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METEMPSYCHOSIS AND VARIATION OF SPECIES
IN PLATO.

That Plato was in earnest with his theory of transmigration of souls admits to my mind of little doubt. True, it implies the continued personal existence of particular souls, which, as he must himself have been fully aware, Plato never succeeded in demonstrating. Nevertheless we see him so constantly passing from an enunciation of the indestructibility of soul universal to the assumption of permanent existence on behalf of particular souls, that we can hardly avoid the conclusion that for him the immortality of our separate conscious personalities, as such, was a rooted conviction. This has indeed been denied, and that by weighty authorities: but the denial has never been based upon convincing argument. The existence of a plurality of finite and personal intelligences was, as I hold, for Plato a fundamental and immutable ontological necessity: and though this does not involve the continuance of any given intelligence as the same conscious personality, it would seem as if Plato, as a matter of private belief, always thought of the scheme being carried out in this way, save only in so far as this self-consciousness might be subject to modification by the conditions of any particular transmigration. In other words, personal immortality is for Plato a pious belief about the mode in which a peremptory ontological necessity works itself out: that is to say, the Absolute Intelligence pluralises itself for ever in the same set of continuous existences, not in a series of intelligences the continuity of whose identity is broken.

This being so, it is not surprising that the Metempsychosis commended itself strongly to Plato, furnishing him as it did with a potent instrument for the enforcement of his ethical

ENNIUS' DREAM OF HOMER

The fragments from the *Annales*, as well as the ancient testimonia, inform us that near the beginning of his epic, before the narrative proper, Ennius shared a dream with his readers. In his dream Homer had appeared to inform Ennius that, by a transmigration of souls, his own soul, after an interim incarnation in a peacock, had been born into Ennius. Homer also related further Pythagorean lore, although the extent of this exposition *de rerum natura* cannot be determined. This dream, which has fascinated ancients and moderns alike, is still the subject of much dispute, primarily centered on the extent of its original content and on the constitution of its remaining fragments.¹ In this article my concern is not to revise the text or to reconstruct the dream, but rather to offer a new interpretation of the dream as an integral element of the epic it preludes. This interpretation will avoid begging the question of the text by resting on the widely accepted outlines of the episode, which I will argue played a role in making Ennius' epic style, especially its Homeric elements, plausible to his readers.

This function of the dream as what might be called an aesthetic ruse is perhaps best illustrated by imagining the Roman reader approaching Ennius' epic with expectations fostered by the epics of Livius Andronicus and Naevius, which in view of their popularity can be said to have constituted the Latin epic tradition when Ennius began his work. The greatest surprise for the reader will of course have been the new meter, hexameter in place of saturnians. Although the novelty of this change should not be over-emphasized—Latin had already been molded to Greek metrical schemes before the *Annales*, beginning with Livius' dramas—each of the ancient genres had something of an independent linguistic character, and Ennius' substitution of quantitative hexameter for the shorter, two-cola and possibly accentual saturnian line constituted a clear break with the Latin epic tradition.²

¹ For the details and recent scholarship, see O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford 1985) 147–67. A scholiast on Persius 6.9–11 gives us an outline of the dream to which the fragments closely conform: "*Ennius . . . in Annalium suorum principio . . . dicit se vidisse in somnis Homerum dicentem fuisse quondam pavonem et ex eo translata in se animam esse secundum Pythagorae philosophi definitionem.*"

² Although it is not crucial to my argument that Ennius' hexameter had as a model Homer's versification rather than Callimachus', for instance, or Apollonius', in several

Other Homeric borrowings as well will have struck Ennius' readers as innovations. The Homeric features in the *Annales* are numerous, and have been well-documented;³ here I will limit myself to a brief sampling of those Homeric elements in the *Annales* where it is likely that Ennius was breaking new ground with the Latin epic idiom. These innovations involve phraseology, syntax, and morphology. Ennius was clearly fond of faithfully rendering noun and epithet combinations in Homer (e.g., *somno leni* and *concava specus* for μαλακῷ ὕπνῳ and σπέος κοῖλον);⁴ he also modelled pairs of coordinate words on Homer (e.g., *muros urbemque* and *noctesque diesque* patterned on πόλιος καὶ τέυχος and νύκτας τε καὶ ἡματα). It is probable that with these and other phrases Ennius was allowing the formulaic a greater role in his epic than did his Latin epic predecessors (this case is easier to make with regard to Livius than to Naevius, since we can compare Livius' translation with the original and see him exclude from the Latin such easily rendered formulaic epithets in the Greek verse as φίλον and καλῆ).⁵

Under syntactical innovations in the *Annales*, whether inspired by Homer or simply by Greek usage in general, can be included his pioneering use of the coordinate *-que* endings⁶ (as seen in the phrase *noctesque diesque* above, which suggests Homer as the model for this metrically useful variation), his use of the accusative of respect,⁷ and

respects Ennius' use of hexameter is closer to Homer than the Alexandrians; see P. Magno, "I modelli greci negli *Annales* di Ennio," *Latomus* 41 (1982) 487–491.

³ For general treatment of these features, see H. v. Kameke, *Ennius und Homer: Versuch einer Analyse der Annalenfragmente* (Weida in Thüringen 1926); also F. Kunz, *Die älteste römische Epik in ihren Verhältnis zu Homer* (Wien-Meidling 1890), W. Röser, *Ennius, Euripides, und Homer* (Würzburg-Aumühle 1939), and M. v. Albrecht, "Ein Pferdegleichnis bei Ennius," *Hermes* 97 (1969) 333–45.

⁴ A fuller list of such imitations can be found in F. Kunz, *Die älteste römische Epik*, 19–20.

⁵ I am in disagreement with H. Fränkel here, who in "Griechische Bildung in altrömischen Epen," *Hermes* 67 (1932) 305, attributes the absence of such epithets to the poverty of Livius' literary medium. It seems more likely that the reduction of epithets in the *Odusia* was an aesthetic judgment on Livius' part, one that was perhaps encouraged by the saturnian line, on the average several syllables shorter than Homer's hexameter.

⁶ O. Skutsch, *The Annals*, 338–39.

⁷ E. A. Hahn, "The Origin of the Greek Accusative," *TAPA* 91 (1960) 223–24.

his use of the neuter plural adjective in an adverbial sense.⁸ There are also the constructions like *dia dearum*, patterned on Homer's δία θεάων, and perhaps his most notorious Grecism, the nominal tmesis that splits *cerebrum* in the phrase *saxo cere comminuit brum*.⁹

Under morphological innovations inspired by Homer may be placed the instances of apocope, wherein *do*, *gau*, and *cael* appear for *domum*, *gaudium*, and *caelum* respectively. Ennius also used forms of *sus* for the reflexive *suus*; since forms of *sus* do occur as demonstrative pronouns in archaic Latin, this Ennian use of *sus* may have been taken with an eye on the Homeric ὅς, which can be both demonstrative pronoun and possessive adjective. Finally, in the phrase *Mettoeoque Fufetioeo* Ennius has evidently modelled a genitive ending on Homer's -οιο.

These examples of Ennius' innovations are meant to give an indication of how pervasive (and in some instances, radical) the stylistic presence of Homer in the *Annales* was and would have seemed to Ennius' audience. Although the success of Ennius' epic style had to rest primarily on the merits of that style itself (on the virtues of hexameter over saturnians for sustained and flowing narrative, for instance, or on the advantages of linguistic "deviations" and formulaic phrases for composing in meter, or on the epic atmosphere created by Homeric tags), it is my contention that the dream of Homer that prefaced the epic was in part designed and included to render the innovative and experimental qualities of Ennius' style more immediately acceptable and plausible to his Roman audience.

As preparation for his epic style, the fiction that Ennius is Homer by metempsychosis can be seen to work in several ways. Given the circumstances of incarnation, the reader is encouraged to accept Ennius' Homeric style (or indeed any Greek usages, whether inspired by Homer or not) as natural and inevitable. For the dream to work in this way does not require (nor of course preclude) the reader's credence in Pythagoreanism. We come as readers to an art work or as spectators

⁸ W. Kroll, "Die Dichtersprache," in *Studien zum Verständnis der Römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart 1924) 249.

⁹ F. Skutsch, "Ennius," *RE* 5 (1905) 2625; L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London 1954) 101. The tmesis of *cere comminuit brum* is considered spurious by some, but has a recent defender in J. Zetzel, who has found precedents for such nominal tmesis in Hellenistic Greek verse: "Ennian Experiments," *AJP* 95 (1974) 137-140.

to a drama willing to be fooled for a spell, and only ask that the artist help suspend our disbelief. Instead of leaving his readers to their own devices and automatic responses when confronted with this new and sometimes strange epic style, Ennius prepares them with a fiction, whereby even Ennius' most notorious Homerisms are given an interpretive framework to render them plausible.

There is a second and subtler way, however, in which the dream prelude has a bearing on Ennius' epic style. In recounting his dream Ennius not only relates his identity with Homer, but also relays some Pythagorean lore *de rerum natura*. Skutsch and Waszink are I think correct in subordinating this exposition to a supporting role in Ennius' claim to be Homer reincarnate. "The Pythagorean revelation," Skutsch argues, "is entirely secondary, being only a means to an end; for only with the help of the migration of souls could Ennius claim to be a second Homer."¹⁰ But the Pythagorean theory that accompanied the dream is also well suited as a metaphorical introduction to Ennius' epic style. In the transmigration of souls, the boundaries between individuals or personalities are not as firm as they seem; the *cognoscenti* perceive an identity that persists behind the different faces and manifestations. But this is just the attitude Ennius would have us take with regard to the boundaries between languages; the language barrier is an illusion. The Pythagorean theory helps to create a linguistic environment in which the liberties that Ennius takes in modelling Latin on Greek will appear not so much to violate a Latin tradition as to continue an older one. Thus, the dream told in the introduction gives the reader of the *Annales* a reason for the strange Greekness of style, and provides something of a model as well for the relationship between Greek and Latin that Ennius would like us to imagine for his epic.

My interpretation of Ennius' dream is a continuation in the direction Skutsch and Waszink have taken with it. Both reject the view that the dream functions primarily as an exposition of the author's beliefs. This is not so much to deny that Ennius or his audience were interested in Pythagoreanism (apparently they were) as to focus on what function this dream account had for a national epic; the crucial

¹⁰ O. Skutsch, "The Annals of Quintus Ennius," in *Studia Enniana* (London 1968) 8; J. H. Waszink, in "Ennianum," *Opuscula Selecta* (Leiden 1979) 100–1, calls the doctrine of transmigration explained in the dream "the indispensable base for the *figmentum poeticum* that Homer's soul (*thumos*) was actually present in the body of Ennius."

question is why Ennius prefaced *imperium* with peacocks and metempsychosis. The common response to this question has been to give the dream a programmatic function; it is a means by which the poet declares his position and intentions vis-à-vis his predecessors and contemporaries. As Skutsch reads it, the dream declares Ennius' intention to be the first Roman poet to write with a Greek sophistication; it also releases him from the Alexandrian ban against the imitation of Homer: Ennius is not imitating Homer—he *is* Homer!¹¹

There is of course a continuum of programmatic declarations in ancient literature (some involving dreams), and it makes sense to interpret Ennius' dream as a *topos* within this tradition.¹² Such focus, however, on the dream as an advertisement of credentials (or, according to some, an acknowledgment of debt)¹³ neglects the consideration of the dream's internal *sui generis* connections with the epic itself. The fragmentary nature of the *Annales* encourages and often compels the reader to view passages in isolation from each other rather than as parts of a whole, but in this case the pervasive Homeric borrowings in the extant verses provide an obvious counterpart to the dream, and my interpretation is an attempt to explore the aesthetic relation between style and dream. By preparing the reader for the epic's innovative style in the ways I have argued above, not only are the dream and Pythagorean theory seen to have an aesthetic purpose in the *Annales*, but certain facets of Ennius style appear in a different light. A. Gratwick speculates that "Ennius thought of Latin as a much-corrupted Greek dialect."¹⁴ This judgment accurately reflects the freedoms Ennius took with Latin, but, if my interpretation of the dream is right, Gratwick overlooks Ennius' complete awareness of these liberties; the dream and the metempsychosis, suggesting as they do the absence of traditional boundaries, are in part designed to forestall the reader's alienation when confronted with Ennius' stylistic experi-

¹¹ O. Skutsch, *Studia Enniana*, 6–9.

¹² A good review of this tradition, with Ennius in his place, can be found in J. Miller, "Disclaiming Divine Inspiration: A Programmatic Pattern," *WS* (1986) 151–64.

¹³ W. Suerbaum, in *Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter* (Hildesheim 1968) 101–3, interprets the dream primarily as "ein Bekenntnis zu Homer und daneben den Ausdruck eines hohen dichterischen Selbstbewusstseins." For Kameke (n. 3 above), the dream "birgt Abhängigkeitsgefühl und Nachfolgebewusstsein" (5).

¹⁴ A. Gratwick, "Ennius' *Annales*," in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* 2 (1982) 70.

ments. To lift both the dream and the Homerisms out of their aesthetic enclosure in the *Annales*, judging the former primarily as an eccentric credo or a literary *topos*, and the other as a sign of confusion between two languages, is to obscure their idiomatic and mutually supportive function in Ennius' epic: the dream helps to authorize the Homeric (and all the Greek) elements of the verse, and they in turn give evidence of the dream experience (for who but Homer, after all, would write *do* for *domum*?). This interpretation, with its assessment of the dreamer as a calculating innovator, perhaps does some damage to the traditional picture of Ennius as the ruggedly naive three-hearted, red-nosed poet formerly a peacock and now boasting to be Homer while prone to crude linguistic aberrations, but the image of the artist that begins to emerge is no less attractive.

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