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ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION AND PLACE OF MYTH IN PLATO: *STATUS QUAESTIONIS*

ABSTRACT: The paper raises the issue of allegorical interpretation, and its role and place in Plato's philosophy. The first part of the paper shows the theoretical findings and explains the use of terms *aínigma, sýmbolon, hypónoia* in Plato's philosophy. The next part explores Plato's attitude toward allegorical interpretation and the function of myth (*mūthos*) in his philosophy. Two important points are presented here regarding Plato's critique. They serve as the criterion for the validation of myth in the ideal state: the role of myth in *paideia* and its relation to philosophical discourse.

KEY WORDS: allegory, enigma, symbol, poetry, myth

Ancient writers used Greek term *allēgorein* (ἀλληγορεῖν)[1] in the meanings of both composing the text and interpreting it. The former is understood as conveying double meaning in writing. The latter is actually allegorical interpretation (allegoresis) and is understood as a reading meanings of encoded in the text and explaining them. The reader

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[1]   The term *allēgoría* is derived from two Greek words *állos* "other" and *agoreúō* "to proclaim", "to speak in public" and means literally "other-speaking", "to speak otherwise" (Ferguson et al. 1999: 34; Copeland, Struck 2010: 2). This construction concerns two connected procedures: "a manner of composing and a method of interpreting" (Copeland, Struck 2010: 2; Domaradzki 2013: 19).

presupposes that there is another sense which is hidden in the text by the author or a higher, spiritual authority.[2] What is important is the fact that allegorical reading of the text blurred its literal meaning. Dawson notices: "Even when the allegorical reader does not explicitly reject the first meaning but simply adds the second to it, the mere presence of the addition implicitly denies the independence or exclusivity of the first meaning."[3] Contemporary scholars use the two different terms for the lucidity of language: "allegoresis" in the meaning of "interpretation" and "allegory" as a literary device.[4]

The term "allegory" is quite late, which is confirmed by Plutarch (1st/2nd century): while writing on the allegorical interpretation of poetry in *De audiendis poetis* (9e–9f), he states that what now is called "allegory", was called "*hypónoia*" in the past.[5]

In the dialogues of Plato it is difficult to point to one technical term used for allegoresis. It is well established that in Plato's times the

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[2]   Copeland, Struck 2010: 2.

[3]   Dawson 1992: 8. Pépin writes: "Encore faut-il, au préalable, s'entendre sur la notion même d'allégorie, en la clarifiant par certaines distinctions. La première d'entre elles, fort élémentaire et néanmoins indispensable (i), intervient entre *l'expression* allégorique et *l'interprétation* allégorique, malheureusement confondues sous le même vocable d'« allégorie » (2). Au sens strict et étymologique, le mot désigne une manière de parler, un σχῆμα λέξεως figuré; au sens dérivé, qui finit par devenir le plus courant, il indique une façon de comprendre la figure selon l'intention de l'auteur ; autrement dit, la première allégorie consiste à cacher un message sous le revêtement d'une figure ; la deuxième, à décrypter la figure pour retrouver le message" (Pépin 1958: 487–488). For example M. Domaradzki (2013: 19–20); Dawson (1992: 4–5); Struck (2004: 2–3); Naddaf (2009: 111); Sijl (2010: 107) distinguish allegory from allegoresis. Domaradzki thinks that allegoresis should be distinguished from exegesis (Domaradzki 2011; Domaradzki 2013: 25–26) and etymology (Domaradzki 2013: 113–116).

[4]   The later term "allegory" was included among literary devices and "treated by turns as a genre, a mode, a technique, or a rhetorical device or trope, related to metaphor and sometimes defined as «extended (or continued) metaphor»". This definition is found in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VIII 6, 44 (Copeland, Struck 2010: 2). Domaradzki distinguishes two traditions: 1. rhetorical–grammatical tradition, in which allegory is understood as a rhetorical device and 2. hermeneutical tradition, in which allegory is a method of reading the hidden sense of communication and applies to cognitive problems (Domaradzki 2013: 20). The history of term *allēgoria* describes Dawson (Dawson 1992: 2–11).

[5]   *De aud. poet.* 19e–19f: οὓς ταῖς πάλαι μὲν ὑπονοίαις ἀλληγορίαις δὲ νῦν λεγομέναις (Hunter, Russell 2011: 100–101).

method of allegorical interpretation was both well-known and commonly applied.[6] However Plato uses other terms, writing on interpretation of myths or in relation to opinions, like αἴνιγμα, σύμβολον, ὑπόνοια (*aínigma, sýmbolon, hypónoia*) Later these terms were included within the meaning of the term "allegory" and allegorical readers used them interchangeably.

In *Politeia* Plato mentions the hidden meaning in the context of the interpretation of Homer's poems, using the term ὑπόνοια (*Rep.* II 378d–378e).[7] In *Epistles* Plato applies another term important for the allegorical interpretation, namely the notion of ***enigma*** (αἴνιγμα). Beside the basic meaning of αἴνιγμα which was "enigma", "riddle", "puzzle", like for example *The Riddle of the Sphinx* or a hidden sense of an oracle, prediction or prophecy, the term was connected with the author's intention to protect the truth taught.[8] Plato uses the term αἴνιγμα in all three meanings. First, in the *Politeia* he gives the example of a "children's riddle (τῷ τῶν παίδων αἰνίγματι) about the eunuch and his hitting of the bat" (Rep. 479c). Second, in the *Apology* Socrates states that Pythia is "propounding a riddle" (αἰνίττεται) (*Apol.* 21b) and in the *Charmides* the inscription at the temple saying "Know yourself!" is characterized as "more riddling" (αἰνιγματωδέστερον) (*Charm.* 164e). In the *Symposium* the language of an oracle is "darkly hinting" and the soul "only divining and darkly hinting what it wishes" (ἀλλὰ μαντεύεται ὃ βούλεται, καὶ αἰνίττεται) (*Sym.* 192d). The enigmatic sense of an utterance requires an appropriate interpretation, like in explaining the mysteries that had a hidden meaning. For example in the *Phaedo* (69c) those men who established the mysteries gave them a "hidden meaning"

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[6]   The commonness of the practice is confirmed by the frequency of Plato's references to it in the fragments where it was necessary to show contradiction of someone's views, ascribing enigmatic nature to them, for example: *Apol.* 27a; *Charm.* 162a; *Thea.* 152c (Tate 1929: 143).

[7]   *Rep.* II 378d–378e: But Hera's fetterings by her son and the hurling out of heaven of Hephaestus by his father when he was trying to save his mother from a beating, and the battles of gods in Homer's verse are things that we must not admit into our city (οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν) either wrought in allegory or without allegory (οὔτ᾽ ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν). For the young are not able to distinguish what is and what is not allegory… (ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὃ μή).

[8]   Domaradzki 2013: 31.

(αἰνίττεσθαι). The third and last sense is the "hidden meaning" of the poem. In his letter to Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, Plato explains that he must explain "the doctrine concerning the nature of «the First»" (περὶ τῆς τοῦ πρώτου φύσεως) to him in "a riddling way (δι᾽ αἰνιγμῶν) in order that […] the reader may not understand" (*Ep.* II 312d).[9] In turn, Plato explains in *Epistle VII* that teaching directed to the tyrant was put in "veiled terms and maintained by argument" (αἰνιττόμενοι), but was not "expressed openly, for it would not have been safe" (*Ep.* 332d).[10] The aim of enigmatic language was to shield true insights from the mob.

However, Plato very often uses the term αἴνιγμα and speaking in ironic terms gives it the sense of *aporia*. According to Struck, the nature of enigma is that it "hides as much as it reveals and produces always two groups, the enlightened and unenlightened."[11] This is especially true of poetry, the interpretation of which may be questionable, for the poet may have used words meaning one thing with the intention of saying something else "for the sake of the machinery of the poem"[12]. Thus, in *Politeia* Plato shows that Polemarch's references in discussion on justice to Simonides's poetry are groundless, because the poet gave a riddling definition of justice. [ἠινίξατο ἄρα, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ Σιμωνίδης ποιητικῶς τὸ δίκαιον ὃ εἴη] (*Rep.* I 332b).[13] As is the case with Plato's *Politeia*, so too in *Lysis* (214a–214e) and *Alcibiades II* (147b–147d), this term is used with a similar meaning. In turn as part of the elenctic method of argumentation the term αἴνιγμα occurs in *Apology* (27a), *Theaetetus* (152a–164d), *Charmides* (161d).[14] Plato, showing the contradiction in someone's stance, ironically summarizes it by saying that apparently

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[9] *Ep.* II 312d–312e: φραστέον δή σοι δι᾽ αἰνιγμῶν, ἵν᾽ ἄν τι ἡ δέλτος ἢ πόντου ἢ γῆς ἐν πτυχαῖς πάθῃ, ὁ ἀναγνοὺς μὴ γνῷ.

[10] *Ep.* VII 332d: λέγοντες οὐκ ἐναργῶς οὕτως—οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἀσφαλές—αἰνιττόμενοι δὲ καὶ διαμαχόμενοι τοῖς λόγοις…

[11] Struck 2004: 49.

[12] Tatian, *ad Graec.* 21,7: Καὶ τὸν Ἕκτορα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα δηλαδὴ καὶ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα πάντας ἁπαξαπλῶς Ἕλληνάς τε καὶ βαρβάρους σὺν τῇ Ἑλένῃ τῷ Πάριδι τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὑπάρχοντας χάριν οἰκονομίας ἐρεῖτε παρεισῆχθαι οὐδενος ὄντος τῶν προειρημένων ἀνθρώπων.

[13] Ford 2002: 114; Domaradzki 2013: 32.

[14] Domaradzki 2013: 33–34. In the *Charmides* Plato shows the ambiguity of the stance saying that "the speaker of the words did not mean them quite as he spoke them (ὅτι οὐ δήπου [...] ᾗ τὰ ῥήματα ἐφθέγξατο ταύτῃ καὶ ἐνόει – *Charm.* 161d).

the author in question had said "a puzzle" and spoken "enigmatically" (*Apol.* 27d: αἰνίττεσθαι *Charm.* 162a: ᾐνίττετο; *Theaet.* 152c: ᾐνίξατο). According to Struck and Domaradzki, Plato was able to achieve "a subtle cutting rhetorical position" in such constructions, because the practice of allegorical interpretation had already been widespread among his contemporaries.[15] Irony undercuts both the speaker's authority and that of the interpreters, who seek hidden wisdom in such figures.

There was another concept related to the term αἴνιγμα, namely the notion of ***symbol,*** σύμβολον, adopted later for the sake of allegoresis.[16] The term σύμβολον, derived from the verb συμβάλλειν ("to put together"), meant "one half of an object – usually a piece of cloth, wood, or pottery – that is deliberately split in two and then allocated to the parties to an agreement.[17] This original meaning of the term was associated with that of "a sign", σημεῖον, in which the symbol serves to confirm or authenticate the agreement. The term grew out, by abstract nominalization, from a verbal form: "The symbol begins life as a concrete thing by which the action contained in the verb is performed."[18] This sense of σύμβολον lies behind Plato's famous comment on the nature of love in the *Symposium* (*Sym.* 191d, 3–5), where the lovers are shown as one original whole that was split into two halves which now search for each other.[19] The symbol in the sense of "a sign" that serves to authenticate, occurs in Plato's *Epistle* XIII. The introductory greetings serve as a *sign* of authentication of the author of the letter: σύμβολον ὅτι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐστιν, as well as of the serious character of the letter: περὶ δὲ δὴ τοῦ συμβόλου τοῦ περὶ τὰς ἐπιστολάς, ὅσας τε ἂν ἐπιστέλλω σπουδῇ (*Ep.* XIII 360a and 363b). Later, this meaning was adopted into political and

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[15]   Struck 2004: 49–50; Domaradzki 2013: 34.

[16]   Until 300 BC this notion has nothing to do with figurative discourse. It was adopted in the practice of allegoresis by the Greek stoic philosopher Chrysippus of Soloi, the foundation for what was prepared by the Pythagoreans. Chrysippus understood it as the "allegorical sense of the poem", close to the notion of enigma (Domaradzki 2013: 41; Struck 2004: 78).

[17]   Struck 2004: 78; Domaradzki 2013: 43.

[18]   Struck 2004: 78.

[19]   *Sym.* 191d: ἕκαστος οὖν ἡμῶν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπου σύμβολον, ἅτε τετμημένος ὥσπερ αἱ ψῆτται, ἐξ ἑνὸς δύο· ζητεῖ δὴ ἀεὶ τὸ αὑτοῦ ἕκαστος σύμβολον. [Then each of us is a symbol of a human, since we have been cleaved just like flatfish, two generated from one. So each person forever searches for the symbol of himself].

business contexts, in which it acquired the most frequent sense in the surviving literature, i.e. that of an object used for "authenticating tokens for the two parties to an agreement."[20] Thus, on the one hand, σύμβολον has the nominal sense of "a sign, token", and on the other, in legal usage, σύμβολα were covenants between two states, while the verb συμβάλλω meant "to make a contract or agreement."[21] In *Politeia* money is "a token for the purpose of exchange", νόμισμα σύμβολον τῆς ἀλλαγῆς (*Rep.* 371b). It is both a conventional and a natural sign, and in each case it requires bringing the inner sense of a message to light. All these senses are based on semantic ambiguity, on a play on which allegorical interpretation depends: the literal sense and the inner one. This way all of them, myth, allegory, symbol, enigma, and metaphor make it possible to understand one thing through another, and serve to describe of true reality, which defies natural perception by senses and direct description.[22]

1. THE PLACE OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION AND PLATO'S CRITIQUE OF POETRY

Allegorical interpretation is viewed by Plato as an uncertain method with respect to knowledge and as dangerous for children. Although he never denies the possibility of using it in a more philosophical way,[23] the use of allegory is questioned, because it cannot establish true knowledge, as it is a device of poetic discourse having purposes different by nature. When arguing against someone else's opinion, Plato makes reference – often ironically – to its enigmatic character, by pointing out and criticizing a contradiction in their statements.[24] Also, the materials for allegorical interpretation[25] were doubtful, because they were provided

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[20]   Struck 2004: 79.
[21]   Domaradzki 2013: 44.
[22]   Domaradzki 2013: 78.
[23]   Struck 2004: 86.
[24]   Domaradzki 2013: 207–208.
[25]   Allegoresis aimed to save authorities of Greek *paideia* from the critique of rationalism. Historians questioned the cognitive value of poetry, while philosophers not only its cognitive value, but also its paideutical value (Domaradzki 2013: 91). "Behind this phenomenon there lies, as concerns pagan tradition, the strong conservatism of

by the myths of Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus. That is why, first of all, researchers estimated Plato's attitude towards allegoresis basing their argumentation on his critique of poetry.[26] According to Plato, from the metaphysical point of view, the nature of poetry is mimetic (μίμησις). It belongs to the realm of "imitation", for a poetic discourse is a copy of reality to which it refers, i.e. objects and sensible occurrences. They are not truly real, but rather imitations of the truly real, i.e. copies of copies. "It is, therefore, «three removed from the truth»."[27] Furthermore, this kind of poetic discourse functions within the relation "between a subject, the poet, and the object of which the poet is making a copy."[28] In this imitative discourse the subject disappears behind the enunciation, which becomes real. Poetry is very distant both "from the truth" (ἀληθείας)[29] and from the „mind" (φρόνησις). According Plato's epistemology, the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) which is reliable (νόησις) is concerned only with archetypes (ἀρχαί), which belong to the sphere of Ideas. Poetry is concerned with "images" (εἴδωλα), on which one can only form "opinions" (δόξα) and which are unverifiable (ἄλογον).[30] "False discourse gives an unfaithful image of the reality which it claims to depict."[31] All the art is

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Greek philosophical rationalism with its wish to preserve the whole tradition of pre-rational layers of the Greek mind" (Jaeger 1961: 47). There is also a positive kind of allegoresis that uses the poets' authority for promoting some philosophical conceptions (Domaradzki 2013: 98); Tate it underlines: „Its purpose was not so much to defend the poetic traditions against charges of immorality as to make fully explicit the wealth of doctrine which *ex hypothesi* the myths contained" (Tate 1929: 142). Both these purposes were connected with two names of the authors who began the practice of allegoresis. Theagenes of Rhegium (529/522 B.C.) and Pherecydes of Syros (the end of IV century B.C.).

[26] Plato established the logos-mythos dichotomy by identifying *mūthos* with falseness. On this opposition see e.g. Domaradzki (2013: 74); Naddaf, *Translator's introduction*, in: Brisson, Naddaf (1998: vii-xi); Narecki (1999: 17); Mrugalski (2006: 26).

[27] Reale 1990: 132.

[28] Brisson 2004: 18.

[29] Tate states that the falsehood or truth of a mythis "not of the λόγος but of the moral, the mould (τύπος) in which the tale is cast, the principle (νόμος) which it embodies, the opinion (δόξα) which it conveys. It is because of the false moral which they contain that Plato rejects the theomachies, the legends concerning Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus" (Tate 1929: 146).

[30] Domaradzki 2013: 212.

[31] Brisson 2004: 21.

poles apart from the true philosophical knowledge; according to Plato, an opposition has existed from the old times between philosophy and poetry (ὅτι παλαιὰ μέν τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ ποιητικῇ) (*Rep.* 607b). The poet appeals through the most excellent charm (μεγάλην τινὰ κήλησιν) (*Rep.* 601b) to the lowest part of the soul (ἐπιθυμία), "the part that craves food and drink and is a seat of sexual appetite,"[32] one that is remote from intelligence and susceptible to manipulation. Poetry "destroys the rational part" of the soul (ἀπόλλυσι τὸ λογιστικόν) (*Rep.* 605b). Myths are also deceitful in being aimed at children, because, "at that age, the appetitive part dominates the human soul,"[33] The heaviest accusation concerns the poet's power to corrupt (λωβᾶσθαι) (*Rep.* 605c) decent people. The poet is here a Sophist (*Soph.* 268c–268d), characterized by false discourse that "bears upon something other than it states,"[34] Plato recognizes the poetry of the highest Greek authorities as "the greatest lie" (τὸ μέγιστον ψεῦδος) (*Rep.* 377e). Many myths that used to be transmitted orally from one generation to the next, regardless of how they were passed in collective memory, whether told by professionals, like Homer of Hesiod, or by nonprofessionals, like mothers, wet nurses, and old women, whose audience consisted mostly of children, should not have a place in *paideia* (*Rep.* 377c–377d).[35]

Ἥρας δὲ δεσμοὺς ὑπὸ ὑέος καὶ Ἡφαίστου ῥίψεις ὑπὸ πατρός, μέλλοντος τῇ μητρὶ τυπτομένῃ ἀμυνεῖν, καὶ θεομαχίας ὅσας Ὅμηρος πεποίηκεν οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν, οὔτ᾽ ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ

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[32]   Brisson 2004: 19.

[33]   Brisson 2004: 19.

[34]   Brisson 2004: 21.

[35]   *Rep.* 377e–378a: The greatest lie about the things of greatest concernment, (πρῶτον μέν, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, τὸ μέγιστον καὶ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ψεῦδος), which was no pretty invention (ὁ εἰπὼν οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο), of him who told how Uranus did what Hesiod says he did to Cronos, and how Cronos in turn took his revenge; and then there are the doings and sufferings of Cronos at the hands of his son. Even if they were true I should not think that they ought to be thus lightly told to thoughtless young persons. But the best way would be to bury them in silence (ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν σιγᾶσθαι), and if there were some necessity for relating them, that only a very small audience should be admitted under pledge of secrecy (δι᾽ ἀπορρήτων) and after sacrificing, not a pig, but some huge and unprocurable victim (θυσαμένους οὐ χοῖρον ἀλλά τι μέγα καὶ ἄπορον θῦμα), to the end that as few as possible should have heard these tales.

ὑπονοιῶν. ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὃ μή, [But Hera's fetterings by her son and the hurling out of heaven of Hephaestus by his father when he was trying to save his mother from a beating, and the battles of gods in Homer's verse are things that we must not admit into our city either wrought in allegory or without allegory. For the young are not able to distinguish what is and what is not allegory] (*Rep.* II 378d).

The majority of scholars interpreted this fragment as a direct critique of allegoresis.[36] First, Plato does not decide here whether there is or not a deeper meaning latent in the myths, but it may be assumed that, while he accuses the poets of ignorance, virtually denying that "undersenses" are present.[37] Second, every poetical fragment can be constructed in various ways, so we cannot be certain, if the interpretation bears out what the author "meant".[38] According to Plato, the kind of myths like those of Homer or Hesiod should be kept out of the state. The influence of such myths is evil, and when offered to a young man, it is pedagogically useless and harmful, having negative influence in *paideia*. Moreover, they create a false image of the gods, as if the latter were full of violence and immorality. However, Plato seems to attach some value at least to some myths, distinguishing between true and false stories. (ἀληθές, ψεῦδος) (*Rep.* 376e).[39] Plato often quotes myths to support his argument, for the poet's words can be divinely inspired with right opinions (ὀρθὴ δόξα) (*Meno* 99), even though they cannot substantiate their intuitions and also we cannot be certain what is a correct interpretation.[40] The first criterion of measuring the value of a myth is *paideia*. Plato postulates that one should assume some patterns (τύποι), according to which myths

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36   Domaradzki 2013: 208; Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 122; Ford 2002: 86; Most 2010: 26; Brisson 2004: 27.

37   Tate 1929: 147.

38   Ford 2002: 86.

39   *Rep.* 376e: λόγων δὲ διττὸν εἶδος, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, ψεῦδος δ' ἕτερον. Analogically Plato writes in the *Cratylus* that there are two kinds of *lógos*: true and false. When true *lógos* is divine, the false dwells among common men. *Crat.* 408c: ἔστι διπλοῦς, ἀληθής τε καὶ ψευδής. Tate argues that poetry can deliver divine inspiration, like for example a message of an oracle (Tate 1929: 147–149).

40   Tate 1929: 147.

should be composed (*Rep.* 379a–381c). Censored myths (ἐγκριθέντας) are capable of having a paideutical value and serving the soul's formation (πλάττειν τὰς ψυξὰς αὐτῶν τοῖς μύθοις). While being under the true *lógos*, they can "point out" the way of life (ἀποδεῖξαι, σημαίνει) (*Gor.* 527b), "persuade" (πειθώμεθα) (*Rep.* 621c), give "the great hope" (ἐλπὶς μεγάλη) (*Fed.* 114c) and convey the right ethical rules.[41]

2. THE PLACE OF MYTH AND THE FUNCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Plato banishes the allegories of traditional tales of divine violence and immorality from the state, as we mentioned above, but at the same time, at crucial point in his dialogues, he introduces extended mythic narratives of allegorical character. Plato makes use of myths to explain his most important but hidden teachings. These kind of myths seem to supply the philosophically correct teachings from which students will be able to learn.[42] This apparent ambivalence could be explained based on a passage from *Phaedrus* which is a *locus classicus* based on which Plato's attitude to *allegoresis* is explained. Socrates answers here the question, asked by his interlocutor, Phaedrus, whether he truly believes the story about Boreas' rape of Oreithyia:

> If I disbelieved, as the wise men do, I should not be extraordinary; then I might give a rational explanation, that a blast of Boreas, the north wind, pushed her off the neighboring rocks as she was playing with Pharmacea, and that when she had died in this manner she was said to have been carried off by Boreas. But I, Phaedrus, think such explanations are very pretty in general, but are the inventions of a very clever and laborious and not altogether enviable man, for no other reason than because after this he must explain [ἐπανορθοῦσθαι] the forms of the Centaurs, and then that of the Chimaera, and there presses in upon him a whole crowd of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegasuses, and multitudes of strange, inconceivable, portentous natures. If anyone disbelieves in these, and with

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41   Domaradzki 2013: 223.
42   Most 2010: 26.

a rustic sort of wisdom, undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability, he will need a great deal of leisure. But I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself (*Phaedr.* 229c–239e).

Socrates repudiated the practice of correcting the old myths, showing its unfeasibility and unethical nature.[43] First, it is impossible to explain every single mythological element of an allegory, without applying the explanatory procedure to the entire pantheon of Gods and mythological creatures. This causes difficulties, as there is always a wider context and many possible interpretations.[44] Another reason for abandoning the idea of correcting the old myths is the irrelevance of this kind of knowledge, which entices us away from searching for ethical truth.[45] Plato's interest in myths is to break their monopoly, when myths serve pleasure. He accords a superior status to philosophical discourse. Finally, what happens if one accepts the hypothesis that some myths conceal the truth? Plato rejects this idea, since truth for him is the domain of the philosopher's discourse.[46] The truth value of a myth is always secondary to philosophical discourse (*logos*) and in condition of agreement with philosophical truth. False discourse conveys a message different from what it literally means and this is in fact allegorical interpretation. Such an interpretation which replaces false meanings with true ones is unacceptable for Plato.

Similar to the term *aínigma* in its polemical and pejorative senses, Plato uses the term *mūthos*, μῦθος ironically in criticizing someone else's stance.[47] The term μῦθος carries this sense in the *Theaetetus* (*Thea.* 164d–164e), where Protagoras' teaching is characterized as a myth. Also in the *Sophist* (*Soph.* 242c–242d) the doctrines under discussion are called myths. All these philosophical doctrines are false and criticized by Plato.[48]

On the other hand, Plato uses the term μῦθος in his own discourse when explaining very difficult philosophical issues.

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43 Domaradzki 2013: 209.
44 Domaradzki 2013: 209; Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 127; Tate 1929: 151.
45 Ford 2002: 86.
46 Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 127.
47 Domaradzki 2013: 221.
48 Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 128–129; Domaradzki 2013: 221.

The term *eikòs mūthos*, εἰκὸς μῦθος refers to his cosmological postulates on the construction of the sensible world in the *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 30b, 48d, 53d, 55d, 56a, 57d, 90e).[49] This expression means: "«a myth which bears upon the copies of the intelligible forms», that is, sensible things."[50] It refers to "a discourse of what is made as a copy of that other [copy]" (τοὺς δὲ τοῦ πρὸς μὲν ἐκεῖνο ἀπεικασθέντος), which therefore, is itself "a copy, standing to discourse of the former [philosophical] kind in proportion" (ὄντος δὲ εἰκόνος εἰκότας ἀνὰ λόγον τε ἐκείνων ὄντας) (*Tim.* 29c). This kind of discourse, as a copy of the intelligible world, is sensible and falsifiable. "Only the present state of sensible things, which are copies of intelligible forms are susceptible of being perceived by the senses, and as being described by falsifiable discourse", described as *eikòs lógos*.[51] In turn, *eikòs mūthos* can be presented only by an explanatory model, whereas the discourse is itself unfalsifiable with regard to sensible things (the object is inaccessible both to direct and indirect perception, i.e. the senses and the intellect). On the contrary, philosophical discourse "bears upon the intelligible forms apprehended by the intellect. These intelligible forms, which constitute true reality, are immutable,"[52] and only a discourse concerning them is abiding and firm (μονίμου καὶ βεβαίου) (*Tim.* 29b), and also true. For the verification of a mythological discourse it is necessary to relate it to a philosophical one: the myth is either true or false depending on whether it accords with philosophy on the same subject.[53] To show the truth of a mythological discourse it must be showed how and to what extent it agrees with the philosophical paradigm. This is Plato's second criterion for the validation of a myth.

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[49] Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 129. Brisson use here the expression "derivative sense", which refers to rhetorical or philosophical contexts (Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 128–133; Brisson 2004: 21–28).

[50] Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 130.

[51] Brisson, Naddaf 1998: 130.

[52] Brisson 2004: 22.

[53] Brisson 2004: 27.

CONCLUSIONS

Plato banishes myths from the state as well as their allegorical explanation, because of the false *paideia*. According to Plato, *paideia* should be an expression of truth. Because this condition of verifiable discourse is not met, the poetical tales of Homer and Hesiod have no validity in the ideal state. However, another criterion Plato adopts is whether a myth agrees with the philosophical discourse or not. In this case, the discourse can be deemed verifiable only based on its adequacy to its referent. Moreover, the referent, which is either in the intelligible world or in sensible things, needs to be accessible either to the intellect or to the senses. This does not concern the mythical type of discourse, the referents of which are, by definition, inaccessible. Brisson concludes, that "myth should be situated beyond truth and falsehood; yet this does not seem to be the case since Plato presents myth at times as a false discourse and at times as a true one."[54] That is why in order to explain the exact place of mythical discourse in Plato one has to change the perspective. Truth and error of mythical discourse depend on its correspondence with another discourse, but not on the correspondence with its referent. The discourse becomes normative and epistemology gives way to censorship, not the thing, to which the discourse refers, whether it is the intelligible or sensible world. In the final analysis, the truth of a myth depends on its "conformity with the philosopher's discourse on the intelligible forms in which the individual entities that are the subjects of this myth participate."[55]

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[54]   Brisson 2004: 24.
[55]   Brisson 2004: 25.

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