

The Most Basic Need

At first this seems to be a presumptuous title, but the choice becomes more self-evident the more we delve into the content at hand. I identify our most basic need as worship. It can apply to anything or anyone, at any time and at any place. Putting it as such sounds somewhat child-like and even immature in its apparently grand sweep. A person would say to him or herself something like “God forbid. I’d never be caught dead or alive subscribing to that!” Further reflection might qualify this by saying, okay. I was too hasty with my response, but I acknowledge that’s how our ancestors had behaved. It served them well, but we grown-ups have moved well beyond that primitive stage.

Despite the glib response, I can’t help but notice an element of humor. That consists in standing back and watching the way we deny what’s so embarrassingly real despite the fact it’s facing us head-on. Although formal religious worship has been relegated to the background of our lives or eliminated altogether, never can the desire to worship be suppressed. In a persistent and frustrating manner it bobs up the more we try to push it down. We don’t have to look far for examples. The simplest and most blatant ones can be found in the media day after day. Observe how many people rush from story to story, image to image in an effort not so much to satisfy our curiosity...true enough...but our need to give allegiance. Once we do we’re satisfied on the deepest level of our being even if it’s done at a distance. In fact, more often than not we fail to acknowledge that our most basic need is this one, to give allegiance. Once we’ve done that, we expect the same in return.

At first such talk sounds a bit odd but turns out to be spot on the more we reflect upon it. Therefore why not recognize this impulse of worship as it is and direct it to its proper end? Sounds like a great idea, but unfortunately we’ve lost sight of what that end might be. Such is the problem at hand, for that end is completely transcendent which we recognize in a kind of half-ass way. However, most people are clueless as to what the word transcendent means. Transcendence has pretty much disappeared from common parlance. At the same time, there’s no reason for despair. Our desire to engage in some form of worship is so strong that never can we ignore it. In light of this, why not follow its lead and see what happens? We have this desire hard-wired within us or better, we **are** in fact this desire, so recognizing it turns out to be a humongous relief.

When talking about needs, the first thing that comes to mind is self-preservation, the way we automatically ward off any physical danger large or small. Actually that’s something we do day in, day out, without being fully aware of the fact. A whole series of insignificant events and encounters comprises the way we negotiate in and around everyday objects and situations. If left unattended as to their consequences, they could do us serious harm. Because self-preservation is so basic, I wonder if it qualifies as a need commonly understood. Rather, I prefer to call it an ur-need. Anyway, I throw it out there as a starting point not wanting to get bogged down by semantics.

As for what falls under the category of needs, more precisely we could start with drinking water which we have to do each day simply to keep alive. Obviously we need to eat food though we can go without that for a longer time. No doubt we couldn't survive for long without proper nourishment, so much so that we don't even reflect on it. From here we can tack on psychological and spiritual needs that are even more important to keep us sane. No need to describe them here since they've been talked about so often.

In light of the brief outline just presented, arguably there's not just one basic need but a multitude of them which work together to show just how weak and dependent we are both physically and psychologically. I'd say the sooner we arrive at this conclusion the better off we'll be. This doesn't mean we walk around with a woe-is-me attitude looking for pity everywhere we can find it. Rather, awareness of our vulnerability keeps us close to the ground. When we fall, we don't have far to go. Strange to say, we discover that there we find everything that supports our existence...and then some, if I may put it that way. At the same time we can grow in being resentful for being in such a situation. We wish to get out of it and unfortunately look to something or someone to lift us up, the chief means as through the giving of allegiance already noted. From there it's one small step to worship.

This attempt at trying to locate our most basic need had preoccupied me for some time, longer than I had imagined. I guess it grew out of a personal want or wants that despite having been taken care of, made me aware of not just my innate poverty but that of other people. Suddenly I saw everyone around me as in some kind of need. It was pitiful and humorous at the same time. Also I remained in the dark for not being able to uncover it. In the meanwhile my efforts were more like an archaeological dig. I'd discover part of the object without knowing how far it was buried in the ground. The joy of having found it made me stop then and there, thinking that I got the whole thing but in a short time realized that I was just scratching the surface. This persisted for some time after which it created a certain weariness. I had made a great discovery but failed to have a plan to unearth it fully. To do so requires a different skill set which I needed to acquire, so at the moment I was relatively clueless how to obtain it. That's when I decided to examine praise starting with some notable examples from the Bible. At first praise seemed to be an artificial response, but the more I looked at the texts, the more I saw how satisfying it was for those doing it.

While what I had just described in terms of a partial discovery, by chance I came across a biblical passage which pointed out with great clarity a fuller reality which I was seeking. This happened quietly, without much fanfare as you'd suspect to be the case. Though I can't recall the details, the passage from the Book of Daniel pointed out what I had desired for so long. The more precise source is Chapter Three verses nineteen onward. Technically speaking after verse twenty-three in the **RSV** come sixty-eight verses not in Hebrew but in Greek. These verses are located in the Septuagint as a separate entity.

Okay, so I managed to successfully excavate an apparently satisfying excerpt which goes by the name of The Song of the Three Young Men. I enjoyed the way the text presented the details, as

though they couldn't come fast enough. It struck me as not unlike something composed for a child and geared for being read aloud. In this way the child can take delight in all the vivid details. But before jumping into the text, let's first see how it's situated in a larger picture keeping in mind that this can go only so far. Easily we could expand further out until we lose the entire context. For our purpose the furthest expansion is Chapter Three which commences with King Nebuchadnezzar fashioning an image of gold (actually gold plated), a whopping ninety feet high. Note the fantastic imagery which continues with all the Babylonian officials compelled to worship such a monstrosity. They're to commence worshipping at the sound of various musical instruments, one of which in vs. 5 is a bagpipe ¹. I guess by worship we mean everyone would bow down or lay prostrate on the ground and not dare to move unless directed otherwise. Should anyone fail to comply, we can leave that blank without going into further details. Such threats associated with praise are unfortunate and can color our perception of it.

The text presents the bad guys pretty much as pawns of King Nebuchadnezzar which is done in that same child-like manner of telling a story. Actually their badness isn't all that compelling. They're simply agents there for carrying out a plan regardless of what they think of it. Now that we've got the villains covered, it's time for our heroes Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to make an appearance. Keep in mind that in vs. 8 they are among some of the Jews who didn't comply to King Nebuchadnezzar's decree. For them that'd be idol worship, the worst thing imaginable.

Also be aware that the three companions were taken captive and were well treated in the palace of the Babylonian king who intended to have them assume prominent positions in governance of his kingdom. In many ways they ended up far better than they if they had lived out their days in their native land, so we can be certain they intended to make the best of it. At the same time to their credit they didn't cave in to what the king wanted most of all. Keep in mind that some of the king's enemies were hostile toward the Jews and saw an opportunity to get at them by accusing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of not serving the local deities nor the recently established golden image. For them the punishment was to be cast into a burning fiery furnace, another storybook type image.

We all know what happened next. However, Dan 3.18 brings up what I consider the most important point that can be easily overlooked yet says a lot about the relationship the three had with God. In fact, it's central to this document and should be noted at this juncture. They flat out told King Nebuchadnezzar that if their God was unable to deliver them from the burning fiery furnace, that would suit them just fine. The words run as follows: "But if not, be it known to you, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." Note the light-some spirit marked by a genuine indifference through the simple words "but if not." Actually I came close to using them as the title. Though this response has nothing to do concerning worshipping or not worshipping, I venture to say it's the highest form worship. It's precisely what the Lord is looking for or more precisely, in which to take delight. He

1 No matter how hard we try to avoid any association, the image of a bagpipe is forever associated with an image of Scotland.

recognizes it and compares it with the brashness of King Nebuchadnezzar as he thumps his chest saying everyone must worship the idol he has just set up. The whole situation would be comical if human lives weren't at stake.

As for King Nebuchadnezzar, you can feel the biblical author's delight in vs. 19 when he says he was full of fury and especially when "the expression of his face was changed." In other words, his physical expression matched the furnace at hand which he ordered to be heated seven times beyond its limit. Surely Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thought the king to be immature (that's putting it lightly) while at the same time they couldn't help but see a sense of humor in the situation. No doubt that by now the three friends were on the verge of being cast into the furnace. The final step was for certain mighty men to bind them fully clothed, another description presented in a vivid yet child-like manner. As for these men, the furnace was so hot that it swallowed them up. And so the more details which are heaped on, the better the effect. At the same time, the way the text presents the story has a distinct lack of horror because we know how it concludes in favor of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

It's at or around this point that of the three companions Azariah (also known as Abednego) offered the prayer as we have it in the Septuagint. Though all three were fully prepared to meet their fate—their trust in God made them completely unafraid—now was the moment of truth. Note the almost nonchalant manner displayed by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego once they've been cast into the furnace. The Septuagint text began both in a formal yet casual manner, "Then Azarias stood up and prayed accordingly." That is to say, he alone did this through vs. 22 as a kind of spokesman before the other two chimed in.

Azariah follows a traditional pattern, if you will, first blessing God, etc. Then he gets right into the nitty-gritty of the human condition, that is, in a matter-of-fact way he speaks in the first person plural thereby avoiding any passing on of blame or guilt. This is really good stuff, something the Lord takes delight in hearing not because he's listening to someone at fault but simply an acknowledgment of the truth. Then vs. 23 gets back to the king's servants who "did not cease feeding the furnace fires" which burned those by the furnace. In other words, we have some more thrilling details.

Now a mysterious entity steps in described as the angel of the Lord. First this heavenly being drove out the fiery flame and in its place inserted a moist whistling wind, the verb *diasurizo* meaning to whistle along with a *pneuma* (wind, spirit) which is *drosos*, a noun often rendered as dew or anything tender. This dramatic intervention was of course welcomed and expected by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Again, if it didn't happen, they would be just fine being burned to a crisp. This indifference as to one's personal fate is at the heart of praise, a character that can be easily overlooked.

Now in vs. 28 the floodgates of praise open up when all three companions as one mouth praise, glorify and bless God (*humneo*, *doxazo* and *eulogeo*). And so follows just about every verse from the rest of this text with "blessed" or *eulogeo*. While this is taking place in an

extraordinary circumstance and without a doubt is admirable, the question arises, is it possible to engage in praise if not at all times then most of the time? That's the question we ask ourselves when reading this account. As for another way of putting it, is this a desirable practice in today's society? Can the demands of modern life with its emphasis upon technology plus the regular chores needed to be performed each day run parallel with praising God? What we see in the text at hand obviously is exceptional yet it has a public or liturgical quality we expect as proper to special circumstances. Unfortunately we compare this with our everyday ordinary lives as being off limits. To us the bland character of daily existence precludes any divine intervention. And so we've erected our very own idol to take the place of God, basing this erection on supposedly solid observation.

It seems that you commence any act of praise with a real jolt or noticeable jump start which differs considerably from sustaining it as a continuous activity. That's something we have to be aware of, for such praise in essence is not meant to be sustained. In other words, there's nothing gradual about the beginning and end of praise. It hits you in one big lump, not in pieces, and often comes to an equally quick end. Again, just look at how Azariah starts followed by his two companions. In the case at hand a truly earth-shattering event got the praise going and sustained it albeit for a limited period of time.

The sudden and full-throttled way praise commences makes you want to examine how this marvel came about. When it happens, the first thing that strikes you is that praise is the most natural thing we can do or to put it better, it's a condition of being from which any doing flows. If we're honest about ourselves, while engaged in praise never have we felt better all around. I think that's what most of us are seeking when talking about it and tend to label as the after effects of praise. Even putting it as such is awkward. Praise has no after effects by reason of its transcendent character. As for the sense of well-being, it starts from the marrow in our bones and spreads outwardly into all the organs our bodies so much that we can literally feel it in the molecules of which we're composed. This isn't speaking metaphorically nor making something up. It's a provable fact. All that's required is going out, doing it and seeing the results. On the other hand, praise of an idol—thing or person—similarly grasps our being but with a major difference. It sucks the life from our very selves.

Should we be engaged in an act of praise either intense or not so intense, after short while a growing sense of our innate boundedness or the way we're so limited can creep in and subtly suggest "go no further." However, we can offset it by acknowledging a spirit of gratitude for the praise in which we are finding delight. If it were otherwise, the sense of well-being passing from within us to without us would dissolve into space and fail to reverberate within us as usual.

As for the joy that's produced, we realize that we alone are receivers of it. No doubt praise springs from within and is part of us, yet we are not its source. At the same time there's no obligation thrust upon us telling that it's necessary to praise God or else face the consequences. Here words tend to fail us, but we can say with some confidence that praise attracts us because

it's natural to our being. In a way, like recognizes like. This is not a fanciful description but one we can observe at any time provided the occasion for praise is genuine, not faked. As for faking, that's be dealt with shortly.

Even a momentary taste of what was just described relative to prayer dislocates our habitual perception of space and time which more often than not we feel is a real drag. For the most part both are heavy and tend to pull us down, the exact opposite of that outward movement tied in with praise described above. I just touched upon space as a blessed confinement that expands outward. Then there's time, the passage of which so often oppresses us. We have to be on the watch here because time can quickly become our worst enemy since we're confronted with it constantly. It passes either quickly or drags on, no middle ground. Should our bodies be filled with an expansion already posited as moving outward from within, it covers that space in a manner we've never experienced before.² So when an occasion of praise manifests itself, we're unaware of all perceptions of space as well as time. However, should we feel pulled down by a sentiment other than praise (which is most of the time), time drags on in a painfully slow manner. And so a little known but very real characteristic of praise is not so much (as far as I can tell) the suspension of time but our unawareness, even disregard, of it. In other words, time has become something off to the side, of secondary concern. That I consider as one of the most significant victories that exists.

This identification of praise-minus-perception-of-time (I like to put these words joined by hyphens to show the unity that's involved) is what we're after. As for our perception of space, it seems to be less significant. I recall Jesus' words with regard to the Spirit which may tie in here because they serve to flesh out this movement put within the context of our bodies as it ties in with praise: "The Spirit blows where it wills; you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from where it came or to where it goes" [Jn 3.8]. First of all, *pneo* seems to be the verbal root of *Pneuma*, also as to breathe. It's kind of strange to look at it this way, some kind of being larger than ourselves making an out-from-within sound (breathing) without us knowing it. Note two verbs involved, to hear and to know, *akouo* and *oida*. The latter suggests being acquainted with, to be disposed and thus implies a certain readiness or condition to follow where the evidence leads. In the context at hand, *oida* is to be taken in the negative sense.

Hearing means that suddenly we've become attentive to a sound or *phone* which is like the *qol* of God walking in the garden (cf. Gn 3.8). In other words somewhere beyond our capacity God is producing sounds which are indifferent to whether we perceive them or not. God is simply too busy doing other things and isn't concerned whether we tune in or not to the Spirit (*Pneuma*

2 As for this movement, you could say the same applies with negativity, the bane of praise. The disagreeable thoughts we hatch move outward with an equal suspension of time, or so it appears to us experiencing it. This negativity pressing from within stays within the confines of our bodies. If you don't believe this, pay attention what happens the next time you have a negative experience. It stays within and roils round and around like a caged animal. The common denominator between negativity and praise is this pressing sensation. To realize this commonality is difficult yet a truly blessed insight on the way to full-throated praise.

also as breath) making this *phone*. As for the direction of this blowing ('where it wills'), such wording can take into consideration our human condition or—and here's an important point—or not. Our lack of knowing as to this source works to our advantage. The key message is that we simply let the *Pneuma* blow, indifferent to its destination, if you will. Such was the case with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and their indifference to their fate. Applying this to the movement from within to without whether positive (praise) or negative, with time we become indifferent and accept either one. We've learned to see that praise and negativity are, strange to say, of the same source but only from this point of view. So instead of wondering if this is true, go out and try it for yourself. The key, of course is attention upon the blowing by *Pneuma*, nothing else.

If this movement from deep within us to the border or skin of our body which encompasses us were to go unchecked, chances are we'd explode, not physically but spiritually and in a very real way. It simply could not be continuous. At first glance this seems to go counter to St Paul's famous dictum "Pray always" as found in 1Thes 5.17. However, his words require some examination starting with the common verb *proseuchomai* along with the adverb *adialeiptos*. The verbal root *euchomai* also as to pray, to long for is prefaced with the strong preposition *pros* indicative of direction towards-which, implying a direction that's unceasing. As for the adverb which means unremitting, incessant, it consists of the root *leipo* or to leave behind prefaced with the alpha privative followed by the preposition *dia* or through. Breaking this down further, we have *pros* followed by the alpha privative or *a* after which comes *dia* or forward followed by through-ness or in sum, *pros-a-dia-leipo*.

So it seems that our awareness in and by itself is the regulator of praise. We have this facility which normally is beyond everyday comprehension and not unlike a mechanism that can turn on or shut off this praise. Use of such terminology sounds mechanical and therefore artificial but is meant to be just proximate. Though it's beyond the scope of this article, this emphasis upon mechanism has a unique way of freeing us up. It goes contrary...very much so...to the so-called freedom we prize. In brief, the Zen saying "attention means attention" is one way of presenting this. The more focused we are upon details in a point-to-point manner, the freer we turn out to be. Something akin to that was presented in the previous paragraph the way the two prepositions *pros* and *dia* interact. And so we have at our disposal a good tool applicable to conditions from which we normally shy.

What I find amazing when discussing such a wonderful and natural gift as praise is that something negative manages to creep in. I guess that's part and parcel of the way things are. Once praise has awakened within us and enlivens our very physical constitution, we can count on something from somewhere rising to challenge it. As has been pointed out, praise is a movement from within us to outside us and to other people as well as events. If this is the natural course, there comes to mind the possibility of it being choked and even cut off altogether. Here we have the birthing ground of thoughts which also gush out but unlike praise which they parallel, they do a reverse loop and don't end in an object other than itself. In a

word, such thoughts, regardless of their quality, are incapable of creating anything new, just repeating the same stuff over and over.

So on one hand we have the reality of praise while on the other hand there's what I call faking it, a good a way as any to describe the unceasing stream of thoughts that arise from within us. They arise all on their own whereas technically speaking, faking it involves an active participant, an agent who's doing the faking. I'll stick with this phrase because most of the time we consent to these thoughts and go along with them for the ride, unfortunately from time to time enjoying it. When you think of it, all such thoughts have an imitative character but rest upon faking, the act of making what's real false. The only thing they have to do with reality is a half-baked imitation here and there.

To fake something means you want to imitate it but are held back. The reason? When you engage in this, you (or a person in your thoughts) go through a whole bunch of scenarios. If we're honest with ourselves, this is where we squander most of our time. The only hope is that we wake up to the fact that we receive no response from the object or person with whom we're supposedly interacting. The interaction turns out to be a one-way street gradually wearing us down. That's the wisdom behind King Nebuchadnezzar having fashioned his idol plated in gold. He sets it up, commands everyone to worship the damn thing and therefore be happy but directs it to him alone who is the power behind the idol. We can imagine how people like him, even modern counterparts, sit back in luxury and relish all this. The natural movement of praise from within us to without as described above is now all theirs. Unfortunately the reverse is true but turns out to be full of poison.

Not long ago I had spent some time researching the idea of memory as *anamnesis* in Plato which has a more extensive scope compared to what we're accustomed. At first it doesn't seem to tie in with praise or faking it as presented in this article but upon closer inspection turns out to be otherwise. A while ago I've come to define *anamnesis* by considering the preposition *ana-* as a kind of striving-upon which always is engaged but never achieves its end. This doesn't imply that frustration on our part is built into our recollective faculty. Instead, it represents a permanent state of mind or should I say better, disposition?

Wherein consists this disposition? It seems to be a predilection for a reality above and beyond our scope. Such words may come across as flighty, unrealistic or representative of wishful thinking because it lacks anything we can lay our hands upon. Very true but then again, the disposition! It's hard-wired into our very substance. In other words, *anamnesis*-as-disposition is inescapable. That's a convenient thing to be aware of because we don't have to waste time thinking whether or not it's real. The matter therefore is settled.

Recalling as just presented with *ana-* in mind has a natural way of disposing us to what lies beyond our reach. It roots us not so much in our memory but memory as part of our heart and soul, *anamnesis*. Because we're not returning to a place that we lost nor are we acquiring something new or not known before but are, strange to say, becoming at home with ourselves.

This is our natural state yet has been either denied, white-washed in this way or that or simply forgotten. I'd say the last is more true. When we recall something as in daily life we do so naturally and without fuss after which we move on.

In my opinion this homey-ness with ourselves is a great way to describe who we are and have been from the get-go. The reason is that homey-ness is equivalent to knowing we're secure all around. When you're secure, you're relaxed and not on guard. Thus *anamnesis* is our home, and once we're home we like to flaunt it. In the case at hand such flaunting is, I believe, at the heart of how a Hebrew verb is used Ps 34.3 which reads "My soul makes its boast in the Lord." This is a terrific alteration or enhancement to the praise we've been discussing because the verb at hand is *halal* fundamentally as to be bright or shining. In other words, *halal* is illuminating everything with which I comes in contact. What could be more natural than that yet reveals a predilection for putting on a display?

A few verses later we have "Look to him and be radiant." Not quite accurate, for such looking or *navat* (implies a beholding) ties in with the other verse at hand, *nahar* or to shine, to give light from which the noun (same spelling) for river is derived. In other words, such beholding implies activation, if you will, of our ability to flow...to move along...with the movement of praise. Backing all this up a bit to vs. 3, we have the words "the poor will hear and be glad." That is to say, the poor will hear the psalmist's *halal* or brightness, if you will. Thus hearing is applied to something we normally don't associate with seeing but in this case is very much real.

I've digressed somewhat from *anamnesis* but hopefully not too far and return to it with an eye on two passages from Plato pretty much taken at random...not an in depth look but one which may amplify the thoughts presented above as related to praise. I'll start with the opposite, *lethe* or forgetfulness. In the days before reliable record keeping *lethe* is as close to a living death as anyone could imagine. It was very frightful, especially in an age when the human memory remained the primary tool as guardian of the past and vehicle for handing it over to another generation. Hence the value of *aletheia* or truth which is the alpha privative prefaced to the root for *lethe* or *lanthano*, that is to say, truth equals not-forgetfulness. Such a view on a central word is quite refreshing and gives an all the more compelling reason to examine *anamnesis*.

As for the first passage in mind, it comes from the **Phaedo** 72d-73a in green and runs as follows with some notations in red following the text:

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 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.

Dokeo is the verb for “I think” which intimates a certain tentativeness with respect to what Socrates is about to say. It may not be true or perhaps partially so though the words which follow show that he’s pretty much convinced of them. This is indicated by the negative of verb *exapatao* along with *homologeō*, to be deceived thoroughly as indicated by the preposition *ex-* or from and to agree with.

The point of agreement: coming to life again is a reality, *anabioskomai*. Like *anamnesis*, the verb has the preposition *ana-* suggesting that which is upon or striving upward while the root infers a manner of living...to go up or to attain a certain way of living. In other words, the living comes from the dead, *apothneso* → *zao* or to be put to death and to live in the sense of being full of life. Hence souls of the dead exist (*einai*, to be) with *psuche*, animating breath or principle of life.

Again Cebes infers that element of tentativeness with regard to the theory (*logos* or word, often word as expression) at hand as being true, something Socrates is accustomed (*eiōtha*, also as to be want) to mention frequently, that learning equals recollection: *mathesis* = *anamnesis*, the former also as the acquiring of knowledge.

This means (*anagke* or necessity) that at some previous time we had learned what we now recollect. *Proteros* or former modifies *chronos* or the passage of time commonly understood. Within that context is the pair mentioned in the last paragraph put as verbs, *manthano* or to learn comes first followed by *anamimnesko* or to recollect.

This is possible only if our soul or *psuche* had existed somewhere before it assumed the current human shape or *eidos* also as figure, form. As for “somewhere” or *prin* (also as before), that remains indefinite. Similarly the *psuche* is to be something immortal or *athanatos*. A key word here is *eoiken* which connotes seeming and again falls in line with the above mentioned tentativeness as to the contents of this entire paragraph.

Now that this passage from the **Phaedo** has been examined with regard to *anamnesis*, there remains the problem of how it ties in with praise, the original theme of this document. We do have this rather hard to define reality of forgetting praise—forgetting in the sense of *lethe* with regard to *anamnesis*—after we’ve practiced it, to use inadequate language. Consider a passage from the **Phaedrus** 250a in this regard:

But not every soul is easily reminded of the reality there by what it finds here—not souls that got only a brief glance at the reality there, not souls who had such bad luck when they fell down here that they were twisted by bad company into lives of injustice so that they forgot the sacred objects they had seen before. Only a few remain whose memory is good enough; and they are seeing startled when they see an image of what they saw up there. Then they are beside themselves, and their experience is beyond their comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what it is that they are seeing.

This passage may be summed up by two words, *tonde* and *takei*, literally as those things here and those things there or in popular parlance, earth and heaven. The link between both is held by memory or *mneme* described as “good enough,” an adverb which shows action, *hikanos* or worthily. At issue are those souls (*psuche*) which had gotten a brief look at reality

takei or there, *brachus* being an adverb, for a short time. Also are those who by reason of associating with persons marked by unrighteousness (*to adikon*) had forgotten sacred objects which they saw before. In other words, the element of *lethe* or forgetfulness is introduced causing a kind of blindness or not seeing, *eido* also as to be visible.

On the other hand are those who are few in number with a sound memory, *mneme* with the adverb *hikanos* also as adequately. What they see startles (*horao* or to observe and *ekplesso*, literally as to strike from) them, that is, an image of what they had seen up there, *ekei* being equivalent to *takei*.

At this point such persons are literally “no longer in themselves.” Their experience (*pathos*, any passive state) transcends their comprehension, *agnoeo* or not to perceive. The reason for this? They can’t fully (*hikanos*, adverb or worthily) grasp what they are seeing, *diaiaisthanomai* literally to apprehend through, *dia*-.

I believe the terminology noted in both passages is spot on as applied to a person who seeks to praise God as much as humanly possible. Not only that, it takes into consideration our natural frailty. This is apparent with such “border” words as *tonde*, *takei* and *hikanos* because they situate us within familiar human limits and are less concerned with going beyond them than presenting themselves as guides. Such guides play an important role in that they use *lethe* or forgetfulness when appropriate so that we avoid being set up to think we must offer praise at all times. And so *lethe* is intimately tied in not so much with memory as *mneme* but memory as *anamnesis*. Another plus is that the terminology Plato uses is tailor-made for our very physical structure. After all, Socrates was keenly interested in the medicine of his day, so no small wonder this carried over to his care for the soul. Here this care has been looked at as praise which is to be safeguarded at all costs.

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