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Introduction

1.1 THE QUESTION OF MYTH

My first encounter with Plato was in high school, when I read the Allegory of the Cave from Book VII of the *Republic*. It was love at first sight: the loftiness of the ideas, the beauty of Plato's writing, and the vivid imagery of the text all were too irresistible for me to ignore. No wonder, then, that the *Republic* is so commonly used both as an introduction to Plato and as an introduction to philosophy. Indeed, the enduring appeal of Plato is due as much to the *form* of his writing as it is to the content of his philosophical ideas. We turn to Plato not only for the brilliance of his thought, but also because he is able to express that thought through a captivating literary-dramatic form and through carefully crafted language. Despite the passage of over two millennia, his dialogues continue to speak directly to us.

There are many aspects of Plato's style that contribute to this appeal, including language, imagery, and the dramatic form. This book will be concerned with one of these aspects in particular, his use of *myth*. It is hard to overestimate the importance of myth in Greek culture; from Mycenaean times all the way through the Hellenistic period, myth held a central position in the cultural, religious, and educational life of the Greeks. Everywhere we turn in Plato's writings, this influence is transparent, as his dialogues are literally teeming with mythical material. For instance, almost every one of Plato's dialogues contains some sort of reference to a particular myth or to some element or figure from the Greek mythological tradition. More significantly, Plato also creates his own myths, and they figure prominently in some of his most important works (including the *Gorgias, Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus,* and *Timaeus*). These dialogues contain substantial passages of unbroken narrative that, although containing philosophical ideas, are (or at least appear to be) in the form of a myth. When these "Platonic myths" appear, they dramatically interrupt the flow of the dialogical question-and-answer. At the same time, however, Plato must surely be trying to make a

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philosophical point through the use of myth. We therefore have an interest-ing amalgam: a philosopher, writing philosophical texts, who liberally pep-pers those texts with mythical material.

Herein lies a problem that has vexed readers of Plato for centuries: *why* exactly does he use myth? It is not simply that myth appears out of place in the context of a dialogical and philosophical discussion of eth-ics or metaphysics; more deeply, myth seems to be *antithetical* to that very discussion. After all, are not myth and philosophy supposed to be two dia-metrically opposed modes of thought? Plato's own writings often seem to suggest just such an opposition. The *Republic,* for instance, offers an explicit and detailed critique of traditional Greek myths on moral and political grounds, and it is only through extensive censorship and oversight by the philosopher-kings that Socrates is willing to admit myths into the *polis* at all. Yet the problem with myth is not limited merely to the specific criticisms of the *Republic.* More generally, myth seems to be the *kind* of thing that is anti-thetical to the conception of philosophy that appears in the dialogues. As Plato's Socrates repeatedly stresses, the best kind of life is the philosophical one, and within that life our most important goal is to use philosophical dialectic as a way of "grasping" the immutable, imperceptible, and universal Forms. By contrast, myth lies on the level of mere human opinion (δόξα), for it is endlessly mutable, deals with matters that are particular and con-tingent in nature, and so (it seems) is irrevocably distanced from truth and the Forms. Myth, then, appears to be not only dangerous to the *polis* and morally questionable, but also ontologically inferior – and what's more, it is something that threatens to distract us from what *really* matters (namely, the pursuit of philosophical dialectic). In short, myth is the kind of thing that Plato – on his own terms – *should* thoroughly reject, not only in his vision of the philosophical life but also as a mode of discourse in the composition of philosophical texts.

And yet myths – both those of tradition and those of Plato's own devis-ing – continue to be a conspicuous part of the dialogues. Which again raises the question: *why?* This book is an extended attempt to answer that question, from the point of view of one pivotal dialogue, the *Phaedrus.* This dialogue is a particularly rich place to investigate Plato's use of myth. For one thing, it contains an extraordinary amount of mythical material, and hence "raw data" on which to base analysis. In addition to numerous references to tra-ditional myths, the dialogue contains several myths of Plato's own devising, including the palinode (Socrates' great second speech) as well as the myth of the cicadas and the Theuth-Thamus myth. There is much to be learned from these passages, through an analysis of their *content* and structural *form,* as well as through an investigation of how Plato *uses* them. In addition to the presented myths, the *Phaedrus* also contains a great deal of explicit dis-cussion *about* myth. Taken as a whole, then, the *Phaedrus* is the single most important dialogue for understanding Plato's uses and views of myth.

1.2 THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF PLATONIC MYTH

By the time Plato wrote his dialogues, myths had been a part of Greek culture for nearly a millennium. This makes Plato's own use of myth a rather late chapter in a much longer story. Accordingly, some understanding of that longer story will be helpful before looking at Plato himself.[1]

Myth was seemingly omnipresent in Greek culture, and was deeply enmeshed with art, literature, and a variety of social, political, and religious institutions. In many ways Greek myth (like Greek religion) was a deeply local phenomenon, given that each individual *polis* had its own local traditions, gods, and festivals. At the same time, however, myth was a pan-Hellenic phenomenon, and was an important line of demarcation between Greeks and foreigners.[2] In terms of content, Greek myth typically dealt with great deeds and events that took place in a distant or lost past, and the mythical stories were a way of preserving that past. Yet far from being a "dead" past, the Greeks regarded the stories recounted in the myths as having a vital connection to the present, particularly in the sense of explaining how present conditions or practices came to be. In this sense, the myths were a way of explaining the present nature of reality.[3]

In the search for a workable definition of myth, classicists and anthropologists have often used the notion of a *traditional tale,* and this concept will be helpful in the attempt to understand Plato's views of myth.[4] As something *traditional,* myth consists of stories that have passed through many hands over the course of many generations, as those stories have been told and retold via oral narration. (The setting for this oral narration could range from the informal storytelling of a child's nurse to the more formal activity of a professional bard.) And as a *tale,* myth consists of some kind of narrative or sequence of events, that is, a "dramatic construction with a

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[1] For a general overview of Greek mythology and its cultural and social significance, see Dowden 1992, Graf 1993, Kirk 1970 and 1974, and Edmunds 1990.

[2] "The system of Greek Mythology is a means of communication between all who subscribe to it. To recognize it is to be Greek, just as to speak the Greek language is a sign of being Greek. A community which sets up a myth in sculpture on its temple talks not just to itself, but to all who come to visit it" (Dowden 1992: 170).

[3] At least in the early phases of Greek history, the myths were accepted as the literal truth. Whether such an attitude persisted in the classical period of Plato's day – and, if it did, to what extent it persisted, and among whom – is an open and complicated question. It is certainly true that the Greeks never regarded the myths as an inerrant divine revelation in the manner of a Bible; but then again (as Graf [1993: 121, 140] notes), Herodotus was probably not unique in thinking that the myths (at least the heroic ones) represented an accurate record of the past. For further discussion, see Tate 1933 and 1936, and Veyne 1988.

[4] On the notion of myth as traditional tale – as well as the broader issues involved in attempting to define "myth" – see Kirk 1970: 1–41; Kirk 1973; Graf 1993: 1–8; Bremmer 1986; Burkert 1979: 1–34; Edmonds 2004: 4–13; Buxton 2004: 18; and Edmunds 1990: 1–20.

denouement."[5] Several implications follow from this conception of myth as a traditional tale. One is that the cultural relevance of myth – the continued transmission and preservation of the stories – becomes far more important than questions about origin and authorship. Indeed, the lack of any identifiable author or origin is part of what it *means* to call a myth "traditional" in the first place.[6] Relatedly, for any given myth there will be countless variants, as individual poets and other myth tellers adapt the traditional material to the needs of different audiences and to the changing values and conditions of society. In this sense, a given myth is not identical to any one telling, text, or artistic representation – it transcends each individual variant. There thus arises an interplay between the constraints imposed by the tradition (an unchanging narrative structure) and the need for that tradition to speak to the demands of the present day.[7]

The vitality and survival of myth depend, then, on an ability to adapt to changing social circumstances and to provide cultural relevance. So long as myth could do so – as was the case in the earliest centuries of Greek history, from the Mycenaean Age down to the Archaic Age – it was regarded as authoritative discourse and as a source of wisdom. Beginning in the sixth century B.C., however, this relevance and authority began to be called into question. The story of how this came about is well known, and is marked by two interrelated changes occurring in the Archaic Age. One is the change from a primarily oral culture to a culture in which writing and literacy began to occupy a more prominent place. As written texts began to supplant oral performance as the mode of mythic narration, the myths themselves were codified and lost their ability to adapt to changing circumstances.[8] Moreover, having the myths in written form freed them from being the exclusive property of a bard, and enabled them – for the first time – to be the common objects of visual inspection and scrutiny. This went hand in hand with a second major change occurring in the sixth century: the rise of philosophy, science, history, and other disciplines that for the first time began to explicitly raise questions and criticisms about the traditional stories. The Presocratic philosophers Heraclitus and Xenophanes, for instance, offer explicit condemnations of the stories of Homer and Hesiod;

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[5] Kirk 1973: 64.

[6] Latona 2004: 197–198; Burkert 1979: 2–3; Buxton 2004: 18; and Graf 1993: 2.

[7] This constitutes the process that Lévi-Strauss called *bricolage,* in which "the heritage of a relative past continually fuses with the cultural forces encountered in their relative present and a new synthesis is produced that represents a society's choices of terms with which to express itself to itself" (Nagy 1990: 204). For further discussion of the adaptability of myth in relation to changing social conditions, see Morgan 2000: 36–37; Edmunds 1990: 15; Kirk 1973: 65–66; Bremmer 1986: 3–4; Edmonds 2004: 4–13; Graf 1993: 1–8; Brisson 1998: 9, 17–48; Buxton 2004: 18; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 20; and Clark 1979: 14.

[8] On the impact of the rise of literacy on the status of myth, see Graf 1993: 152–155, 176; Brisson 1998: 25–39; Brisson 2004: 5–14; Naddaf 1998: xi–xxvi; Bremmer 1986: 4–5; and Lincoln 1999: 25–26.

and the historians Herodotus and Thucydides are likewise skeptical of many aspects of the mythic tradition.[9] The result, then, was a certain degree of tension between the forces of tradition and the newer voices (philosophical and otherwise) seeking to claim the mantle of authority. As we approach Plato, we ought to see him as a key player in this debate.

In presenting this account of the cultural and social changes of the sixth and fifth centuries, I am not suggesting that Greek intellectual history can be neatly divided into a "pre-philosophical" (or "mythical") and a "philosophical" (or "post-mythical") age, nor am I suggesting that it amounts to a simple movement "from μῦθος to λόγος" (what is sometimes called the "Greek miracle"). The latter notion – long espoused (even today) by scholars who have written about early Greece – would have us believe that there was a unidirectional and irreversible shift as a "mythical mode of thought" came crashing down and a new "rational mode of thought" arose in its place. As many have pointed out, however, this entire scholarly narrative of a movement "from μῦθος to λόγος" is *itself* a kind of convenient myth, one that is historically inaccurate as well as reliant on problematic assumptions.[10] Indeed, it is the Greek philosophers themselves (particularly Plato) who originated this line of thinking, as they sought to use the rhetoric of exclusion – situating their own λόγος in stark opposition to the traditional μύθοι – as a means of defining themselves *as* philosophers. As powerful as such rhetorical posturing may be, it is simply inaccurate as a representation of ancient society and texts. For instance, it implausibly suggests that the traditional myths themselves as well as the entire "pre-philosophical" era were utterly divorced from rationality (as if Thales were the first Greek to use reason in any way).[11] Likewise, it misrepresents early philosophy as an ahistorical endeavor that arose spontaneously, made a complete break with the past, and completely excluded myth – when in reality nearly all of the early Greek philosophers continued to use myth in their writings.[12] We (as

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[9] Xenophanes DK B1 and B11; Heraclitus DK B40, B42, B56, and B57; Herodotus 2.45; Thucydides 1.1, 1.20–1.22.

[10] For discussion and criticisms of the "from μῦθος to λόγος" account, see Buxton 1999: 1–21; Most 1999; Morgan 2000: 1–45; Lincoln 1999: 3–43; Naddaf 2009; Wians 2009: 1–10; and Kirk 1973: 66–67.

[11] The historical reality is much more complex. There is, for instance, a discernable order and structure within the myths themselves. And, as Kirk (1973: 66–67) notes, it is not as if the "pre-philosophical" Greeks were wandering around in an imagistic haze without any practical reasoning in their lives; rationality has been present (in some form) in all human civilization and was not contingent upon the discovery of Aristotelian syllogism for its use (cf. Adkins 1990: 100–101).

[12] Vernant (1983) puts the point well: on the from μῦθος to λόγος standard account, philosophy is presented as "a traveler without luggage, entering the world without a past, without antecedents, without affiliations" (343); but, in reality, philosophy is "a historical fact with its roots in the past, growing out of that past as well as away from it" (365). (Cf. Tait 1957: 165.) For a very insightful discussion of the nature of ancient philosophy as an historical

modern readers) ought not, therefore, accept the ancient philosophers'
terms of discussion as our own.[13]

The history of the two terms μῦθος and λόγος illustrates well the difficul-
ties in trying to fit them into wholly discrete categories.[14] In its most basic
sense (going back to Homer), a μῦθος is simply "something one says," and
can refer to a broad array of different types of speech. As such, μῦθος does
not necessarily refer to a myth (that is, to a traditional story dealing with the
gods or heroes). Equally important, in pre-Platonic usage μῦθος does not
carry any pejorative sense, nor is it inherently opposed to λόγος. Quite the
contrary, the earliest Greek writers, even those who are critical of the tra-
ditional stories, often use these two terms interchangeably. Prior to Plato,
then, μῦθος and λόγος are anything but transparent or univocal in meaning,
and instead vary greatly depending on the context and the specific purposes
of the individual author.[15] Plato's own approach to μῦθος is a reflection of
and a response to this cultural and linguistic heritage. On the one hand,
he wishes to offer a critical evaluation of previous views of μῦθος, and in
the process he imbues familiar words with new meanings and implications,
including the association of μῦθος with consistently negative connotations.
It is thus that we frequently find a strict dichotomy or opposition between
μῦθος and λόγος, an opposition that Plato is consciously constructing and
emphasizing.[16] At the same time, however, he blurs the boundaries between
them in a way that is continuous with his predecessors.

As an alternative to the simplistic "from μῦθος to λόγος" account, then, we
would do well to be attentive to the constant *interplay* (both positive and neg-
ative) between μῦθος and λόγος in Plato and the early Greek philosophers.
As a number of scholars have recently noted, the social-political context of
this interplay revolves less around the notion of rationality than around the
notion of *authority*.[17] Traditionally, it was myth that was invested with author-
ity, insofar as it was regarded as a trustworthy, veridical, and respectable

[13] phenomenon – a discipline that was consciously *constructed* by Socrates and Plato – see
Nightingale 1995: 9–59.

[13] A point well made by Morgan (2000: 4, 10, 22–23, 30ff., 40, 45). She asks, "Why is the Greek
miracle the freedom of logos from myth? Because that is what the Greek philosophers tell us
to think" (33).

[14] For a discussion of the pre-Platonic usage of μῦθος and λόγος, see Morgan 2000: 16–24;
Naddaf 2009: 101–102; Naddaf 1998: vii–xi; Lincoln 1999: 3–43; and Edmunds
1990: 3–4.

[15] As an example of the fluidity of these terms, notice that various words and phrases that
combine the two terms are possible in Greek, such as μυθολογία, μυθολόγος, λογομύθιον, and
μυθολογέω. In addition, a "myth" – one of the narrower meanings of μῦθος – can itself be
viewed as a particular *type* of λόγος (in the general sense of "speech" or "discourse").

[16] Although Plato is not the first Greek thinker to present an opposition between μῦθος and
λόγος (see, e.g., Pindar's *Olympian Ode* 1.28–1.29), he is the first to emphasize its signifi-
cance and to make it a central concern.

[17] See Nightingale 1995: 1–59; Lincoln 1999: ix, 3–43; Lincoln 1993; Wians 2009: 3; and
Edmonds 2004: 4–13.

mode of discourse. In this early setting, the various myth tellers (poets) were rivals, as each one competed with the others to produce a particular version that would be the most memorable and acceptable – and, hence, authoritative – to the audience.[18] In the sixth and fifth centuries, however, as the authority of myth began to be questioned, other groups – including not only philosophers but also historians, physicians, and sophists – sought to claim such authority for themselves, and sought to institute their own discourse as the most trustworthy and veridical. Thus the early Greek philosophers were not engaged simply in a dispassionate and rational search for timeless truths, even though they present themselves in that way. They were also (and perhaps more fundamentally) part of a social-political context, vying for authority against rival groups. As we will see, Plato himself is very much implicated in this context as well, as he aims to define and legitimate the discipline of philosophy and to mark it off from competing modes of discourse.

1.3 THE VARIETIES OF MYTH IN THE DIALOGUES

Now that we have a sense of the historical and cultural setting in which Plato lived, let us turn to some of the general features of the myths of his dialogues. So far I have treated "myth" as if it were a unitary category within Plato's dialogues. To a certain extent this is justified, since part of my aim in this book is to understand Plato's view of myth *as such*. In fact, however, we can also make important distinctions among the *kinds* of myths that appear in the dialogues. Broadly speaking, we may distinguish three main types:

1. *Traditional myths.* These are the canonical, orally transmitted stories that had been present in Greek culture for centuries (such as those we find in Homer and Hesiod). Plato sometimes talks *about* traditional myths (e.g., in Books II–III of the *Republic,* and in 229c–230a of the *Phaedrus*), and sometimes he *uses* or *incorporates* such myths (or imagery from the myths) in his dialogical writing.[19]
2. *State-regulated myths.* These are discussed primarily in the *Republic,* and are of two types: (a) traditional myths that have been censored by the civic rulers and purified of unacceptable content, and (b) myths written by the rulers themselves (e.g., the Myth of the Metals). The purpose of both types is to provide a proper educational climate for children, to promote images of virtue, and to promote civic unity.
3. *Platonic myths.* These myths are those that Plato himself writes. They include the grand eschatological myths (*Gorgias, Phaedo,*

[18] On this agonistic aspect of Greek myth, see Edmonds 2004: 4–13 and Lincoln 1991: 123.
[19] In the *Republic* (377c–d) Socrates further subdivides the traditional myths into (a) the "major" (or "greater") myths, told by poets such as Homer and Hesiod; and (b) the "minor" (or "lesser") myths, told by nurses and mothers to children.

Republic, Phaedrus) as well as a number of shorter myths (e.g., the myth of the cicadas in the *Phaedrus*). Such myths may be considered "philosophical," and they play a unique role in Plato's writing.

It will be helpful to have such distinctions in mind when asking, "What is Plato's view of myth?" For, to a large extent, the answer will depend on what *kind* of myth we are referring to. Much of my inquiry will focus on Platonic myths, since there are several notable examples of them in the *Phaedrus* (the palinode, the myth of the cicadas, and the myth of Theuth-Thamus). However, a pivotal passage in the *Phaedrus* (the Boreas passage) will also reveal a great deal about Plato's view of traditional myth. I will not deal with state-regulated myths, since they do not play any role in the *Phaedrus.*

Although it is fairly easy to identify those passages in the dialogues that fall into one of the first two groups, it is less obvious how to treat those passages that Plato himself authors. Which passages in the dialogues should we count as "Platonic myth" in the first place? How do we know where Plato's argument ends and Platonic myth begins, and what entitles us to call a given passage "mythical"? One proposed approach to the matter is a simple philological one: if Plato uses the word μῦθος to refer to a given passage, then – and only then – are we entitled to treat that passage as "myth."[20] However, the complexity of Plato's usage of the term μῦθος militates against such a simplistic approach. Among the various occurrences of the term (and its compounds) in the dialogues, in many contexts μῦθος does indeed mean "myth." But in other contexts it refers not to "myth" but to some speech or philosophical doctrine (either Socrates' own or those of his interlocutors), and indeed it is often used interchangeably with λόγος.[21] For example, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates refers to his first speech as both a λόγος (237a5) and a μῦθος (237a9, 241e8); similarly, he calls the palinode a μῦθος (253c7) as well as a λόγος (242b4). This shows that Plato's usage of the two terms is fluid, and that he often employs them in deliberately unexpected and provocative ways. Consequently, the mere occurrence of μῦθος is not by itself a sufficient criterion for considering a passage as "myth."

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[20] Zaslavsky (1981b: 12–13) advocates this view: "The only safe and unprejudicial operating criterion is the simple principle that one is entitled to call a myth in Plato's writings only what is explicitly so called, and that one is not entitled to call a myth anything which is not explicitly so called. In other words, we must not allow ourselves to designate as a myth what modern opinions would lead us to take for granted as a myth."

[21] Of course, in the broadest sense – where λόγος simply means "discourse" – a μῦθος is a *type* of λόγος. There are over 100 occurrences of the word μῦθος in the Platonic corpus, as well as some 50 occurrences of terms that either are derived from μῦθος as a root (e.g., μυθικός, μυθολόγος, μυθολογία, μυθολόγημα) or are compounds with μῦθος (e.g., παραμύθιον, παραμυθέομαι). For a catalogue and discussion of the various occurrences of μῦθος, see Brisson 1998: 141–157; Moors 1982: 55–58; and Brandwood 1976: 593. Interestingly, there are very few occurrences of μυθ terms in the aporetic dialogues; instead – and perhaps unsurprisingly – most such occurrences are in those dialogues that contain the Platonic myths, as well as in those dialogues that contain an explicit discussion of the nature of philosophy and philosophical method (Moors 1982: 57–58).

(For instance, the fact that Socrates refers to his first speech as a μῦθος does not necessarily mean that he intends it to be read as mythical.) Nor is it a necessary criterion, since it is unreasonable to expect any author to consistently apply a meta-narrative label every time he or she introduces a unique element into the text. (Indeed, if taken seriously, this sort of methodology would imply that neither the cicada story nor the Theuth-Thamus story in the *Phaedrus* should be regarded as mythical – something which I take to be prima facie implausible.)

But if the attempt to identify Platonic myth in terms of its labels (what it is explicitly *called*) is unsatisfactory, so too is the attempt to identify it in terms of its content (what it is *about*), given that the same content may be presented both mythically and nonmythically. The *Phaedo,* for example, examines the soul both in myth and in argument. A more fruitful approach for demarcating Platonic myth – and the one that I will adopt here – is to use the notion of *traditional tale* mentioned earlier. That is, "Platonic myths" are those passages in the dialogues that consist of unbroken narrative or storytelling (a "tale") and that bear some sort of vital relation to the cultural past (a "tradition"). At first this approach might seem counterintuitive, given that Plato carefully crafts and constructs his myths for specific dialogical contexts, and is clearly not transmitting an orally received story that had been passed down for generations. But while Plato's myths may not be "traditional" in the most literal sense, I will argue that they *are* traditional in the sense that Plato deliberately incorporates a variety of *motifs, images,* and *narrative structures* that come from the Greek cultural heritage. In addition, as we will see, Socrates always presents his myths *as if* they had been handed down to him from some other source, even though he may not mean that literally. This approach to tradition is, in part, Plato's way of appropriating the authority and power of myth and co-opting it for his own philosophical purposes.[22] Using this notion of traditional tale will also enable us to understand what it is that makes mythical discourse (including Platonic myth) distinct from philosophical discourse.

1.4 THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS SURROUNDING MYTH

It will be helpful at the outset to have a clear sense of the main issues that arise in connection with Platonic myth, as well as some of the main ways in which previous commentators have approached those issues.

The value of myth. In the broadest sense, a major area of concern is Plato's view of the overall *value* of myth. The criticisms of traditional μύθοι in the

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[22] I should hasten to add here that the whole question of how to identify Platonic myth is also one that Plato himself *intends* for us to ask. For as Morgan (2000: 157) notes, "when we ask what is and is not a myth, and ponder the criteria by which we would answer the question, we are engaging in philosophy." In this sense, Plato is as much interested in provoking our thought on the issue as he is in providing any answers.

Republic are thorough and explicit. But how far do those criticisms extend? Does Plato view *all* myth as inherently flawed, defective, and problematic? Or might there be certain types of myth that he would regard in positive terms? For example, perhaps traditional Greek myths could be appropriately reformed in such a way as to become philosophically respectable and morally sound (and perhaps the *Republic* itself outlines such a reformation). Alternatively – and more to the point – perhaps Plato's *own* philosophical myths are such that they are not subject to the criticisms levied against traditional Greek myths. But is this correct? Or does Plato regard even his own myths as problematic and flawed?

Myth and philosophy. A related area of concern is the *philosophical status* of myth. What is the relationship between myth and philosophy? Is myth fundamentally subordinate to philosophy and inferior to it? Or can myth serve a philosophical purpose? In particular, does Plato see his own myth-making as a legitimate part of philosophical activity, or as a departure from such activity? The issue is especially pressing in the *Phaedrus,* where we have a substantial myth – the palinode – that deals with a number of central philosophical issues (including the soul and the Forms). Accordingly, some commentators have concluded that Platonic myths such as the palinode *are* a legitimate part of philosophy and, as such, ought to be read as a serious statement of Plato's views. Perhaps, then, the *Phaedrus* shows us a more "tolerant" or "inclusive" Plato who no longer dichotomizes myth and philosophy as he did in the *Republic.* Instead, he is now willing to admit myth as a valuable part of philosophy, or perhaps even to suggest that myth is an essential part of philosophy.[23]

On the other hand, there might be good reasons to think that Plato remains deeply critical of myth and regards even his own myth making as a nonphilosophical activity. At the end of the *Phaedrus,* for instance, Socrates says that the "serious" (σπουδαῖος) pursuit of truth consists in dialectical inquiry, and that by comparison the composition of written works or rhapsodic speeches is no more than "play" (παιδιά). Does this remark apply to the palinode itself? If so, then it might imply that Plato regards myth making as no more than a "playful game" that is subordinate to the serious philosophical work of dialectical inquiry. On this view, Platonic myth has some positive role to play, but if we truly wish to engage in philosophy, then we must move beyond it.[24]

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[23] For the view that the palinode is a serious and legitimate part of philosophy, see Heath 1989a, Waterfield 2002: xliv–xlv, Ferrari 1987: 30, 32, 64 (also cf. 212, 214), Sinaiko 1965: 38, and Findlay 1978: 19. Ferrari (1987: 122ff.) further claims that myth is "essential" for the philosopher, and that the philosopher "must" use myth. Those who take the "developmental" view of the *Phaedrus* and claim to find a more "tolerant" Plato in the dialogue include Nussbaum (2001) and Nicholson (1999: 13–14).

[24] Those who argue that the palinode is not properly a part of philosophy include Rowe (1989 and 1986), Nehamas and Woodruff (1995: xxxviii–xxxix), and Morgan