The *Phaedo*'s Rejection of the *Meno*'s Theory of Recollection

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One reason for taking seriously the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno* is that the *Meno* is not the only place in the Platonic corpus where Socrates advances this thesis. It emerges in full force in the *Phaedo* (primarily at 72e-77a, though it is mentioned again later on in the dialogue); it makes an appearance in the *Phaedrus* (at 250) as well. Although some scholars have imagined it present or 'implied' elsewhere — in the *Timaeus* (at 42b),[1] at *Rep.* 7.518b6-c2,[2] in the *Symposium*,[3] and even in the *Statesman*[4] — it is in fact rather conspicuously absent from these dialogues.[5] Indeed, it seems that what lies behind the sightings of recollection in dialogues besides the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* is little more than that it strikes scholars that recollection would fit nicely there. Yet, that recollection is missing just where it would fit nicely makes its absence even more profoundly felt.

Recollection is, we may note, glaringly absent as well from other Platonic dialogues where one would quite reasonably expect to find it, dialogues in which questions of what knowledge is and how it is acquired are prominent — the *Symposium* and, especially, the *Theaetetus*.[6] Moreover, of

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1 Vlastos (1991), 54.

2 See, for example, Hackforth (1955), 77; Gulley (1954), 195; Adam (1969), II.98.

3 Bluck (1961), 50.

4 Skemp (1952), 76, sees in the *Statesman*'s 'sensible likenesses' (αἴσθηται ὁμοιότητες) at 285e 'the later form of the earlier doctrine of Recollection'.

5 Although there is talk of reincarnation in the *Timaeus*, recollection does not appear there. As far as the *Republic* passage is concerned, see Klein (1965), 158, who rightly insists that although Socrates does indeed maintain in this passage that there is within each of us the power to know, so that education is not the pouring of knowledge into ignorant souls, 'still, there is no mention of "recollection" in this passage'.

6 See Klein (1965), 157-72. Hackforth (1955), 77, approvingly quotes Cornford (1934; rpt. 1957), 28, who explains the Theory of Recollection's absence from

the two places besides the *Meno* where recollection is found explicitly,[7] the *Phaedrus* passage is so heavily mythic that perhaps one need not see in it anything literally intended. That leaves, in all of Plato, but one dialogue besides the *Meno* where the Theory of Recollection might qualify as a Socratic or Platonic 'doctrine': the *Phaedo*. Yet, if the *Phaedo* is in fact the only place outside the *Meno* where the Theory of Recollection is developed with some sustained effort and is proposed more than just mythically, then the strength of the argument for taking seriously the *Meno*'s Theory of Recollection is much diminished. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to look at the Theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo* to see whether it sufficiently resembles the theory found in the *Meno* to serve as support and confirmation of it.

It will be argued in this paper that the *Phaedo*'s discussion of recollection consciously draws itself away from the *Meno*'s, making reference to the *Meno* for the express and sole purpose of severing all connection to it.[8] It will be contended that the *Phaedo* is interested in recollection only insofar as recollection and Forms provide mutual support for one another and, together, help make the case for the immortality of the soul.[9] Yet recollection is not indispensable even in the *Phaedo* to the case for the soul's immortality: the dialogue offers other arguments for the non-bodily existence of the soul — both in its pre-existence and in its post-existence — that are independent

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the *Theaetetus* by saying that the *Theaetetus* 'presupposes that we know the answer to the question here to be raised afresh: what is the nature of knowledge and of its objects'.

7 One might say that recollection is implicitly parodied in the *Euthydemus* at 293-296, where Euthydemus and Dionysodorus seek to demonstrate to Socrates that he knows everything 'even when you were a child and when you were being conceived. And before you yourself came into being and before the foundation of heaven and earth, you knew absolutely everything, if it is true that you always know' (trans. Sprague).

8 It is the contention of this paper that the two versions of recollection are not only different but that the *Phaedo*'s deliberately pulls away from the *Meno*'s. Many commentators recognize that the two versions differ, but they are reluctant to assert that Plato rejects in the *Phaedo* the version he proffers in the *Meno*. See, for example, Anderson (1993), 125; Bostock (1986), 63; Ackrill (1974), 177; and Hackforth (1955), 74. Bostock is typical. He says, on the one hand, that: 'As Socrates indicates at 73b3-4, the version now to be presented is not meant to be the same as the *Meno*'s version', but insists, on the other, that what the *Meno* contains is 'an earlier version of this argument'.

9 Scott (1995), 56-73, argues forcefully against what I too regard as an ill-conceived view of the Theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo*, namely, the view that it is a theory of concept-formation.

of recollection. Nor is recollection regarded in the *Phaedo* as proved: its truth rests on the imperfectly established existence of Forms.[10] Indeed, when Socrates notes that the Theory of Recollection is 'out of tune' with the attunement theory of the soul, he does not presume that it is a foregone conclusion that the theory to be adopted is recollection theory — instead, he allows Simmias to choose the theory he prefers (*Phd.* 92c); and even when Simmias chooses recollection, because, as he says, it is grounded in a 'hypothesis', the theory of Forms, that he is convinced he holds rightly (*Phd.* 92d-e), Socrates, not content to let matters be, shores up the first argument he offered against attunement theory with two additional ones.[11]

It is probably fair to say, then, that Socrates is less than wedded to the Theory of Recollection even in the *Phaedo*. One imagines that were it to turn out that people have no pre-existent souls that might once have known but have since forgotten the Forms, Socrates would simply seek some way other than recollection to account for how human beings come to posit realities that transcend the sensibles that share their names. Indeed, such an alternative explanation is suggested later on in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates, in describing his second-best quest for 'causes', arrives at Forms to provide a

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10 Although the *Phaedo* has its own 'method of hypothesis', it instantiates the *Meno*'s hypothetical method in the way it proceeds, at *Phd.* 72e-77a, to prove the soul's immortality by way of recollection. It asks what would have to be true if the soul is to be immortal. It answers: learning would have to be recollection. And what would have to be true if learning is to be recollection? Answer: there would have to be Forms. And do we know that there are Forms? Answer: not quite. So, we do not really know that the soul is immortal. (Although Socrates seems at first to recognize that only the *argument* for immortality founders if there are no Forms — 'this argument will have been in vain' [*Phd.* 76e4-5] — he then speaks as if immortality itself is on the line: '... and if not the former [that is, if the Forms do not exist], then not the latter [that is, our souls do not exist before birth], either' [*Phd.* 76e].)

11 The first is the rather peculiar argument that since an instrument can be more or less in tune, it would follow from the assumption that the soul is an attunement, that a soul could be more or less a soul; but, since a soul cannot be more or less a soul, then, if it were an attunement, all souls would have to be, contrary to fact, equally good (*Phd.* 93a-94b). The second is the argument that whereas an attunement, qua compound, follows and indeed cannot oppose its components, the soul often opposes what, on attunement theory, would be its components, namely, the body (*Phd.* 94b-95a).

'safe' solution to logical puzzles that are generated by experience (*Phd.* 100-102).[12]

Socrates in the *Phaedo*, then, avoids dogmatism both about the Forms and about the Theory of Recollection. And this is so despite his meeting no resistance in Simmias and Cebes to either thesis; the same Simmias and Cebes who stubbornly resist virtually everything else Socrates proposes, become surprisingly deferential when he speaks either of Forms or of recollection.[13] Indeed, against the backdrop of Simmias's and Cebes' unrestrained endorsement of these presumably 'Socratic' doctrines, Socrates' own restraint and circumspection are all the more striking.

Regardless of the degree to which Socrates is committed to the version of recollection he promotes in the *Phaedo*, he leaves no doubt that this version of recollection is incompatible with the version in the *Meno* — and that he means to have nothing to do with recollection as it is presented there. He signals the *Phaedo*'s departure from the *Meno* in several ways: (1) through the dramatic action of the *Phaedo*'s recollection passage, (2) by correcting the *Meno*'s version of recollection, and (3) by introducing notions in the *Phaedo* whose utter obscurity can be dispelled only when interpreted as deliberate divergences from ideas presented in the *Meno*. Let us turn now to the *Phaedo*'s discussion of recollection.

After Socrates completes his argument for the necessity that the souls of the dead exist (for if they died, eventually everything would be dead) (*Phd.* 72a-e), Cebes chimes in with a supplementary argument: 'And besides, Socrates, [the existence of the souls of the dead may be proved] ... according to that theory, λόγος, that you are always accustomed to spouting,[14] that for us

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12 See also *Rep.* 7.524c: '... the intellect was compelled to see big and little, too, not mixed up together but distinguished, doing the opposite of what sight did ... . Isn't it from here that it first occurs to us to ask what the big and the little are? ... and so, it was on this ground that we called the one intelligible and the other visible' (trans. Bloom 1968).

13 Burger (1984), 70, notes how readily Cebes and Simmias accept the Theory of Recollection: '... the recollection argument will turn out to be the only one in the entire conversation that both Cebes and Simmias wholeheartedly endorse. It is, therefore, the one too that Socrates shamelessly exploits: he need only appeal to the recollection thesis, and his interlocutors will immediately give up any opinions they believe conflict with it. Socrates takes advantage of their acceptance, despite the fact that it is based upon unexamined, and even preposterous, assumptions about the psyche, knowledge, and the objects of knowledge'.

14 What is the best way to understand Cebes' characterization of the Theory of Recollection as something that Socrates is 'always accustomed to spouting' (*Phd.* 72e4-5)? Are we to think that Socrates regularly put forward the theory

learning turns out to be nothing but recollection ... ' (*Phd.* 72e3-6). As Cebes understands what he calls 'Socrates'' thesis, it is that what one is now reminded of one must have learned at some former time, but that such 'being reminded' would be impossible unless the soul existed somewhere before being born in human form. Unless our souls were immortal, Cebes concludes, we could not learn.

This first stage of Cebes' presentation of recollection-theory corresponds roughly to the myth presented in the *Meno* at *M.* 81a-e. Indeed, two of the difficulties that plague the *Meno*'s recollection myth recur in Cebes' account of Socrates' Theory of Recollection. First, it is not clear in Cebes' account how the 'learning' done in the 'somewhere' where we presumably existed before we were born is accomplished: if it, too, is recollection, does that not create a regress that cannot be stopped — and, consequently, a chain of learning that cannot get started? It is true that in the *Meno* myth the soul is said to have 'seen' (ἑωρακυῖα) all things, yet, insofar as the myth also proclaims that all learning is recollection, it is not clear that there can be a first seeing that unproblematically constitutes the first learning.[15] Second, it is not

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that learning is recollection? Burnet (1911), 51, for one, thinks that 'it is very difficult to regard this definite statement as a fiction'. But Burnet also believes that the Theory of Forms must be attributed to Socrates, inasmuch as Plato would not, in his depiction of Socrates' dying day, attribute to Socrates views that are not really Socrates' but are 'novel doctrines' of Plato himself (xi-xii). I admit that I do not find as repugnant as Burnet does the notion that Plato uses Socrates as a mouthpiece for his own views: if Plato believes that his views are in some way a natural extension of Socrates', then it might well seem to Plato an act of devotion to ascribe his own views to Socrates (as, say, Pythagoreans ascribe their views to Pythagoras). Nevertheless, it *is* rather puzzling that Cebes speaks of the Theory of Recollection as a familiar Socratic thesis. It is true that Socrates, referring to the Forms, says the following in the *Phaedo*: 'Well, ... this is what I mean: it is nothing new, but is what I have spoken of incessantly both at other times and in our earlier conversation' (*Phd.* 100b1-3). The two cases are not the same, however. For we might wish to say, on the one hand, that at least the *character* Socrates, if not Socrates himself, does talk incessantly about Forms, yet, on the other, that even the character Socrates does not talk habitually of recollection. Perhaps it is best to suppose that Plato presents Cebes as a youth who, in his youthful exuberance, simply exaggerates: for whereas, in the *Phaedo*, it is indeed Socrates who says of himself that he speaks incessantly of Forms, it is not Socrates but Cebes who says of Socrates that he is accustomed to speaking always of learning as recollection.

15 The slave-boy-demonstration concludes that the soul is always in a state of having learned, ἀεὶ χρόνον μεμαθηκυῖα (*M.* 86a8), implying, it would seem,

clear what the nature of the 'somewhere' where our souls presumably existed before being born in human form is, although Cebes, like the *Meno* myth, gives us no reason to think it is some place radically different from those places familiar to us from life and legend. We may observe, however, that whereas the *Meno* myth begins with the assumption that the soul is immortal, Cebes uses recollection to *prove* the immortality of the soul.[16]

When Simmias cannot 'recall' the proofs, ἀποδείξεις, for the thesis that learning is recollection, Cebes rehearses for him the proof in the *Meno*'s slave-boy-demonstration. There is one excellent argument, Cebes says, namely, that when people are questioned, they are able, if someone asks the questions well, to say by themselves all that is; yet they surely would be unable to do so unless knowledge and a right account, ὀρθὸς λόγος, happened to be present within them. Thus, he continues, if one leads people to diagrams or anything else of that sort, there is proof positive that this is so (*Phd.* 73a7-b2).[17]

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that there was no original seeing. This claim, however, need not contradict the myth's claim that the soul has *seen* all things, both here and in Hades (*M.* 81c6-7), for the assumption in the myth that the soul is immortal, coupled with its assertion that all learning is recollection, makes it doubtful that there could have been, even in the myth, a first learning that is seeing but is not recollecting. The myth is generally sketchy, leaving its main contentions unclear or imprecise; yet, both the myth and the demonstration insist that all learning is recollection. (That the slave-boy is said [at *M.* 85e2-3] to be able to do what he has just done in geometry 'in all other subjects', καὶ τῶν ἄλλων μαθημάτων ἁπάντων, only reaffirms the demonstration's opening assertion that 'there is no teaching, but [only] recollection', οὔ ... διδαχὴν εἶναι ἀλλ' ἀνάμνησιν [*M.* 82a1-2].)

16 The *Meno*'s slave-boy-demonstration, though not the myth, does, however, proceed as Cebes' account does here: if the boy recovers from within truths that were in his soul but not acquired in this lifetime, his soul must be immortal.

17 Burnet (1911), 52, following Bury (1906), 13, argues that the matter of leading one to diagrams 'is opposed to, rather than included in', the process of asking questions well, even though the most straightforward reading of the preposition ἔπειτα that introduces the matter of leading one to diagrams, is 'thus'. Let us note, however, first, that in the *Meno*, the process of putting questions well to the slave-boy, that is, of asking him leading questions, is not separate from the use of diagrams: the questioning does not begin apart from the diagram; second, that Cebes certainly seems to be using the process of leading someone to diagrams as an illustration of asking questions well; third, that Cebes says explicitly that he is citing *one* excellent argument; moreover, that he offers but 'one' argument is striking, as it comes in response to Simmias's request for

The reference to the *Meno* is unmistakable.[18] The proof Cebes offers is but a summary of what takes place in the *Meno*'s slave-boy-demonstration. Socrates, there, leads the boy to a diagram, and asks his questions well — too well.[19] The boy, in turn, comes up with the correct answer, presumably *on his own*. Although the slave-boy does not really produce the correct answer on his own, Meno in the *Meno* concurs with Socrates' assessment that he does; and Cebes in the *Phaedo* appears to reach the same conclusion. Furthermore, although Socrates, in his recapitulation of the slave-boy- demonstration, determines that what the slave-boy has in his soul is not knowledge and a correct logos but only true opinions,[20] Cebes assumes, just as the

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'proofs' in the plural; and fourth, that Socrates refers in the singular, ταύτῃ, to the proof, ἀπόδειξις, that Cebes has just offered.

18 Somewhat remarkably, commentators have been hesitant to make the connection definitively. Gallop (1993), 88-89, says that this passage contains what is 'possibly an allusion to *Meno* 81e-86b'; Burnet (1911), says: 'This seems a fairly certain reference to *Meno* 82b9 sqq. No doubt, if we hold this doctrine and its proof to be genuinely Socratic, the reference to the *Meno* is less certain'. I am not sure exactly why Burnet thinks that the reference to the *Meno* becomes suspect if one takes the view and proof as genuinely Socratic; but, whatever he may mean, it is hard to see how there could be anything here but a direct allusion to the *Meno*. See also Hackforth (1955), 74, n. 1, who thinks that with respect to the leading of people to diagrams, there is a clear reference in this passage to the *Meno*, but that with respect to the 'proper questioning', there may be only 'a quite general reference to that Socratic 'midwifery' which is abundantly illustrated in the early dialogues'. I think, however, that, considering how many times Socrates in the *Meno* emphasizes that he is only asking questions and not teaching the slave-boy, it is highly unlikely that there is anything here but a reference to the *Meno*.

19 Cornford (1952), 51, recognizes that the phrase 'if one asks well' at *Phd.* 73a might point to 'some uneasiness' in Plato's mind with respect to the slave-boy-demonstration in the *Meno*, where Socrates' questions are leading ones.

20 We may compare Socrates' expression in the *Meno*, ἐνέσονται αὐτῷ ἀληθεῖς δόξαι, 'there are going to be present within him true opinions' (*M.* 86a7), with Cebes' καίτοι εἰ μὴ ἐτύγχανεν αὐτοῖς ἐπιστήμη ἐνοῦσα καὶ ὀρθὸς λόγος, 'yet, unless knowledge and right account were present within them' (*Phd.* 73a9-10). Although Socrates speaks at one point in the *Meno* of the knowledge the slave-boy has now (*M.* 85d9), he proceeds, I suggest, to reduce to absurdity the possibility that the slave-boy has knowledge now, concluding that all he has now are true opinions.

Meno's discussion predisposes Meno to assume, that what those questioned must have inside them is knowledge.[21]

Perhaps the most striking feature of the introduction of the *Meno*'s Theory of Recollection into the *Phaedo* is that the character who both introduces and defends it is not Socrates but Cebes. Not only is Socrates not the one to advance what Cebes presents as a customary Socratic view, but he will propose, momentarily, in his own name, a very different theory for which he will adduce a very different proof. Indeed, Socrates immediately distances himself from Cebes' proofs: 'But if you are not persuaded by that, Simmias, ... then see whether you might agree, looking at it this way' (*Phd.* 73b3-4). Moreover, he imputes doubts to Simmias that Simmias himself has not expressed: 'For are you indeed distrustful of how what is called learning is recollection?' (*Phd.* 73b4-5). Indeed, Socrates rushes in to ascribe doubt to Simmias before Simmias has had a chance to react on his own. Socrates thereby makes it quite plain that what Simmias has just heard, whether it aroused his suspicion or not, surely *ought* to have aroused his suspicion.[22]

Yet the fact is that Simmias is not doubtful, Ἀπιστῶ ... οὔ (*Phd.* 73b6). He is, as he says, 'nearly convinced', σχεδὸν πείθομαι, by Cebes' way of putting the matter; indeed, he is nearly able to 'recall', σχεδὸν μέμνημαι, that learning is recollection (*Phd.* 73b6-9). Yet, if Simmias is not doubtful, then it can only be Socrates who sees cause for doubt. Indeed, it is clear to

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21 Whereas Cebes is surely right to connect having knowledge with possessing a correct account, he is wrong to conclude that when those questioned are able to produce the right answer, that in itself demonstrates that they have knowledge and a correct account within. In the *Meno*, Socrates contends that the slave-boy's arriving at the right answer indicates that he has true opinions within. Yet how accurate is it to say that the slave-boy has, with respect to the diagonal, either knowledge or true opinions within? Surely, what he has within is the ability to follow the compelling proof for, and hence to learn, the new bit of geometry that Socrates teaches him.

22 See Hackforth (1955), 74, who says, rightly, that 'the description of the *Meno* argument as 'excellent' (κάλλιστος) is partly offset by Socrates' doubt whether Simmias finds it convincing'. Yet Hackforth resists drawing the conclusion for which I argue, namely, that Socrates is 'repudiating the earlier argument for recollection and immortality'. The most Hackforth (ibid.) will concede is that Socrates regards the argument he will currently expound as 'far superior'. See also Gulley (1954), 197: 'In 73c Plato introduces a new aspect of the theory, hinting at its novelty in his suggestion that if Simmias is not convinced by it in its presentation so far, then perhaps he will agree if it is presented in another way (73b)'.

Simmias that Socrates wants to provide a new and distinct formulation of the thesis: he would be pleased, he says, to hear how Socrates would put it.

What follows is Socrates' statement of the theory that learning is recollection, accompanied by a new proof. Neither the content nor the demonstration that Socrates presents resembles Cebes' account at all.

Socrates begins his account by distinguishing it from Cebes'. 'I, for my part', ἔγωγε, he says, 'put it this way' (*Phd.* 73c1).[23] The way Socrates puts it is, in other words, *not* Cebes' way. In what follows, Socrates departs both from Cebes' opening account of recollection, that is, from his paraphrase of the *Meno*'s myth, and from the proofs he provides for it, that is, from his review of the slave-boy-demonstration.

In the *Meno*, we may note, the slave-boy-demonstration is hardly the defense or proof that it purports to be of recollection as it appears in the recollection myth. On the contrary, the picture of the process of recollection that emerges from the myth is very different from the one that derives from the slave-boy-demonstration. The learner, according to the myth, is a solitary inquirer; no mention is made of his having need of another. Having lived numerous lives before the present one, and having seen and learned all things, namely, the things that there are both here and in Hades, he is able to recollect what he knew previously. Moreover, since all things have a natural kinship to one another, once he recollects a single thing, the recollection of all the others requires but courage and perseverance. The process of recollection as depicted in the slave-boy-demonstration, by contrast, resembles nothing so much as elenchus, a procedure that requires the participation of both a questioner and an answerer, a procedure that relies on questioning to arouse opinions held by the answerer but hidden from his view.[24] The *Phaedo*'s recollection passage needs to defeat both the *Meno*'s myth-related brand of recollection and the sort of recollection found in the slave-boy-demonstration: recollection in the *Phaedo* replaces both (1) the myth's notion that each of us learns, exclusively, by recapturing, by ourselves, by trying hard, things we saw in a previous lifetime, since 'all nature

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23 See Burger (1984), 71: 'Dissatisfied, apparently, with Cebes' enactment of recollection, Socrates takes over'. We shall see at the end of this paper that Socrates wishes to substitute in the *Phaedo* for the version of recollection in the *Meno* a version suitable to Simmias and Cebes: just as the *Meno*'s version is fashioned for Meno's sake, so is the *Phaedo*'s designed for Simmias and Cebes.

24 I do not contend that the slave-boy-demonstration is a genuine elenchus, however, for, in my view, Socrates in the demonstration is a knower who in fact teaches the slave-boy something the slave-boy never knew before.

is akin', and (2) the slave-boy-demonstration's notion that we learn, exclusively, by 'recollecting', that is, by being asked questions and being shown diagrams, with (3) the distinct notion that *sometimes* when we learn we do so by recollecting Forms with which we were acquainted before birth.

Two divergences from Cebes' statement of the recollection thesis thus appear immediately: first, whereas, according to Cebes, whatever was learned previously must have been learned before one was in human form, according to Socrates in the *Phaedo*, what was previously known could have been learned at any previous time; second, whereas, according to Cebes, the proof of the soul's immortality lies in that one can only be reminded of what one has learned before this lifetime, according to Socrates in the *Phaedo*, the soul's immortality is not derivable solely from the phenomenon of 'being reminded', since one can be reminded, as Socrates says, as long as one knew the thing one is reminded of — 'before', πρότερον (*Phd.* 73c2), that is, at any previous time.

Socrates is not, of course, correcting only Cebes. What he is correcting is the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno*. In affirming that one's being reminded requires only that one have known 'before', he challenges both the *Meno*'s assumption that *all* knowledge is acquired prenatally and its premature conclusion that, therefore, the soul is immortal. In the *Phaedo*, the immortality of the soul will stand or fall with the recollection specifically of Forms — entities which, as the *Phaedo* argues, can be 'seen' not by embodied, but only by disembodied, souls.

As Socrates continues, he makes his position even clearer. It is not that all learning is recollection (as in the *Meno*); it is only when knowledge comes to one by one's being reminded that there is recollection (*Phd.* 73c4-5).[25] Any other way of learning, then, is not recollection. And how is one reminded? Is it, as the *Meno* would have us believe, by being asked a question or by being shown the answer in a diagram?; is it true, in other

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25 The term ἐπιστήμη in this passage refers not to the agent's cognitive state but to the thing known: it is the just-mentioned necessarily previously known thing, τι (*Phd.* 73c1), that comes, παραγίγνηται, to one (*Phd.* 73c4-5). See *Phd.* 75e4, where 'the knowledges' (pl.), τὰς ἐπιστήμας, are clearly not the agent's many knowings, but the many (previously) known things. The terms 'knowledge' and 'know' are used loosely in this passage, sometimes meaning no more than 'coming to think of', and sometimes, having full understanding. It has the former sense in many of the examples Socrates uses of reminding and being put in mind of, as well as at *Phd.* 74b2-4 and 74c9.

words, that the slave-boy was 'being reminded' of something?[26] Not according to Socrates in the *Phaedo*. For, in the *Phaedo*, being reminded occurs when someone sees, hears, or in some other way senses something and, upon doing so, recognizes not only the thing perceived, but also, as a result of that perception, something else (*Phd.* 73c6-8). Moreover, the knowledge by which a thing of which one is reminded is known must be, Socrates insists, not the same as, but different from, the knowledge by which the original thing is recognized (*Phd.* 73c8).

Many subtle and ingenious suggestions have been made with respect to what Socrates intends by this last qualification, that is, by the stipulation that the knowledge with which the reminding thing is known differs from the knowledge with which the thing of which one is reminded is known.[27] Hackforth (1955), 67, n. 4, for example, thinks that the qualification seeks to rule out as bona fide recollection one's being reminded, when one perceives *x*, of the characteristics of *x* that one does not perceive at the moment — since the knowledge by which one knows *x*'s characteristics would be the same knowledge as that by which one knows *x*. For Burnet (1911), 54, it is knowledge of opposites that does not count for Socrates as genuine recollection — since the knowledge of one of the opposites is not distinct from the knowledge of the other. For Ackrill (1974), 184, what Socrates wishes to exclude as a true case of being reminded is the case in which 'thinking of *y* is already involved in perceiving and recognizing *x*. One would not want to say that something brings so-and-so to mind if so-and-so is necessarily in mind when that something is'. According to Ackrill, then, if on seeing a picture of Simmias one thinks of Simmias, one has *not* been reminded — for in recognizing that this is a picture of Simmias, one has already, by the same knowledge, as it were, thought of Simmias.[28]

Since, however, the case of one's being reminded of Simmias by seeing his picture serves as Socrates' prime example of what being reminded *is*, it certainly seems that Ackrill must be misunderstanding Socrates' point. And

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26 Socrates virtually never asks the slave-boy if he remembers or is reminded of anything; the one time that he does so (*M.* 84e), he asks him if he remembers what the question is!

27 See Bostock (1986), 64, who notes Plato's 'obscure condition that the knowledge of the reminding thing, and of the thing it reminds us of, should not be "the same knowledge"'.

28 See also Burger (1984), 73, who says: 'Of course, one would 'know' the image only if one knows Simmias, and just for that reason, it is unclear how it could satisfy the condition that knowledge of what is recollected be other than knowledge of what causes the recollection'.

neither Burnet nor Hackforth explains why it is so important to Socrates that the knowledge with which the reminding thing is known differ from the knowledge with which the thing of which the reminding thing reminds one is known. Yet, if one reads this passage of the *Phaedo* as a correction of the *Meno*'s Theory of Recollection, it becomes immediately evident what is at stake for Socrates in this otherwise obscure point. In the slave-boy demonstration, the diagonal that is drawn reminds the slave-boy of no other diagonal. The drawn diagonal in itself constitutes the answer to the geometrical problem at hand. That is why, despite what Socrates says in the *Meno*, the slave-boy does not 'recollect'. The simple fact is that he does not recollect because he is not reminded by the sight of one thing of something *else* that is the object of a different knowledge. The slave-boy is simply *taught* by way of a diagram how to answer the problem at hand. If the slave-boy were reminded, by seeing the drawn diagonal, of, say, the geometer's perfect and purely conceptual diagonal,[29] which surely *is* the object of a separate and distinct knowledge, then and only then would his learning qualify as 'recollection'.

Through this caveat, Socrates sets the stage for what is for him the most important kind of reminding and being reminded, namely, when a thing of 'lower' ontological status serves as a reminder of a similar thing of 'higher' ontological status. In a case of this kind, the one who knows surely knows the things in question with two different knowledges. When one is reminded of Simmias by seeing a 'drawn' Simmias, one is reminded by an ontologically inferior Simmias of an ontologically superior one.[30] Although it is true that one knows Simmias and Cebes by different knowledges, and that one knows Cebes' lyre and Cebes by different knowledges, the more interesting and significant instance of knowing by different knowledges, the instance toward which the discussion progresses and in whose discovery it culminates, is that of knowing the real Simmias from knowing the drawn one. It is

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29 Cf. *Rep.* 6.511d, where Socrates notes that although geometers use visible figures and make claims about them, their thought is directed not to the figures but to the thing they resemble: the Square Itself, the Diagonal Itself — 'not the diagonal they draw'.

30 It has been asked why Socrates speaks of a 'drawn' or 'pictured' Simmias, rather than of a picture of Simmias. The answer, I think, is that Socrates wishes to contrast Simmiases of different ontological orders. By speaking of a drawn Simmias and of a real one, Socrates speaks of different kinds of Simmias; yet it is not as clear that a picture of Simmias is a kind of Simmias. In addition, the drawn, γεγραμμένον, Simmias, horse, etc., calls to mind the drawn diagonal, the γραμμή that reaches from one corner of the square to the other.

by way of the Simmias example that Socrates is able to make the transition to what most concerns him: how one is reminded by sensibles of their corresponding Forms.

Having reviewed several kinds of reminding in which things that are different from one another serve, respectively, as the reminding and reminded things — seeing lyres and cloaks reminds one of their owners; seeing Simmias reminds one of Cebes; seeing a drawn horse or lyre reminds one of a person; seeing a drawn Simmias reminds one of Cebes — Socrates goes on to conclude that recollection occurs especially when the thing recalled has been forgotten, either through lapse of time or through inattention (*Phd.* 73e).[31] (Here, too, let us note, there is a significant departure from the *Meno*: in the *Meno* myth, Socrates does not say whether or not knowledge once acquired is stored or forgotten; and the slave-boy's current knowledge was either known always or acquired in his present lifetime. Conspicuously absent from the *Meno*'s account is precisely what we have in the *Phaedo*, namely, knowledge acquired in a previous life, then forgotten, and later recalled.) Socrates then proceeds to discuss the last of the cases reviewed, the case in which one is reminded of something by a similar thing — for example, when a drawn Simmias reminds one of the real Simmias. It is only in this case, says Socrates, that the question arises of whether the reminding thing is deficient with respect to that of which it reminds.[32]

Having broached the issue of deficiency, Socrates is able to take his first step in the direction of what will shortly be his proof for immortality. Socrates speaks of the relationship between equal logs or stones, on the one hand, and the Equal Itself, on the other.[33] Although it is the sensible equals

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31 'Reminded' and 'forgotten' are obviously being used rather broadly here to mean, respectively, 'being put in mind of' and 'not having in mind at the moment'; otherwise, seeing Cebes could not remind one of Simmias without Simmias's being quite forgotten. Thus, when Gosling (1965), 154, says: 'Normally, when I see my wife's handbag it does not remind me of my wife, even if it makes me think of her: I am not that forgetful', he is pressing 'remind' and 'forget' too hard or reading them too narrowly.

32 Gosling (1965), 160, is surely right to note that when we ask whether or not a pictured Simmias is deficient with respect to Simmias, we are not asking whether it is a good likeness but whether it is actually Simmias or just a representation of him: if the pictured Simmias lacks not a single feature of Simmias, then it does not remind one of Simmias; one thinks it is Simmias. To speak in terms of being reminded is to recognize an ontological falling-short.

33 We should note that the *Phaedo* does not limit the Forms to those of mathematics and virtue. It puts all Forms on an equal footing, mentioning, in particular, largeness, health, and strength (at *Phd.* 65d). Interestingly, it is just

that 'remind' one of the Equal itself, they do so by way of their deficiency:[34] they, unlike the Equal Itself, can appear unequal and can change from being equal to being unequal.[35] How, Socrates wonders, could one recognize the deficiency of equal logs and stones unless one were formerly acquainted with the perfection of which these fall short?[36] It is only when things are similar, let us note, that, from seeing the one that is deficient, a person comes to think of the other that is perfect.[37]

The perfect realities, the Forms, that are known by way of the perception of their similar sensibles, Socrates now contends, must have been known by us before such time as we perceived the sensibles that are similar to them and recognized their deficiency. Yet we begin sensing at birth. Hence, Socrates concludes, we must have had knowledge of the Forms before

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these three that Socrates uses in the *Meno* (*M.* 72d-e) to illustrate his point that in defining a term one looks not to the variable individual instances of the term but to what they have in common. Yet, in the *Meno*, there are no Forms that correspond to these qualities.

34 Scott (1995), 63, n. 12, asks why the senses are necessary as a catalyst for recollection: 'Another possibility, one that Plato ignores, is that we grasp the forms by rational intuition without any need for the senses'. What Scott's question fails to take into account is that grasping the Forms 'by rational intuition without any need for the senses' is not recollection. It is, Socrates contends, when one learns by recollection that a sensible reminder is required. There are, however, for him, other ways of learning — perhaps even, as suggested at the beginning of this paper and in n. 12 — other ways of grasping the Forms.

35 Here, too, I agree with Gosling (1965), 160, that the sensible equals are not deficient in being less equal than the Equal Itself. To be deficient equals is to fail to be 'eternally and immutably equal'.

36 The assumption here is that unless one already had the notion of perfection, one could not recognize things as deficient, yet one could (obviously) have the notion of perfection without having perceived deficiency. Perhaps it is because the prisoners in the Cave in *Rep.* 7 do not recognize the deficiency of their perceptions that they never 'recollect' Forms.

37 The sensible equals are other (ἕτεροι) than the Equal Itself. But they are similar (ὅμοιοι) rather than dissimilar (ἀνόμοιοι) to one another. When Cebes is asked whether it is in being similar or dissimilar to the many equals that the Equal Itself comes to be known from them, Cebes answers, as if in a comedy routine, 'Certainly'. The right answer is: 'from being similar'. Socrates lets the point go. (Later, however, Socrates is careful not to make the same mistake. When he wants Simmias to say whether we are born knowing or are later reminded of the things of which we acquired knowledge before, he says: 'Then which do you choose, Simmias?' [76a9]).

birth.[38] We apparently do not hold on to our knowledge of the Forms when we are born and during our lives because, as Socrates points out to a confused Simmias (at *Phd.* 76b), we cannot give an account of them.[39] That means we must forget them when we are born.[40] And if we forget them at

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38 This Socratic argument has caused scholars considerable consternation. See, for example, Cornford (1952), 51. For it seems that Socrates must be confusing the idea (a) that we start sensing at birth with the idea (b) that at birth we make the determination that our sensibles fall short of the corresponding Forms; otherwise, how could he derive from the notion (c) that our knowledge of the Forms must precede our judgment that sensibles fall short of them, the conclusion (d) that we must know the Forms before birth, that is, before *the moment at which our sensing begins*? Yet surely there is a better way of understanding Socrates' point: he is, after all, hardly so foolish as to think that as soon as we begin perceiving we begin making the determination that sensibles fall short of their corresponding Forms. Let us consider, then, the following alternative construal of Socrates' argument: Since it is from sensibles that we are put in mind of the Forms insofar as we judge sensibles deficient, and since, however, *we are unable to get knowledge of the Forms once we begin using our senses*, it follows that we had to have gotten our original knowledge of the Forms before we were born — since we begin using our senses at the moment of birth. In this argument, Socrates relies not on the notion that knowledge of the Forms necessarily precedes the judgment that sensibles are deficient with respect to them, but on a point made earlier, namely, that sentient beings are precluded from knowing the Forms, insofar as the senses hinder reason's ability to know them (see *Phd.* 65b-66a). Indeed, that Socrates' argument depends on this earlier point is confirmed by Simmias's remark: 'That must follow *from what has been said before*, Socrates' (*Phd.* 75b9). On Socrates' view, our sense-perceptions remind us of the Forms we once knew before we began sensing, but they hinder rather than aid us as we seek to regain our former knowledge.

39 Socrates here confirms a point made earlier in Cebes' statement of the Theory of Recollection, that there is a link between having knowledge and being able to give an account. This notion is found as well in the *Meno*'s discussion of knowledge as what results from 'working out the reason', αἰτίας λογισμός (*M.* 98a).

40 Neither the *Meno* nor the *Phaedo* recognizes such a thing as latent knowledge. In both dialogues, when one has knowledge, one knows. Whereas the slave-boy is said to have (latent) true opinions in his soul that are aroused by questioning, Socrates eliminates the possibility that the knowledge the boy has now could be latent, when he says that if one had knowledge always 'one was always knowing', ἀεὶ καὶ ἦν ἐπιστήμων (*M.* 85d12): one cannot have knowledge yet not know. The *Meno*'s myth speaks of what the soul once knew, ἠπίστατο (*M.* 81c9), and of its ability to 'learn' — by way of recollecting — what it once knew. But it never quite affirms that when the soul 'recollects', it recollects

the moment of birth, we surely could not also get them at the moment of birth. Therefore, we must get them before we are born. By perceiving sensibles, we are reminded of the perfect realities that we once knew — before birth. Therefore, our souls must have existed before birth.

The recollection in the *Phaedo*, then, that proves the soul's immortality is radically different from the recollection in the *Meno*. The recollection in the *Phaedo* is not 'recollection' by way of questions or diagrams; it is recollection of pure Forms by way of deficient sensibles. The recollection in the *Meno*'s slave-boy-demonstration does not even involve being reminded: what the drawn diagonal puts the slave-boy in mind of is the drawn diagonal; indeed, the drawn diagonal in the *Meno* is never recognized to be in any way deficient. Moreover, being reminded in the *Phaedo* is not the whole of re-acquiring knowledge formerly possessed; rather, being reminded makes the recollector aware of what he does not know by reminding him *that* he once knew it. According to the *Phaedo*, one recollects, that is, is put in mind of, via sense-perception, things that one formerly knew; but insofar as one is not able, simply by virtue of having been reminded, to give an account of the things one is put in mind of, it seems that the recollection by which one is put in mind of something previously known does not suffice for coming to know again what one knew before.

What the soul in the *Phaedo* remembers is what it cannot know when it is embodied; in the *Meno*, however, it remembers what it learned in previous lives — both here and in Hades. In the *Meno* myth, one is able to recollect what one knew in previous lives because 'all nature is akin', συγγενοῦς (*M.*

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knowledge that is latent. (In general, the myth leaves such matters unclear and imprecise.) The *Phaedo* maintains that the soul knows the Forms before it enters a human body. At the moment of entry, its knowledge is lost — forgotten. And even when the soul catches a glimpse of the Forms it once knew, it does not yet know: in order to have knowledge, the soul must be able to 'give an account' of what it 'recollects'. Recollection, then, is, in neither dialogue, the process by which one gains access to knowledge that has been stored; if anything, it is the first step in a process by which one re-acquires knowledge one once had but lost, that is, knowledge that is not latent but gone. (On this point, see *Phd.* 75d10 and 76b5.) Since having knowledge, unlike having true opinions, involves understanding (or, in Socrates' words, the ability to give an account), knowledge cannot be latent: although one does not think and cannot be thinking about all one knows all the time, if one does not understand something one *is* thinking about, one cannot be said nevertheless to have knowledge of that thing, latent or otherwise.

81d1);[41] in the *Phaedo*, one is able to recollect what one knew because one's soul is 'akin', συγγενής, to the Forms (*Phd.* 79d3; 84b2). In the *Meno*, one has knowledge of the very things of which one has opinions; in the *Phaedo*, one's soul, by following reason, beholds what is true and divine 'and *not* the object of opinion', ἀδόξαστον (*Phd.* 84a8). In the *Meno*, one's soul recollects what it has seen both here and in Hades; in the *Phaedo*, one's soul recollects what it has seen in '"Hades" in the true sense', Ἅιδου ὡς ἀληθῶς (*Phd.* 80d6-7), that is, in the realm of the non-visible (ἀϊδής) intelligibles, the Forms.[42] In the *Meno*, no release from the cycle of rebirth is envisioned: the soul goes from here to Hades and back — over and over again; in the *Phaedo*, the soul of a man who has lived philosophically is returned to its natural home to dwell in the rarefied atmosphere of the pure, the unseen, the intelligible: the Forms.

It has been argued that (1) the *Phaedo* is the only dialogue within the Platonic corpus besides the *Meno* where the Theory of Recollection is set forth as a Socratic or Platonic account of human learning, yet (2) the *Phaedo*'s account departs radically from the *Meno*'s, and (3) the *Phaedo*'s account repudiates the *Meno*'s. In light of these conclusions, it seems that if, for reasons internal to the *Meno*, one is inclined to believe that Socrates does not seriously endorse its version of recollection, one need not, for reasons external to it, relinquish that inclination.

In closing, it is perhaps worth noting that Socrates is an unqualified fan of recollection in neither the *Meno* nor the *Phaedo*. Just as he limits his endorsement of the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno*, so he does, as we have seen, in the *Phaedo* as well: he raises the possibility that there might be no Forms, in which case there would be nothing for the immortal soul to be remembering when it notes the deficiency of sensibles (*Phd.* 76d-e). If Socrates is unhappy with the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno* and therefore substitutes for that version a different Theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo*, why, we may wonder, does Socrates raise doubts about the Theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo*?

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41 Since in the *Meno* all nature is akin, there are no ontological levels that might clear a space for the kind of recollection we find in the *Phaedo*.

42 Plato's fondness for plays on words is in evidence also at *Phd.* 92d, where Simmias prefers recollection theory to attunement theory because, although recollection theory, too, has not been proved, ἀποδείξασθαι, it, unlike attunement theory, is worthy of acceptance, ἀποδέξασθαι. A (far worse) pun, similar to the Ἅιδης/ἀϊδής one of our passage, is found at *Rep.* 6.509d: '... while the other [the sun] is king of the visible, ὁρατοῦ. I don't say 'of heaven', οὐρανοῦ, so as not to seem to you to be playing the sophist with the name'.

Socrates' introduction of the Theory of Recollection in both the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* — in their respective versions — reflects the great care he takes for his interlocutors. Meno is a misologist of the very type described in the *Phaedo* at 90c-e.[43] When arguments conflict or disappoint, he is quick to bail out. For the sake of securing Meno's continued participation in what he, Socrates, regards as all-important virtue inquiry, Socrates fashions a Theory of Recollection that will appeal to Meno — one that recalls Pythagorean ideas familiar to Meno, plays on Meno's pride in his ability to remember, and capitalizes on Meno's love of the esoteric and ostentatious, the τραγική. Unlike Meno, however, Simmias and Cebes are avid arguers. In that sense they are already deeply philosophical.[44] We note in this regard Simmias's speech at *Phd.* 85c, a speech worthy of Socrates in the *Meno*: 'I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do too, that in these matters certain knowledge is either impossible or very hard to come by in this life; but that even so, not to test what is said about them in every possible way, without leaving off till one has examined them exhaustively from every aspect, shows a very feeble spirit ... ' (trans. Gallop). The Theory of Recollection, then, that Socrates proposes in the *Phaedo* has the goal of turning Simmias and Cebes not to philosophy construed as the life of argument but to a different kind of philosophical life, to the somewhat otherworldly life of communing with transcendent Forms. Indeed, it is this latter type of philosophy, the sort that separates one from one's body and frees one's intellect to consort with truth, that is repeatedly called in the *Phaedo* not simply 'philosophy' but philosophy 'in the proper manner', ὀρθῶς: at 64a4-8, 67b4, 67d8, 67e4, and 69d2. It is also called 'real philosophy', τῷ ὄντι, at 68b2-3. When Socrates, then,

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43 This passage of the *Phaedo* is very much in the spirit of *M.* 81d-e and *M.* 86b-c, where Socrates diagnoses as lazy, soft, and cowardly those who refuse to inquire, taking refuge in eristic argument. Socrates warns in the *Phaedo* that when arguments go awry, it is not the arguments but those who present them who are to be blamed. 'But we must be courageous and be eager to be sound' (*Phd.* 90e3). Let us note that Socrates, even in the *Phaedo*, does not promise that there will be knowledge at the end of rigorous argument.

44 When the others present show signs of frustration and require a pep talk by Socrates, Simmias and Cebes are the only ones who are not in danger of lapsing into misology. The only thing that might keep them from pursuing an argument is their concern for Socrates — not any unwillingness to continue arguing. See *Phd.* 88c-91c. See also *Phd.* 63a1-3: 'There goes Cebes again, always hunting down arguments, and not at all willing to accept at once what anyone may say'. Simmias, too, even near the dialogue's very end (107a-b), still admits to having misgivings about the argument; he remains prepared to argue further.

prevents Simmias from being satisfied with Cebes' presentation of recollection, he intimates, in effect, not simply that that version is defective in certain ways, but that it is not suitable for Simmias. For the Theory of Recollection that Socrates fashions for the sake of Simmias and Cebes is not one that urges, as the *Meno*'s version of recollection does, the ordinary soul to seek to remember all that it has learned here and in Hades, but one that inspires the philosophical soul to yearn to recover Forms. Yet Socrates succeeds no better with Simmias and Cebes than he does with Meno. Meno does not turn to the life of argument; Simmias and Cebes do not turn away from it.[45] Despite his failures, however, the valiance of Socrates' efforts and the lengths to which he is willing to go for the sake of his interlocutors attest to the boundlessness of the benefaction he seeks to bestow on all those he encounters — old or young, Athenian or stranger.

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45 Cebes and Simmias endorse a philosophical life they neither live nor understand. Neither Simmias nor Cebes can give an 'account' of the Forms — indeed, Simmias believes that once Socrates dies there will be no one who can. Furthermore, it is not at all clear to them that death is not fearful. And before Socrates suggests otherwise, Simmias counts even Evenus as a philosopher.

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