a passage from another dialogue, this case seems to be an exception as a means to flesh out *anamnesis*, hence the following from the **Meno**:

As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things. As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection. We must, therefore, not believe that debater's argument, for it would make us idle, and fainthearted men like to hear it, whereas my argument makes them energetic and keen on the search. I trust that this is true, and I want to inquire along with you into the nature of virtue. 81c

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We surely agree that if anyone recollects anything he must have known it before. 73c

*Homologeō* or to agree fundamentally means to speak with one accord. It is with respect to recollecting or essentially as having knowing something earlier, *anamimnesko* as *epihistemi*, the latter as the verbal root for *episteme*, literally as standing upon, *histemai* prefaced with *epi-*. And so the before (*proteron*), if you will, is brought into the present.

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Well, you know what happens to lovers: whenever they see a lyre, a garment or anything else that their beloved is accustomed to use, they know the lyre, and the image of the boy to whom it belongs comes into their mind. This is recollection just

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<sup>4</sup> A footnote in Cooper's edition refers to the **Meno** 81e ff.

as someone on seeing Simmias, often recollects Cebes, and there are thousands of other such occurrences. 73d

*Erastai* is the noun for lovers, the verbal root being *erao*, and by reason of what's involved is an excellent demonstration of *anamnesis*. Sight of an object used by or belonging to one's beloved brings to mind him or her to whom it belongs. *Dianoia* is the noun which consists of *noos* (mind) prefaced with the preposition *dia-* or through which is indicative of the ability to perceive right through things. As a sentence just below infers, *anamnesis* is an antidote for forgetfulness, the verb being *epiletho*, to cause to forget, to neglect.

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In all these cases the recollection can be occasioned by things that are similar, but it also can be occasioned by things that are dissimilar?—It can. 74a

*Sumbaino* is the verb for occasioned, literally as to go with, *sun-* which ties in nicely with *homoion*, like or similar. *Sumbaino* also can be associated with things that are *anomoion*, unlike or dissimilar.

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As long as the sight of one thing makes you think of another, whether it be similar or dissimilar, this must of necessity be recollection? 74c

A short but important sentence with regard to *anamnesis* in action, if you will. *Opseos* or sight (with the eyes) of one thing shifts over to thinking or *ennoeses* (to put into mind or *noos*) of the opposite regardless of like or not like. Such is *anamnesis*.

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We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this. 74e-75a

*Anagkaion* or must also means necessity with regard to knowledge (*ennoeo* as with *noos* three sections above) of the Equal (*to ison*, *prooida* or to know beforehand (*eido* implies seeing *pro-* or before). Note another use of *pro* in addition

to the one prefaced to the verb, that is, with respect to that time (*chronos*). Reference is to seeing or *eidon* equal things and realizing that they strive to resemble the Equal, *oregeo* also as to stretch out, to grasp. However, they remain deficient, *endeesteros* also as lacking, wanting.

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Then surely we also agree that this conception of ours derives from seeing or touching or some other sense perception and cannot come into our mind in any other way, for all these senses, I say, are the same. 75a

*Homologeō* as with 73c above with regard to *ennoeo* as in 74e-75a. Sense perception is the source of the conception discussed just above, *aistheseōn* being the same whether of sight or touching mentioned here.

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Then before we began to see or hear or otherwise perceive, we must have possessed knowledge of the Equal itself if we were about to refer our sense perceptions of equal objects to it, and realized that all of them were eager to be like it, but were inferior. 75b

Prior to our perceiving or *aisthanomai* (as in 75a), we possessed knowledge, *lambano* also as to take, to receive with *episteme* (cf. 73c). Here this refers to the Equal in and by itself (*tou isou*). Despite the similarities between *tou isou* and those eager (*prothumeō*: to have thumos as *pro-*, zeal directed towards something) to be like it, there comes the realization that all are inferior, *phaulos* also as trivial, paltry.

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Therefore, if we had this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the Equal but the Greater and the Smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the Equal than about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, the Pious and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of “what it is,” both when we are putting questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born.

That is so.

If, having acquired this knowledge in each case, we have not forgotten it, we remain knowing and have knowledge throughout our life, for to know is to

acquire knowledge, keep it and not lose it. Do we not call the losing of knowledge forgetting?

Most certainly, Socrates, he said.

But, I think, if we acquired this knowledge before birth, then lost it at birth and then later by the use of our senses in connection with those objects we mentioned, we recovered the knowledge we had before, would not what we call learning be the recovery of our own knowledge, and we are right to call this recollection?

Certainly. 75c-e

Reference here to having knowledge or *episteme* is by the reflective pronoun *auten* and applies not just to birth but to immediately after, *euthus* (connotes straightness, directness). This is applicable to both the Equal, Greater, Smaller and all such things (*ison, meizon, elatton* and *ta toiauta*). The present argument (*logos*, cf. 73a) at hand applies to the Beautiful, the Good, the Just, the Pious: *kalos* (cf. 73a), *agathos* (often the moral sense), *dikaios, hosios* (hallowed) and anything designated as “what it is” (*auto ho esti*). And so we must have acquired *episteme* before birth, *anagkaion* or necessary (cf. 74e-75a).

Provided we’ve acquired this *episteme* in each of the above mentioned instances means we haven’t forgotten it where the preposition *epi-* of *epiletho* suggests a lapsing into (upon) forgetfulness, this being the bane of any discussion about *anamnesis*. Instead, we know always (*aei*) and know just as *aei* through life, *bios* again connoting a manner of life or how we comport ourselves. As for knowing, it’s the verb *eido* applicable to seeing (cf. 74e-75a). Thus to know = to acquire knowledge (*eido* = *lambano* or to take, receive with regard to *episteme*). More often than not losing of knowledge = forgetting, *lethen* (also oblivion) = *apobolen*, literally a throwing away.

*Oimai* or I think is important insofar as it represents an opinion of Socrates, one held dear but not necessarily able to prove. It applies to the acquisition (*lambano*, as just above) of knowledge before birth, then lost (*apoluo*, to loosen from) it at birth and later recovered (*lambano* prefaced with the preposition *ana-*, upon) the knowledge in our possession earlier. This results in learning as the recovery of our own knowledge (*lambano* prefaced with *ana-* and *episteme*) which is called *anamimnesko* (i.e., *anamnesis* as a verb).

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So then, Simmias, our souls also existed apart from the body before they took on human form, and they had intelligence. 76c

Souls or *psuche* came *proteron* or first with respect to the body or *soma*, having assumed a form which is human. This is expressed by the verb to be (*einai*). Also they were endowed with *phronesis* which also means purpose, intention as well as prudence.

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If those realities we are always talking about exist, the Beautiful and the Good and all that kind of reality, and we refer all the things we perceive to that reality, discovering that it existed before and is ours, and we compare these things with it, then, just as they exist, so our soul must exist before we are born. If these realities do not exist, then this argument is altogether futile. Is this the position, that there is an equal necessity for those realities to exist, and for our souls to exist before we were born? If the former do not exist, neither do the latter? I do not think, Socrates, said Simmias, that there is any possible doubt that it is equally necessary for both to exist, and it is opportune that our argument comes to the conclusion that our soul exists before we are born, and equally so that reality of which you are now speaking. Nothing is so evident to me personally as that all such things must certainly exist, the Beautiful, the Good and all those you mentioned just now. I also think that sufficient proof of this has been given. 76d-77a

Around this point in the **Phaedo** Socrates leaves off direct talk about *anamnesis* and continues to speak of the soul as deathless.

*Thrileo* or to blab on about is a wonderfully apt word to describe Socrates' attitude given that the circumstances look quite bleak. Freely he goes on concerning all that we perceive or sense such as the Beautiful and Good (*kalon* and *agathon*), the verb being *aisthanomai*. An important word which can be overlooked easily is *aneurisko* which pertains to discovering that the realities (*ousia* or being) were already in existence, *proteron* as first along with *huarchosan*, the preposition *hupo-* indicating of that which underlies the beginning, *arche*.

We compare things with this underlying reality resulting in the insight that they exist just as our soul or *psuche* exists before birth. The verb at hand is *apeikazomomai* or to express by comparison (*eikon*). On the other hand, if they don't exist, the argument or *logos* is useless, *allos* being an adverb for otherwise.

The rest of the paragraph continues with Simmias agreeing to all that Socrates had set forth, that having been covered earlier. To him it is sufficient proof of the soul's existence before birth, the adverb *hikanos* or in a befitting manner and the verb *apodeknumi*, literally to point away from or to represent.

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It has been proved even now, Simmias and Cebes, said Socrates, if you are ready to combine this argument with the one we agreed on before, that every living thing must come from the dead. If the soul exists before, it must, as it comes to life and birth, come from nowhere else than death and being dead, so how could it avoid existing after death since it must be born again? What you speak of has then even now been proved. However, I think you and Simmias would like to discuss the argument more fully. You seem to have this childish fear that the wind would really dissolve and scatter the soul as it leaves the body, especially if one happens to die in a high wind and not in calm weather. 77ce

*Apodeiknumi* is the verb to prove as in 76d-77a with regard to the fact that all living things (*zōn* as with *zōe* implying manner of life) come from the dead. The argument proceeds along lines that have been discussed and therefore are familiar. Then we come to a childish fear, *dedienai* to be alarmed with *país*, of children. It consists of the wind being able to both dissolve and scatter the soul or *psuche*, *ekbaino* and *diaphuo*. Note the two prepositions prefaced to the verbal roots which tell it all, *ek-* and *dia-* or from and through.

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Will the soul, the invisible part which makes its way to a region of the same kind, noble and pure and invisible, to Hades in fact, to the good and wise god whither, god willing my soul must soon be going—will the soul, being of this kind and nature be scattered and destroyed on leaving the body as the major of men say? Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias, but what happens is much more like this: if it is pure when it leaves the body and drags nothing bodily with it as it had no willing association with the body in life, but avoided it and gathered itself together by itself and always practiced this, which is no other than practicing philosophy in the right way, in fact, training to die easily. Or is this not training for death? 80d-e

*Aides* or unseen, secret, is the adjective used here to describe the soul and goes to a place similar to it describe as *gennaion*, *katharon*, *aide* (suitable to one's birth, pure and invisible). Here is the dwelling of the god described as *agathos*



and *phronimon*, good and discreet. However, will the soul whose nature (*phuo*, to beget, to engender) is such be scattered and destroyed, *diaphusao* and *apololen*? Note the two prepositions prefaced to the verbs which speak of this, *dia-* and *apo-*, through as indicative of thoroughness and from. Thrown in with both is *euthus* or immediately as when leaving the body.

However, note the verbs associated with the soul if it's pure: leaving the body, drags nothing bodily, no willing association with body during life, avoided the body, gathered itself together and always practiced this: *kathara*, *apallasso* also to release, no *sunephelko* or no drawing along with, having no *koinoneo* or *koinonia* with the body, *ekousa* or not readily with the body, *pheugo* or to flee, *sunethroismene* or to gather together into (*eis*) oneself. Such are the components that go into practicing philosophy (*philosopheo*) correctly or *orthos*. Another way of putting this is training to die easily, *meletosa* or to take care in a manner which is *rhadios* also as lightly or willingly.

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Moreover, these are not the souls of good but of inferior men which are forced to wander there, paying the penalty for their previous upbringing. They wander until their longing for that which accompanies them, the physical again imprisons them in a body, and they are then as is likely bound to such characters as they have practiced in their life. 81d-e

*Agathos* vs. *phaulos* or good vs. trivial or petty, the latter being compelled to wander, *anagkazo* and *planao*, the latter also as to lead astray. Thus these souls (*psuche* not mentioned) are paying a penalty for their previous rearing, *trophe* also as nourishment which is *kakos* or evil.

This wandering stays with souls characterized as *phaulos* due to their craving which accompanies them, that is, an *epithumia* which is *sunepakoloutho*. The noun is comprised of *thumos* or intense longing made more so by the preposition *epi-* or upon prefaced to it. As for the verb, it's prefaced with two prepositions, *sun-* and *epi-* or with and upon indicative of an almost glue-like accompaniment in reference to anything which is *somatoeidōs* (*soma* + *eidōs* or form, figure). It is this *epithumia* which brings about *endeo*, literally a binding-in. The result? Such souls are attached to the same character (*ethos*, also as accustomed usage) they practiced during life, the verb being *meletao* here as having a habit along with *tugchano* which implies a hitting or coming upon. *Tugchano* suggests that the situation could have turned out otherwise.

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No one may join the company of the gods who has not practiced philosophy and is not completely pure when he departs from life, no one but the lover of learning. 82b-c

*Themis* or that which is laid down or established is not possible (*aphikneomai*, to arrive or to reach) for anyone who has not practiced philosophy, the verb being *philosopheo*. The same applies to not being completely pure when leaving (*apeimi*, to go away, to depart) this life, *katharos* also as pure in the moral sense. Note the adverb *pantelos* comprised of *pan* and *telos*, all and completion. The only exception with regard to *aphikneomai*? A person who loves learning, *philomatheo* (*philos* = friend & *manthano* = to learn, to comprehend).

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The lovers of learning know that when philosophy gets hold of their soul, it is imprisoned in and clinging to the body, and that it is forced to examine other things through it as through a cage and not by itself, and that it wallows in every kind of ignorance. Philosophy sees that the worst feature of this imprisonment is that it is due to desires so that the prisoner himself is contributing to his own incarceration most of all. As I say, the lovers of learning know that philosophy gets hold of their soul when it is in that state, then gently encourages it. 82d-e

*Philomathes* or friends of learning realize that when *philosophia* grabs their soul or *psuche*, *paralambano* literally as to take alongside or *para-*, it becomes imprisoned in the body, *diadeo*, the preposition *dia-* or through indicative of complete enslavement. Also note the verb *proskollao*, to be glued to in a direct sense indicative by the preposition *pros-*. The adverb *atechnos* is added or without means (of escape). This is a perfect way of describing how the soul is compelled to view reality as through a cage, *anagkazo* with regard to *skopeo* or to behold with *heirgmos* also as prison. This is instead of *skopeo* directly or literally through oneself. And so the soul wallows around in every kind of ignorance, the verb *kulindo* as to roll around with regard to literally a lack of learning, *amathia* or ignorance.

Philosophy is able to comprehend or *kateidon*, literally as to look down upon (*kata-*) the worst part of being in such a prison comes from the prisoner's own desires, *epithumia* as noted above. I.e, he has become an accessory (*sulleptor*) to his own imprisonment. Contrary to this, lovers learning...those who are *philos* or friends of *manthano*...realize that *philosophia* takes to itself (*para-* or beside

prefaced to *lambano*) literally the soul or *psuche* of theirs by gently attempting to set it free. The verb at hand is *paramutheomai* or to encourage, again *para-* as being beside together with the adverb *erema* also as softly.

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You seem to think me inferior to the swans in prophecy. They sing before too, but when they realize they must die they sing most and most beautifully as they rejoice that they are about to depart to join the god whose servants they are. 84e-85a

*Kuknon* is the noun for swan, also a minstrel or bard which sings most beautifully (*kalos*) just before it dies because it is rejoicing at its departure (*apeimi*, to go away) to be with or *para* the god, beside. Swans do this because they are the god's servants, *therapeuo* as to be an attendant, to do service.

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Some concluding observations...

Obviously more excerpts from the **Phaedo** could be added. Wonderful as they are, I stop here because for this article sufficient evidence has been presented with regard to death as well as *anamnesis*. Let me add perhaps the best part of the **Phaedo**, the very end just before Socrates expires: "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius" [118a]. Even at this extreme point Socrates continues just as he done throughout his entire life saying that death is a cure for the ills of life. However, for him and hopefully for us death is firmly rooted in a living awareness of *anamnesis*. While death is part and parcel of the **Phaedo**, the way Socrates comports himself shortly before taking the hemlock intimates that it's a topic he has to put up with for their sake, not for his. Like most mortals, his companions are terrified of death and can't help but project this on to Socrates. If the way he comports himself ever was a concrete example of *anamnesis*-in-practice, you'd be hard to find something better to take its place.

I can't help but go back to the very beginning of these excerpts, that "ancient theory" or *logos* which is *palaios*. It's something that stuck in my mind from the beginning. To me it infers that Socrates was familiar with a tradition or several traditions that has merged into one which spoke of the very beginning of everything. I omit cosmological terms such as the Big Bang. That may apply, but keeping in line with Socrates' concern for how to live virtuously, that would be a mere distraction. "Mere" is deliberate, for despite how vast and important the

universe happens to be, listening to Socrates somehow put that physically infinite reality in its place where it needs to be. Actually he did dabble in matters of the natural world but after a while discovered they came up lacking.

This business about a *logos* being *palaios* brought me back to Frances Conford's book **From Religion to Philosophy** where he talks about *phusis*, the general term for nature which also means origin, growth, outward form and constitution...to name just a few that can be situated under the umbrella of that noun. It doesn't smack of something that Socrates would subscribe to directly. *Phusis* hadn't yet evolved from a religious appreciation to one that's philosophical. It's too far back for any of that. And so *phusis* remains The Source of Everything. If you ignore *phusis*, you ignore everything, *anamnesis* included.

This may a stretch of the imagination, but I can't help but think the opening words of St John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God." In light of *logos* being *palaios*, I inserted the proper Greek word, the one with capital "L." In this way it shows completion in the sense of manifestation in human form of the one with the lower case "l," that obviously being Jesus Christ. Again, stretching it some more, everything in between is where *anamnesis* has free play. It's what got Socrates going in the first place, sustained him throughout life and at the end, enabled him to remain as himself while simply switching over to another mode of existence as he had discussed just before his physical death.

As for John's *arche*, that strikes us as vague as *phusis* until we focus upon it, not allowing it to pass by unexamined. Among its definitions are origin, foundation, first principle, sum and total. So it looks like *arche* and *phusis* are pretty close to each other. The former seems concerned with a narrowing down, a closer emphasis compared with the more diffused *phusis*. What's revolutionary about *arche* is the preposition *en* or in. This infers that *arche* has some kind of room to contain a reality bigger than itself. Perhaps this room or what fills it acts as a jolt that emerges from the primeval *phusis*. Without this jolt things would have kept going round and round endlessly.

Note the past tense, "was the *Logos*." I think John puts it as such even though *Logos*...Jesus Christ...is (present tense) still lives there. In other words, the *Logos* has left *arche* in a way or perceptible to us, that is, only for our own benefit. The same past tense applies to *Logos* as he is *pros* God. The preposition *pros* takes on a special meaning in that it connotes something consisting of direction-towards-which and always is active. *Logos* decides to leave even this behind as well. No

small wonder that later Paul exclaims that “though in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself” [Phil 2.6-7].

Although it may not exactly fit in, perhaps somewhere through all this the faculty of *anamnesis* is at work though on a far deeper level. Perhaps when Socrates speaks of it as he does so well he is being in-formed of this reality which several hundred years later became manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. Nobody can nor should fault him for his efforts which are remarkable in and by themselves. Thus while this dove-tailing of *anamnesis*, *arche* and *phusis* may be something inaccurate, nevertheless some merit may be present. What makes it appealing as such? I venture to offer recognition of Jung’s seemingly prosaic “the psyche is real” versus “the psyche is not real.”

Adherence to “the psyche is not real” boils down to a tension that had been operative ever since the transition from religion to philosophy got underway, that is, à la Frances Cornford. Perhaps what was offered in these modest and insufficient musing might represent a transition we’re in the midst of now which I render as “from philosophy to ?” Deliberately I insert the question mark. We’re too close, if you will to see where we’re going. What’s more important is to refrain from divining the future. That, it seems, would subscribe to a mind set with which we’re all too familiar, that “the psyche is not real.” What we do know for certain is we’re located somewhere between the primal *phusis* and the *Logos* continuing to leave behind *arche* while simultaneously carrying it forward. This isn’t valid logically speaking but mythically. So if we have insight into *phusis* as well as *arche* through the mediation of *Logos* or Jesus Christ, all is well. Forget about the future.

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