

everywhere. It would be perverse to suppose that he sometimes used the one form and sometimes the other.

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#### WORDS AMISS AT PLATO, *PHAEDO* 118a1–4

καὶ ἐπαιῶν οὕτως ἡμῖν ἐπεδείκνυτο ὅτι ψύχειτό τε καὶ πῆγνυτο. καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο καὶ εἶπεν ὅτι, ἐπειδὴν πρὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ γένηται αὐτῷ, τότε οἰχῆσεται.

The warden—ὁ ἄνθρωπος—who administered the poison has been checking the upward spread of its chilling and numbing effects on Socrates' body. He has ascertained that Socrates cannot feel him pressing or squeezing his foot or, next, his shins; and now, the narrator says, 'proceeding upward in this way he showed us that he was getting cold and numb . . .'. My concern in this note is with the sentence that follows, and especially the opening clause, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο.

Some have supposed that αὐτός refers to Socrates himself, who then must be imagined grasping or pinching his own chilly thigh (probably) and announcing, 'When it reaches my heart, I shall be gone.' Thus Archer Hind explains: 'Socrates himself did the same as the man. This seems to be mentioned simply as evidence of his perfect calmness.'<sup>1</sup> But at this point Socrates is lying on his back (117e5, κατεκλίνη ὑπτιος· οὕτω γὰρ ἐκέλευεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and, as we learn from the very next sentence, has covered his head (ἐνεκεκάλυπτο γάρ), uncovering it only to utter his famous last words about the rooster owed to Asclepius. While it is not inconceivable that, just before covering his head, he might sit up, lean forward, grasp his thigh, and pronounce on the poison's fatal progress, it must be said that such a scenario is bizarre and improbable. In determining and demonstrating the efficacy of the poison, the warden obviously must ask Socrates several times, 'Can you feel this?' (vel sim.) as he presses or squeezes, and each time must receive the answer 'No'. Socrates in fact participates in the demonstration, and for him then to sit up—disobeying the order to lie ὑπτιος—and repeat the warden's pressing or squeezing actions would be superfluous, to say the least. Besides, imperfective ἤπτετο, following ἐφαπτόμενος (117e6), properly should mean, not 'touched', but 'kept hold of' or 'had his hands on'.<sup>2</sup> And even if it were granted an inceptive meaning to accommodate αὐτός = Socrates, the verb would still seem to require a reflexive αὐτοῦ, 'took hold of himself'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. D. Archer Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato* (London, 1883), ad loc.

<sup>2</sup> On the meaning of ἐφάπτεσθαι here, 'lay hold of' rather than 'feel', see C. Rowe (ed.), *Plato. Phaedo* (Cambridge, 1993), ad loc. And for the tendency of simplex verbs to retain the semantic force of preceding compound verbs, see R. Renehan, *Greek Textual Criticism. A Reader* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 77–85, with reference to C. Watkins, 'An Indo-European construction in Greek and Latin', *HSCP* 71 (1966), pp. 115–19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* (Cambridge, 1955), 190, n. 2 ('Nor could αὐτός mean Socrates, for then we should have had αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ . . .'). As a further objection to αὐτός = Socrates, P. Edwards has suggested to me (*per e-litt.*) that if Plato had intended Socrates to make a momentous statement about the precise time of his own death, it is unlikely that he would have employed *oratio obliqua* here (. . . τότε οἰχῆσεται); rather, we should have expected him to 'privilege' Socrates with *oratio recta* (. . . τότε οἰχῆσομαι), as he does elsewhere in *Phaedo* and especially in the final request for sacrifice to Asclepius.

It is altogether probable, then, that *αὐτός* refers, not to Socrates, but to the warden, the professional who has witnessed the chilling effects of the poison on the bodies of other condemned prisoners and who therefore can say of Socrates, ‘When it reaches his heart, he’ll be gone.’ But emphatic *αὐτός* = ‘the man’ is puzzling. Burnet thought that it distinguishes the warden from Socrates’ friends; the statement *καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο* implies that ‘the others had touched Socrates by the executioner’s directions’, whereas now only he continued to hold him.<sup>4</sup> But there is no reason to believe that the others had done so; rather, the demonstration appears to have depended entirely on the warden’s squeezings or pressings, along with his questions to Socrates and Socrates’ negative responses. More recently, Rowe also has acknowledged the emphasis in *αὐτός*, translating ‘he himself kept hold of [him]’, without saying, however, whether he favours or rejects Burnet’s interpretation.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Verdenius maintained that the pronoun carries no special emphasis here but ‘simply marks the fact that the subject of *ἤπτετο* is not the same as that of *ψύχοιτό τε καὶ πήγνυτο . . .*’<sup>6</sup> But *πήγνυτο* and *ψύχοιτο* are subordinate to preceding *ἐπεδείκνυτο*, and the subject of *ἤπτετο* is naturally and unambiguously the same as that verb’s subject (‘the man’); a merely distinguishing pronoun would be otiose.

Forster’s emendation of *αὐτός* to *αἰθίς*, accepted by Hackforth, and printed in Fowler’s Loeb text (1914), would seem to have influenced Robin’s translation (‘Et, le touchant encore, il nous déclara . . .’), even though his text retains *αὐτός*.<sup>7</sup> But *αἰθίς*, whether printed or implicitly preferred, comes with its own awkwardness, for the adverb will entail a puzzling break in the warden’s test of the spreading numbness (‘and *again* he took hold of . . .’), and it must stand at odds with the more natural meaning of *ἤπτετο* (‘kept holding . . .’ or ‘had his hands on . . .’).

Even if we ignore the difficulty of emphatic *αὐτός*, there would seem to be something amiss or askew in the narrative sequence, ‘. . . (the man) showed us that he was getting cold and stiff. And he himself was holding him and he said that, when it got to his heart, he would be gone.’ We should have expected the statement, ‘and he said that . . .’ to follow immediately upon the statement, ‘he showed us that he was getting cold and stiff’. I would suggest that that is where Plato actually put it; the phrase *καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο* is a misplaced emphatic parenthesis. We should read: *καὶ ἐπανίων οὕτως ἡμῖν ἐπεδείκνυτο—καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο—ὅτι ψύχοιτό τε καὶ πήγνυτο, καὶ εἶπεν ὅτι, ἐπειδὴν πρὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ γένηται αὐτῶι, τότε οἰχίσεται*. ‘And proceeding upwards in this way, he showed us—*he alone actually was holding him*—that he was getting cold and stiff, and he said that, when it got to his heart, he would be gone.’ For *αὐτός* = ‘alone’, compare Burnet’s observation on 64c6, *αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό*, that ‘emphatic *αὐτός* often acquires a shade of meaning which we can only render by “alone” . . .’<sup>8</sup> And for *καί* = ‘actually’ with pronouns (and intensive adjectives such as *μόνος*), see Denniston.<sup>9</sup>

The posited parenthesis, no less than the other three in *Phaedo* 117–118, marked by

<sup>4</sup> J. Burnet, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford, 1911), ad loc., after L. F. Heindorf, *Platonis Dialogi Selecti* 4 (Berlin, 1809) ad loc. (‘. . . atque ipse tangebatur. αὐτὸς oppositum ceteris qui aderant, quos ille tangere iusserat ἐπιδεικνύμενος ὅτι ψύχοιτό τε καὶ πήγνυτο . . .’).

<sup>5</sup> Rowe (n. 2), ad loc.

<sup>6</sup> W. J. Verdenius, *Mnemosyne* 11 (1958), 243.

<sup>7</sup> L. Robin, *Platon, Phédon* (Paris, 1926).

<sup>8</sup> Burnet (n. 4) ad loc. Cf. also 63c8, cited by Kühner–Gerth (1.653), *αὐτὸς ἔχων τὴν διάνοιαν ταύτην ἐν νῶι ἔχεις ἀπιέναι, ἢ κὰν ἡμῖν μεταδοίης*;

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford, 1934), 320 (and 317).

dashes in the Oxford text,<sup>10</sup> will contribute to the vividness and drama of Phaedo's report of the death scene (and will preclude incidentally that somewhat unseemly conceit, mentioned above, which would have Socrates' friends gathering around and touching or squeezing his stiffening limbs), but it may also serve a more important purpose. Gill has summarized what is known, both from ancient sources and modern toxicology, about the effects of hemlock poisoning and compared Plato's account of its effects on Socrates.<sup>11</sup> Plato, he concludes, has been highly selective in his description, apparently choosing not to include the more gruesome effects, as recorded especially by Nicander and verified by modern toxicologists—in particular, the inevitable nausea, choking, and convulsions.<sup>12</sup> He suggests that Plato may have wanted to affirm Socrates' stamina and stoicism in the face of death, and also simply to omit ugly details from his depiction of the death scene; but above all, by concentrating on Socrates' gradual loss of sensation, he may have intended to illustrate 'in visual form' his presentation in *Phaedo* of death as the soul's liberation from the body. Rowe quotes from Gill's paper with evident approval, but thinks that Plato may allude to 'the less pleasant effects of the poison'; the phrase *ἐφαπτόμενος αὐτοῦ* may imply that the warden has 'taken hold' of Socrates in anticipation of possible convulsions. I should suggest, however, that the words *καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο*, as transposed, are meant to underline the fact that there were no convulsions,<sup>13</sup> that there was no need for Socrates' friends to help the warden hold him down in the expected death throes of hemlock poisoning: 'he alone actually was holding him'.

As for the presumed misplacement of *καὶ αὐτὸς ἤπτετο*, unrecognized parentheses regularly find themselves suffering misplacement in the manuscripts; initial emphatic *καί* rendered this one especially vulnerable.

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<sup>10</sup> *κατεκλίνη ὕπτιος—οὕτω γὰρ ἐκέλευεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος—καὶ ἄμα* (117e5); . . . *καὶ ἐκκαλυψάμενος—ἐνεκεκάλυπτο γὰρ—εἶπεν—ὁ δὲ τελευταῖον ἐφθέγγετο—* (118a6–7).

<sup>11</sup> C. Gill, 'The death of Socrates', *CQ* 23 (1973), 25–8.

<sup>12</sup> Burnet, in Appendix I of his edition (above, n. 4), confesses that 'it is disturbing to be told, as we are by some authorities, that hemlock-juice would produce quite different symptoms', that is, from those described by Plato. But of course there was never any assurance that the death scene in *Phaedo* is historically accurate. There is no guarantee that even Socrates' celebrated last words, as recorded in the dialogue, are truly 'historical' (*pace* G. W. Most, 'A cock for Asclepius', *CQ* 43 [1993], 96–111).

<sup>13</sup> On *ἐκινήθη* (Socrates' final movement), which Rowe also thinks may allude to the poisoning's grimmer effects, see W. D. Geddes, *Platonis Phaedo* (London, 1885), 188: 'Probably not more than "he quivered". Convulsion *in articulo mortis* was, when violent, indicated by *σφαδάζω*.'

#### PLATO, *REPUBLIC* 9.585c–d

The sentence that appears in the best MSS at *Republic* 585c—'Ἡ οὖν αἰεὶ ὁμοίου οὐσίας οὐσίας τι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπιστήμης μετέχει;—makes no satisfactory sense in the context of the argument of which it is part. Many emendations have been proposed, but in recent decades this effort seems to have petered out. In general, we are slower to propose emendations these days; and in particular, modern translators of the *Republic* may have been swayed by the authority of Burnet's Oxford Classical Text, which prints the sentence unemended. At any rate, they translate the sentence as it