

PLATO'S RIVERS OF THE UNDERWORLD*

Résumé. — Cet article passe en revue les conceptions eschatologiques platoniciennes, en se concentrant sur le rôle et le symbolisme des descriptions fluviales. Platon conçoit un nouveau modèle eschatologique, incorporant d'autres conceptions alternatives tout en essayant de les surpasser. L'A. souligne la manière dont Platon adapte chaque description aux principaux arguments des dialogues dans lesquels elle est développée, ainsi que les propositions les plus révolutionnaires de ce modèle, comme la classification particulière des destins *post mortem*, dans laquelle l'élément fluvial joue un rôle symbolique fort, ou la création d'une échelle subtile de « corporeité », qui culmine avec le statut privilégié des philosophes.

Abstract. — This is a review of the Platonic eschatological conceptions, focusing on the role and symbolism of the fluvial descriptions. Plato designs a new eschatological model, incorporating and, at the same time, trying to overcome other alternative conceptions. The author emphasizes the way Plato adapts each description to the main arguments of the dialogues in which they are developed, as well as the most revolutionary proposals of this model, such as the particular classification of *post mortem* destinies, in which the fluvial element plays a strong symbolic role, or the creation of a subtle scale of 'corporeity', culminating in the privileged status of the philosophers.

1. Preliminary remarks

I am afraid the title of this paper may not seem appropriate for a volume dedicated to “Water in Greek Religion” for two reasons: I will not speak about water as much as may be expected and I fear that the Greeks would never have classified my theme as a subject of ‘religion’ – using our terminology, though not theirs. As for the first objection, I can argue that the Platonic description of underworld rivers cannot be fully understood without setting it in the wider context of Plato's philosophical arguments, not necessarily hydraulic; and as for the second, it is more difficult to neutralize it unless we accept that in fact Socrates / Plato θεός οὐς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζουσιν, ἔτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καινὰ¹. But this is the point.

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1. *Ap.*, 24b-c.

Plato constructs a revolutionary conception of the world beyond, and this world was an important part of the religious beliefs of his contemporaries, not only those who simply accepted the oldest traditions concerning the realm of Hades and Persephone, but also of those who had enriched those traditions with the new perspectives and hopes created by the different doctrines of the Eleusinian mysteries or Pythagorean and Orphic ideas. Furthermore, the innovations and mixture of traditions are not limited to the shadowy regions under the earth, but also to the paradisiacal places where the blessed will dwell.

2. Previous and contemporary Greek conceptions of the world Beyond

It is a well-known fact that the concept of the afterlife has not, in Greece, had a consolidated profile, a firmly established design, neither in the configuration of a place of blessing and reward for the good, nor in the way that penalties for the bad are conceived. However, there is not an abundance of models, and we find even some permanent features that are more or less adapted to the different descriptions.

2.1 *On the earth*

2.1.1 *The Elysian plane and other privileged landscapes*

The Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον², mentioned for the first time by Homer as the final destination of Menelaus (*Od.*, 4, 563); it is used also in the plural³ and in one case (Lucian) it is defined as a *λειμών*⁴. We must, in this context add the idyllic land described in a dirge by Pindar (fr. 133). These paradisiacal territories can be aligned with other lands not related to the afterlife, composing a rich catalogue of marvellous regions, as the country of the Hyperboreans or many other Utopian places.

2.1.2 *Islands*

Another important constituent of afterlife (or ‘other life’) geography is the Islands or Island of the Blessed⁵, the μακάρων νῆσοι / -ος along with – in the case of Achilles – the White Island⁶. The islands of the Blessed are the final dwelling place of the heroes (ὄλβιοι ἦρωες) of the fourth Hesiodic

2. *Od.*, 4, 563; A.R., 4, 811; Str., 1, 1, 4; Plu., *Sert.*, 8; etc. In pl., *IG* 14.1973; χῶρος Ἠλύσιος *IG* 14. 2012, C, a, 8.

3. Polem., *Hist.*, 93.

4. Luc., *Jconf.*, 17.

5. See M. GARCÍA TEJERRO (1985a).

6. See M. OLLER (2014), with bibliography.

generation⁷. In the Pindaric⁸ description the Island is shrouded in the breezes of the Ocean, trees produce the “flower of gold” and the blessed plait necklaces and crowns following the precepts of Rhadamanthys. In those cases it must be underlined that it seems that we are not dealing with a place only for the souls, but with a place where heroes and heroines will live eternally in a wonderful abode, with both immortality and eternal youth guaranteed.

2.2 *The subterranean realm*

2.2.1 *Chasms (the underworld properly said): Hades and Tartarus*

The panorama of the ‘surface’ landscapes is completed in Greek eschatology with descriptions of the underworld that are indeed not limited to meadows and prairies. However, we must differentiate two realms. On the one hand, there is the ‘realm of Hades’, the place where most mortals – or rather, their ‘images’, εἶδωλα, or souls – go to dwell eternally. On the other hand there is the awful Tartarus, where Hesiod places the roots of the earth. The topography of those subterranean realms and the details of the descent are far from being unified in Greek traditions. From the Homeric description of the path followed by Hermes and the souls of the suitors – who through places like the stream of the Ocean, the rock Leukas, the gates of the Sun and the δῆμος of the Dreams arrive at the ἀσφοδελὸς λειμῶν – to the more detailed descent described in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes⁹ or the instructions of the Orphic tablets¹⁰, and the isolated mention of other details in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter or, later, the Greek tragedy, the diversity is quite astonishing. Additionally we must take into account that these meadows are not always a place of reward and happiness. They can be a mere place to dwell eternally under the earth as mere εἶδωλα καμόντων (*Od.*, 24) or even an awful place, the Ἄτης λειμῶν of Empedocles¹¹.

As for the Tartarus¹², its most complete description – and of the subterranean realm in general – in archaic literature is found in Hesiod, though the Homeric mentions are also important. Homer mentions the distance between Hades and Tartarus as equivalent to that between the sky and the

7. *Op.*, 170-173.

8. *Ol.*, 2, 70-72.

9. On the importance of this comedy for the understanding of Athenian religion see E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE (1997).

10. See *infra*, p. 70.

11. Fr. 109 Gallavotti.

12. See M. L. WEST (1997²), p. 194-195, for Hesiod.

earth¹³, and says that there are the “deepest limits of the earth and the sea”¹⁴. The poet specifies that in this region are the ‘sources and limits’ (extremities) of everything: earth, Tartarus, sea, and sky. The only hydric (and hydrographic) mention in this description is that of the Styx’ waters, daughter of Ocean. It is a very coherent description. The world has become a spectacular and immense building. The inferior part is constituted by Tartarus’ abode, surrounded by a bronze wall. Inside it are the Titans, locked up in this bronze prison: only Day and Night cross every day the gates and only the offspring of Night – Hypnos and Thanatos – have their dwelling there. Above it we find the roots of the upper world, up to the Sky, the dwelling of Hades and Persephone, and the abode of Styx.

2.2.2 Some features of the subterranean realm:

2.2.2.1 Meadows:

As A. Motte observed in his wonderful work on ‘meadows and gardens in Ancient Greece’, among the more persistent images of the landscape of the afterlife, *la prairie est l'une des plus anciennes et des plus durables, l'une des plus spécifiques aussi, et l'on peut dire que le mot λειμών s'est acquis en ce domaine ses plus hauts titres de noblesse*¹⁵. But not only in Greece. It is in fact a notion shared by many Indo-European cultures¹⁶. And this λειμών reappears from Homer on – in Hesiod, Pindar, Attic Comedy and so on with the particularity that it is not necessarily a part of a paradise upon earth, but can also be found in the underworld. The conception of this meadow is far from being unique – as a consequence of the amalgamation of ancient diverse traditions – even in the same author: in the Homeric poems we find three mentions of the ἀσφοδελός λειμών. As A. Motte observes¹⁷, that of the first νέκυια (*Od.*, 11, 538-539) is in fact located on the surface, beside the βόθρος made by Ulysses, whereas the next one (573), reveals a ‘projection verticale’; finally, the last one (*Od.*, 24, 13) is a kind of

13. Hom., *Il.*, 8, 13-16: warnings of Zeus against the possibility of a revolt against him. The description of Tartarus includes two particular features, omitted in the Platonic quotation: ἦ μιν ἐλὼν ῥίψω ἐς Τάρταρον ἠερόεντα, / τῆλε μάλ', ἦχι βάθιστον ὑπὸ χθονός ἐστι βέρεθρον, / ἔνθα σιδήρειαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός, / τόσσον ἔνερθ' Ἄϊδεω ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης.

14. Hom., *Il.*, 8, 477-483: Zeus insults Hera. He will ignore her anger, even if she goes to the deepest limits of the earth and the sea: [...] σέθεν δ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀλεγίζω / χωομένης, οὐδ' εἴ κε τὰ νείατα πείραθ' ἴκηαι / γαίης καὶ πόντοιο, ἴν' Ἰάπετος τε Κρόνος τε / ἤμενοι οὐτ' ἀγῆς Ὑπερίωνος Ἑελίοιο / τέρποντ' οὐτ' ἀνέμοισι, βαθὺς δέ τε Τάρταρος ἀμφίς.

15. A. MOTTE (1973), p. 247 (with reference to *prairies et jardins de l'autre monde*).

16. See M. GARCÍA TEJERO (1985b); M^a H. VELASCO LÓPEZ (2000).

17. A. MOTTE (1973), p. 251-252, n. 48.

compromise between the other two. Meadows appear also in Orphic eschatology: the tablet of Thuri (n. 3, ll. 5-6) orders the soul of the dead “journey on the right-hand road / to holy meadows and groves of Persephone”¹⁸.

2.2.2.2 Rivers, springs, lakes:

As F. Graf and S. I. Johnston say, “rivers that must be crossed are in fact one of the most common features of Underworld geographies”¹⁹, and they illustrate this assessment with the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the myth of the ferryman Charon and his transport of the souls (Ar., *Ran.*, 190-193), Egyptian traditions and a Hittite text. Nevertheless the Greek examples cannot be easily enlarged beyond the Athenian myth and the texts I will cite hereafter, but they become essential in a part of the Platonic landscape of the underworld, which adopts elements of beliefs well rooted among his contemporaries.

Homer and Pindar

After this description a natural question emerges: what about water? Rivers, fountains and lakes are also an important part of the eschatological landscape, though their presence is not as abundant as could be expected – and desired for this volume. The divine Styx has been cited above and it has a decisive role in the description of fluvial elements of the underworld, and also of the rivers of the surface of the earth. In the *Iliad* the name of the Styx appears four times, twice in the context of an oath (14, 271; 15, 37), one in an allusion to Hades’ realm (8, 369, the Στυγὸς ὕδατος αἰπὰ ῥέεθρα); but in the fourth one, in the context of the Catalog of Ships, the poet links it to the rivers of the Thesprotis region (2, 748-755), the Titaressus and the Peneius. The first does not mix its waters with the Peneius, because it is an ἀπορρώξ of the Styx. Surprisingly, the hydronyms Peneius and Titaressus or Titaresius reappear in Thessaly, in the Valley of Tempe, a region linked to Delphi by the *Septerion* ritual²⁰. The relation to the Styx was probably mentioned by Pindar (*Pae.*, 10), according to the remnants of the first lines and their commentary, which refers to a river Στυ[γὶ] σύνδετον, though the reconstruction is difficult.

But the most interesting mention of this liaison between the subterranean world and the surface of the earth is in the instructions Circe gives to Odysseus in order to accomplish his *katabasis* (*Od.*, 10, 508-515). Once he has moored the ship at the indicated point on the border of the Ocean, in

18. Δεξιάν ὄδοιπὸρ[εῖ] / λειμῶνας τε ἱερὸς καὶ ἄλσεα / Φερσεφονείας.

19. F. GRAF and S. I. JOHNSTON (2007), p. 97.

20. See E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE (2011).

the exact place where Persephone's woods are, he must enter Hades' realm and arrive at the place where the rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, this one described again as an ἀπορρώξ of the Styx, flow into the Acheron. By the way, note that the Ocean, in Homer and other sources, apart from being the immense flow of water that surrounds the earth, represents a physical frontier between the world of the living and the world of the dead²¹.

Later on, the river Acheron, and/or the Acherusian lake, will become the 'infernal' river *par excellence* and the picture of the last journey of the souls will be enriched with the motif of the boatman Charon, mentioned for the first time in the *Miniad* (fr. 1)²². This fluvial description will be a constant in Greek literature, largely expanded in all Greek regions and times,²³ and we will return to it when explaining the Platonic model²⁴.

Finally, I wish to recall that in a fragment of a Pindaric dirge transmitted by Plutarch²⁵, according to this author, the poet told that there were three different ways to arrive in Hades, and "the third way is for those who have lived unholy and criminal²⁶ lives; it plunges their souls into a pit of darkness", and then (fr. 130) "from there sluggish rivers of gloomy night / belch forth an endless darkness"²⁷.

Orphics

I will limit this part only to the testimony of the orphic tablets. I must cite F. Graf and S. I. Johnston again, who observe that "thirteen of the twenty "mnemonic"²⁸ tablets mention geographical features of the Underworld" and that "twelve of the thirteen tablets under consideration are concerned with obtaining water in the Underworld – a very common motif in eschatological narratives and ritual systems all over the world, which tend to presume that the deceased will be thirsty"²⁹. A. Bernabé and

21. See details in A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL (2015), p. 380-382, with references and bibliography.

22. Details of the presence of this motive in A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL (2015), p. 382-384.

23. As A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL (2015), p. 385-386 observes, we should add the Argive tradition of the Alcionian lake, at Lerna, the place where Dionysus descended to rescue his mother Semele, related to important Dionysian rites; see. Paus., 2, 37, 5-6 and the commentary by A. I. Jiménez San Cristóbal.

24. The persistence of these beliefs can be observed by comparing Aristophanes' *Frogs* with the summary of Lucianus in *De luctu*.

25. Fr. 130 (= Plutarch, *De latenter vivendo*, 7, 1130c).

26. All Pindaric translations are by W. RACE, *Pindar: Nemean Odes, Isthmian Odes, Fragments* (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge (Mass.) - London, 1997.

27. ἔθεν τὸ ἄπειρον ἐρεύγονται σκότον / βληχροὶ δνοφερᾶς νυκτὸς ποταμοί.

28. This is the label they assign to the tablets with instructions for the underworld.

29. F. GRAF and S. I. JOHNSTON (2007), p. 97-98.

A. I. Jiménez observe also that this motif of the “refreshing drink” or *refrigerium* is well attested from the Near East to Rome and is also present in Christian and Gnostic eschatology and attested not only in texts, but also in an abundant iconography.³⁰ Tablets L1 (Hipponion)³¹, L2 (Entella)³², L3 (Petelia)³³ and L4 (Pharsalos)³⁴ include references to a spring (κρήνη) that must not be approached (placed to the left of the house of Hades), and to the Lake of Memory (Μνημοσύνης λίμνη), whose cold waters will calm the thirsty dead. A spring and the motif of thirst are also mentioned in most of the tablets from Eleutherna (L5A-B-C³⁵ and L5E-F³⁶), and in those from Thessaly (L6)³⁷, Sfakaki (L6A)³⁸ and Mylopotamos (L5D)³⁹.

2.3 *The destiny in the afterlife in relation to the world beyond*

The best synthesis of this classification of the destiny of human beings by the time of Plato – in connection with the panoramic of the gold tablets – is made by F. Graf and S. I. Johnston⁴⁰ and I will limit myself to summarizing it⁴¹. The most extended belief concerning the afterlife is that of a dual destination of the souls. Since Homer we hear that Hades is a dark and gloomy place where souls have a sad existence having become mere shadows, εἴδωλα. There are two exceptions: those guilty of horrible offences against the Gods, who must therefore undergo eternal punishments, and those who have been rewarded with a privileged afterlife, a kind of new life in an idyllic entourage – Elysian fields, Islands of the Blessed and so on. However, the belief in the immortality of the soul has led to new conceptions of the afterlife. Along with the Orphic tablets, the two literary descriptions that have modelled categories of destiny of the souls according to behaviour in life are Pindar (*Olympian* 2, frs. 129, 131b & 133) and Plato in the dialogues commented upon in this paper. In Pindar the tripartite division of afterlife destiny is very well defined: 1. “Those who joyfully kept their oaths spend a tearless existence”; 2. “the others endure pain too terrible to behold”; 3. “those with the courage to have lived three times in either realm,

30. A. BERNABÉ and A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL (2001), p. 287.

31. *OF* 474 Bernabé.

32. *OF* 475 Bernabé.

33. *OF* 476 Bernabé.

34. *OF* 477 Bernabé.

35. *OF* 478-480 Bernabé.

36. *OF* 482-483 Bernabé.

37. *OF* 484 Bernabé.

38. *OF* 484A-B.

39. *OF* 481B.

40. F. GRAF and S. I. JOHNSTON (2007), p. 100-108.

41. As for the differences and similarities of Plato's descriptions with those of the Orphics, see the excellent article by A. BERNABÉ (2013).

while keeping their souls free from all unjust deeds” – those who then go to the Island of the Blessed. However, as I will try to demonstrate later, Plato will design a more developed model of the afterlife, superseding all previous types.

3. Myths of Plato on the afterlife⁴²

The Platonic ‘myths’⁴³ most directly related to the afterlife, as is well known, are those included in the *Gorgias* (523a - 537b)⁴⁴, the *Phaedo* (107c - 115a), the *Phaedrus* (246d - 249d, but with more limited development), and the *Republic* (613e - 619b) respectively. To these ‘myths’ – introduced as such by Plato himself – we must add as a first mention of this subject, though not under the form of an account or ‘myth’, the final words of Socrates in the *Apology* (40c - 41c), where as mere possibilities he presents two alternative destinies of the soul⁴⁵.

The order of this sequence, which matches the more usual relative chronology of the dialogues⁴⁶, could be supported by the development of thoughts regarding the afterlife and the destiny of the souls explained therein. At least, they represent a line of progression in those arguments, combining this consistency with a remarkable coherence with the main ideas of each dialogue and a complementation of the descriptions that establishes a complete architecture of the proposed landscapes in relation to the core of Platonic philosophy. To summarize – and to defend – what I am calling coherence and complementation, I could say that the *Apology* shows that

42. See M. INWOOD (2009).

43. An analysis of the use of ‘myth’ in Plato would bring us too far. Some important studies: P. FRUTIGER (1934), J. A. and L. STEWART (1960), R. ZASLAVSKY (1981), K. F. MOORS (1982), J. PIEPER (1984), E. RUIZ YAMUZA (1986), L. CECCARINI (1991), G. DROZ (1992), J.-F. MATTÉI (1996), R. BUXTON (ed.) (1999), L. BRISSON (2005), C. PARTENIE (ed.) (2009), C. COLLOBERT, P. DESTRÉE and F. J. GONZÁLEZ (eds.) (2012).

44. See also in the same dialogue 492e - 493c, playing with the opposition life / death and $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ / $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$. On the orphic elements of this part see A. BERNABÉ (2009), p. 66-72, with a clarifying commentary on this passage.

45. I will not comment here on the pseudepigraphic *Axiochus*, a kind of – simplified – ‘summary’ of Platonic conceptions of the afterlife, but I want to emphasize its importance to know the persistence of the theme and its interpretation in Hellenistic Platonism, under the form of a *consolation*, not devoid of Orphic ideas. It includes some interesting references to the Netherworld. See A. BERNABÉ (2013), p. 140-143, with a very complete bibliography.

46. I mean that, even if there is no unanimity in the classification of all the dialogues and, the chronologica lsequence *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic* is usually accepted. See, for instance A. DÍAZ TEJERA (1961), H. THESLEFF (1982), G. LEDGER (1989), L. BRANDWOOD (1990), Ch. KAHN (1996), p. 47-48, ID. (2003).

at the time of its composition – and regardless of the fact that it is as much a rhetoric piece as a work with a philosophical aim – either Plato had not begun to build a theory of the soul's destiny, or at least – and very probably – the issue of the nature of the world beyond was not one of the Socratic concerns. He suggests two alternatives to the effects of death: either it is like an insensible sleep without dreams, or it is a 'transfer' of the soul to another place (εις ἄλλον τόπον). In both cases it is a positive destiny, in the former because of the tranquillity and peace of the absence of feeling, and in the latter because of the possibility of sharing that abode with Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer, or to converse with other victims of their unjust trials – Palamedes and Ajax – and to talk also with old heroes, like Ulysses, Sisyphus and many others.

In the *Gorgias*, a dialogue on the power of rhetoric and persuasion, as well as on the question of whether it is better to cause injustice or to suffer it, *Socrates uses the myth to make a call for the right behaviour and for the search for the truth*. Thus, he points out the differences between the times of Cronos and the innovations introduced by Zeus. Formerly, the νόμος stated that pious men went to the Islands of the Blessed, while the bad ones were condemned to the Tartarus. However, they were judged before they had died and there was a serious danger of the judges being deceived by the appearances and misguided by the ability of the defenders. Then Zeus decided that it was necessary to judge the souls after death, when they were naked – and, moreover, they retained the signs of their behaviour in life. He affirms that those who are guilty of the worst crimes have no cure (they are ἀνίατοι), and cites Homer to remember the cases of Tantalus, Sisyphus and Tityus as representative of those without cure and condemned to the worst punishments. He praises those who, having had the opportunity of being unjust, because of their power, have shown a good behavior. However, there is no mention of rivers in this myth: Socrates focuses on the exemplary punishments⁴⁷.

The *Phaedo* offers a strong contrast in its description. He is the most 'fluvial' of the three myths, and I will come back to it in detail later on. But I can anticipate that its thoroughness in the description of the world beyond is parallel to the effort to design a *complete vision of the different destinies of the souls according to their nature*.

47. Nor is there any allusion to reincarnation, though, as A. BERNABÉ puts it, "nothing in the *Gorgias* contradicts the possibility that, after suffering punishments in Tartarus, the soul is given a second chance to undo its mistakes" (2013, p. 126). Be this as it may, it is also true that this is a dialogue which makes it clear that "justice pays *in the end*" (J. ANNAS [1982], p. 125, italics included).

The next dialogue to be mentioned here is the *Phaedrus* (246d - 249d). The description of the region above Heaven (τόπος ὑπερουράνιος) is complementary in some way to the account of the *Republic* on reincarnation. The difference is that it deals with the *first time* a soul enters a body and with the description of the subsequent mechanism of reincarnation (in fact, there is only a mention of the election of a ‘second life’). This description displays the usual Platonic tendency towards a complete classification and taxonomy. The first part is a description of ‘divine souls’. Thereafter, he goes on to explain the cycle of ‘human’ souls. Here the division goes forth as follows. First, we have the souls that remain ἀβλαβεῖς and eternally contemplate the Truth. But those contaminated by oblivion and evil – because they cannot ‘see’ – lose their wings and fall, incarnated into different men, according to the amount of ‘vision’ of the Truth they have had. The classification ranges from the philosopher (first class) to the tyrant (ninth class). The next distinction is that of the cycles these different souls must accomplish until the ‘second’ life⁴⁸. At the moment of the κλήρωσις and αἴρσεις, the degree of contemplation of Truth is again decisive, and the preference is always for the philosopher who, thanks to the process of ἀνάμνησις and his practice of the ‘contemplative’ life, has the privilege of recovering the wings and approaching divine status. It must be emphasized that the myth illustrates in this dialogue the description of the fourth type of μανία, the erotic, and that the underlying rationale is a parallel between the contemplation of truth and of beauty⁴⁹.

As for the myth of Er in the *Republic*, it could be described at the same time as a synthesis of the previous accounts – those of the *Gorgias* and of the *Phaedo* – and as a further development regarding both the description of the superior realms of the universe and the subject of the reincarnation and παλιγγενεσία of the souls, including a new fluvial reference. For this reason I will comment on it later in connection with the *Phaedo*.

4. Subterranean rivers in Plato: The *Phaedo* and the *Republic*

4.1 *Phaedo*

The nature of this dialogue, dedicated to Socrates’ last moments, justifies the abundant allusions to the afterlife. For instance, in his discussion with Simmias, Socrates refers to the initiation in the mysteries – Dionysian, as it seems – in these terms:

48. For this “hierarchy of reincarnations”, see A. BERNABÉ (2011), p. 109-111.

49. This is why, in many aspects, it can be considered complementary of the *Symposium*.

And I fancy that those men who established the mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For as they say in the mysteries, 'the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the mystics few'; [69d] and these mystics are, I believe, those who have been true philosophers⁵⁰.

This is a first 'flash' of what at the end of the dialogue will be expressed categorically, and differently: the special destiny of the philosophers' souls. This final part (107c - 115a) has a dual structure, which contains two different descriptions of the underworld that complement each other, though the first is a kind of summary of the second, which is far more detailed – and richer in arguments and nuances. It gives the impression that the first abridged description is an 'abstract' of more commonly accepted ideas, and that then Plato develops and complements this description in a highly creative manner, though not contradicting his former conceptions.

What I have called a 'prelude' is indeed not only a presentation of the arguments, but has the function of the ancient poetic προοίμια that summarized the subsequent narratives by underlining at the same time what will be the main thought, thus preparing a 'ring composition' with the final conclusion of the account. Note that the main argument here is that, given that the soul is immortal and goes to Hades with the sole baggage of its 'education and nurture', "it cannot escape from evil or be saved in any other way than by becoming as good and wise as possible."

As for the description, it is limited to two aspects. First, the descent of the souls, a journey to Hades guided by the δαίμων allotted to each one, because the path is complicated, with bifurcations and crossroads⁵¹. Second, when "they have received their due"⁵² and have passed there a fixed time, then another guide brings them back "after many periods of time". The feature of 'duality' reappears when he describes (a) two different attitudes of

50. καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάσαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκείσει ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. εἰσὶν γὰρ δὴ, ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετὰς, 'ναρθηκοφόροι' [69d] μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τε παῦροι: οὗτοι δ' εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς. The 'mud' reappears in other descriptions (for instance, Aristoph., *Ra.*, 145 and 273).

51. R. GARLAND (2001²), p. 50, when talking about the Platonic topography of the netherworld, affirms: "Though there are undoubted echoes of popular beliefs in Aristophanes' and Plato's description of Hades in so far as they duplicate each other in certain particulars, at the best they merely serve as eccentric variants on a popular theme."

52. Translations by H. N. FOWLER (1913).

the souls, according to their nature: one more obedient (and ‘prudent’⁵³), the other more resistant (more attached to the body); and (b) the distinction between impure and pure souls. However, at the end the result is the same: both go finally to their due and fitting place. I see here an implicit allusion to the reincarnation theory⁵⁴.

After this first part, Socrates announces another description of the earth, in a kind of transition to the second part of his arguments. In this transition he proclaims the existence of many wonderful regions of the earth and he adds that “the earth itself is neither in size nor in other respects such as it is supposed to be by those who habitually discourse about it, as I believe on someone’s authority”⁵⁵. Then the second description begins, again introduced by a ‘prelude’ in which Socrates establishes a difference between the easy description of “what it is” and the difficulty of proving that it is true: this argument will be retrieved at the end of this part, and anticipates the question of the veracity of the details of the account and the *truth* underlying it. Anyway, he says, nothing prevents him from telling what he believes the earth is like and what its places or regions, the τόποι, are like⁵⁶.

Breaking with the poetic tradition, Plato seems to side with those who defend the sphericity of the earth and, according to the formulation, also of the sky enveloping it. I say ‘it seems’, because this issue is not universally accepted, partly due to the imprecision of the terms used – ἰσοροπία means ‘being in equipoise’ and περιφερής points to ‘circularity’ but not necessarily ‘sphericity’: it could be said also of a cylinder or a circle – and partly because the description that follows does not need to be linked to a sphere. However, the reality is that some lines later, when he describes the ‘true’ earth, he compares its external aspect with that of a coloured sphere, and that in the *Timaeus* (33) Plato uses the term σφαῖρα to describe the world. Nevertheless, the form is not decisive in understanding the description, because since Hesiod the depictions refer to a vertical succession of layers, independently of the exact geometrical form of the whole.

The real surprise comes with the next assertion: we believe that we are dwelling on the true earth, but this is a mistake. We, the inhabitants of the

53. The more docile is described as κοσμία καὶ φρόνιμος, and it ἔπεται καὶ οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ τὰ παρόντα. It is not difficult to see here an allusion to those who have dedicated themselves to philosophy and are prepared for the ‘new’ life.

54. The introduction of the reincarnation related to the destiny of the soul gives a new dimension to the question of the destiny of the soul: cf. J. ANNAS (1982), p. 125-129.

55. ὡς ἐγὼ ὑπὸ τινος πέπεισμαι. Summary of the theories on this “somebody” in E. RAMOS JURADO (2002), p. 201, n. 337.

56. On mythical descriptions of the world, with a contextual analysis of sources, see A. BALLABRIGA (1986).

world from the Phasis River to the pillars of Heracles, suppose that we are living on the surface of the earth, but we are dwelling in one of the multiple hollows of this earth, which is not the true earth. Plato masterfully plays with the vertical perspectives: the vision from the bottom of the sea is compared to the effect we feel when we raise the head and think that the *aer* is the sky. The *reality* is that there is another upper level where the true earth is. If we could attain the upper surface of the air we would realize that there are the true heaven, the true light and the true earth.

Up to this point, Socrates has presented what he has qualified as a ‘conviction’. But then he proceeds to support this conviction with a μῦθος. The change is important because it seems that he abandons the theoretical point of view to pass to a new type of argument by means of the μῦθος. This is a very important text in the story of the conceptualization of this Greek term and one of the clearest examples of its use by Plato. It is an interesting warning to the listener/reader. There is a shift to a level of explanation that, despite the degree of reliability and possible truth of the contents, shows features that are not necessarily compatible with reality. And this *shift* and this warning coincide with an important step further in this account: from the mere material description of the earth we pass to the association of this landscape with the destiny of the souls. The μῦθος supports the innovative theory that explains the different destinies of the souls according to their nature. *This link between territory – or realm – and quality of the soul is decisive in the general description and, more concretely, to understand the role of the underworld rivers.*

The description of the external aspect of this true earth and of the nature of its elements – colours, metals, minerals, vegetation, fruits, and animals – is idealized, according to the Greek tradition of ‘paradisiacal’ lands we have commented on above. This perfection or idealization of the landscape is due to the fact that those who contemplate it are the Blessed ones (ὥστε αὐτὴν ἰδεῖν εἶναι θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν, 111a). And the privileged inhabitants of this earth are distributed among the ‘middle lands’, the places around the air – an equivalent of our sea –, and islands placed around the air, close to the continent. To sum up, the significance that water and sea have for us, corresponds on that earth to that of the air and the aether respectively, as Plato clearly states⁵⁷. *Hence, it follows from this description that ‘water’ – and sea water –, decisive for purification in ‘our’ earth, is radically excluded from this pure and blessed earth.* Furthermore, the water-air and air-aether analogy is complemented by another referring to the difference

57. *Phaed.*, 111a-b: καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ, ὅπερ ἡμῖν τὸ ὕδωρ τε καὶ ἡ θάλαττα ἐστὶ πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν χρεῖαν, τοῦτο ἐκεῖ τὸν ἀέρα, ὃ δὲ ἡμῖν ἀήρ, ἐκείνοις τὸν αἰθέρα.

between those blessed people and us, concerning the physical and psychic features: there the seasons have an exceptional κρᾶσις and therefore they do not suffer diseases, live much longer, and are superior to us in their sight, hearing, and intelligence. Moreover, they practice religious rituals dedicated to gods that dwell really there “and they have intercourse with the gods by speech and prophecies and visions, and they see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and in all other ways their blessedness is in accord with this” (112b-c). This picture sums up features of Cronos’ Age with the paradisiacal descriptions mentioned above, but it must be emphasized that, on the one hand, it constitutes a formidable example of conciliation of Socrates’/Plato’s philosophy, consolidated traditions concerning the destiny of some privileged heroes, and contemporary religion; whereas, on the other hand, it raises some doubts and questions concerning the status of those Blessed. Are they endowed with bodies – see the reference to senses or diseases – or are they pure souls? And, as David White puts it⁵⁸, “what happens to these souls after death? Do they simply repeat another cycle of existence there or is it possible to be sent into a lower form of life, just as souls of humans in the hollows can become souls of lower animals? The myth does not address these possibilities.” Perhaps we must not be too ‘rationalistic’ by putting things this way. However, if we combine this description with what follows, with the descriptions of punishments in the *Republic*, and also with the account of the *Gorgias*, it would be possible to harmonize the different representations. I am arguing that Plato is putting forward two possible ‘corporealities’ in the afterlife, I mean, two possible – exceptional – possibilities of retaining either the body or, at least, *a persistence of the corporeal sensations*, in opposite directions: in order for those who are impious and criminals to be actually and fully punished, and in order to enjoy the highest εὐδαιμονία in the case of the Blessed ones. Furthermore, my proposal should be completed with another dual classification: the punishment may be eternal (Sisyphus, Tantalus) or temporary (those who have committed errors that may be expiated), but also the good destiny has levels of happiness and reward (those who enjoy temporarily the blessing of the pure earth and those who obtain superior eternal status, that is, the philosophers). *In other words, this part of the myth anticipates what comes at the end.* Thus, we must recover the thread of the account and carry on.

And this account brings us suddenly to a very different part of the world. More precisely, we enter the Under-earth region. Once again, Plato combines the traditional vision with his own description, to the point that it

58. D. A. WHITE (1987), p. 248.

*This idea is confirmed – this is my argument – by the catalogue of rivers chosen by Plato and by their roles in the destiny of the souls*⁶¹.

The first important Platonic innovation is the transformation of Ocean into an ‘infernal’ river. In parallel with the traditional circular flow of the Ocean around the world, Plato describes it as the “greatest and outermost” of all the rivers and says that it “flows round in a circle.” However, he says nothing on the relation of this Ocean with the traditional Ocean of the surface of our earth, though, according to the previous arguments, it seems that there must be some connection between them. And it is possible that this link excludes it from the group of rivers related to the punishments of the impure souls: we must remember that Ocean appears in the paradisiacal descriptions of the Blessed Islands mentioned above.

The next one is the Acheron, which, “after flowing through various desert places”, passes under the earth and comes finally to the Acherusian Lake. Once again the conception of an inferior earth, with blurred limits with the subterranean regions, motivates this particular description. Furthermore, the connection of infernal and surface rivers was fully accepted in Greek traditions since Homer⁶², as attested by Pausanias when he describes the rivers of the Thesprotis⁶³ – he affirms that Homer was inspired by them for the description in the *Odyssey* – and by the stories related to the Peneios river in Thessaly. And all this allows us to understand why this place – i.e. the bank of the Acherusian lake – is a meeting point of the souls of most people, the place where they remain for a time and from which they return to life for their ‘rebirth’ (a ‘palingenesis’: *πάλιν ἐκπέμπονται εἰς τὰς τῶν ζώων γενέσεις*). The Pyriphlegethon, the third river, also links the surface of the earth to the underworld: it flows around the earth and descends to the edge of the Acherusian Lake, without mingling its waters with it; and finally flows beneath the Tartarus. Streams of lava on the earth are overflows of it. Finally, the fourth river, the Cocytus, flows into the Stygion, an “awful and wild” place with the color of lapis lazuli (*κυανός*). The river forms there the Styx Lake. Note that this is another innovation by Plato, who incorporates into his particular cosmography the origin and landscape of the Styx. Then it flows under the earth and, after circling around, flows into the Acherusian Lake in a place opposite the Pyriphlegethon, without mingling its waters with the lake.

61. See also the analysis of Platonic rivers by J.-F. ΜΑΤΤΕΪ (1993).

62. *Il.*, 2, 748-755, even the details of the place of contact with the dead in *Od.*, 10, 508-515 is not particularly clear in this respect.

63. 1, 17, 5: *πρὸς δὲ τῇ Κιχύρω λίμνῃ τέ ἐστὶν Ἀχερουσία καλουμένη καὶ ποταμὸς Ἀχέρων, ῥεῖ δὲ καὶ Κωκυτὸς ὕδωρ ἀτερπέστατον.*

As I mentioned above, all this hydrographic description of the underworld comes after the introductory account of the arrival of the souls to the Acherusian Lake. Retrieving this general and summarized description, Plato now returns to the specific destiny of the souls in a kind of internal ring-composition in which the second part is developed and enriched with details.

First, he makes a link with the former description and limits the distinction to two classes: those who have lived ‘well and piously’ and those who have not (the *παλιγγενεσία*; see *supra*, p. 74). But then a more detailed classification begins in which five groups are differentiated:

- (a) Οἱ μὲν ἂν δόξωσι μέσως βεβιωκέναι, that is, those whose behavior in life was neither particularly good nor especially ill: they embark in vehicles and, navigating along the Acheron, arrive at the lake. They dwell there and are then purified, with two possible results: either a proportional penalty or a reward for their good deeds. Anyway, this is again the place from which rebirth takes place. However, this ‘middle class’ of souls is only one among several others. So, the next four types present a gradation, from the inferior to the best.
- (b) Οἱ δ’ ἂν δόξωσιν ἀνιάτως ἔχειν διὰ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων. Indeed we know that many people are guilty of terrible deeds and they are ‘incurable’, and for this reason they are sent to the Tartarus, “whence they never emerge”. Plato retains the primordial function of Tartarus as a place for eternal penalties, a model inaugurated by Zeus according to the Hesiodic *Theogony*, but now assigned to mortals. This place also awaits the souls of those who are guilty of terrible but curable crimes:
- (c) Οἱ δ’ ἂν ἰάσιμα μὲν μέγала δὲ δόξωσιν ἡμαρτηκέναι ἀμαρτήματα.

The difference now is that they spend one year there and then the wave “casts them out”, but in different ways: the Cocytus transports the homicides (ἀνδροφόνοι) and those who offended their parents (πατραλοῖα, μητραλοῖα) are carried away by the Pyriphlegethon.

- (d) Οἱ δὲ δὴ ἂν δόξωσι διαφερόντως πρὸς τὸ ὀσίως βιῶναι (καθαρὰ οἴκησις, ἐπὶ γῆς). With this group Plato establishes a link with the inhabitants of the ‘upper earth’ mentioned above, because they are those whose destiny is to dwell on the (true) earth in the ‘pure abode’.

Now, up to this point the classification is not particularly revolutionary, so to say, in comparison with a more ‘general’ differentiation of human behaviours – bad, good, middle. However, following the tendency detected so far to establish perfect correspondences, Plato adds a fifth category, essential to give to this ‘myth’ a ‘*raison d’être*’ in support of his concept of the soul and of the role of philosophy. And these are those purified by it,

- (e) τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ φιλοσοφία ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι.

The two main features of this group are really spectacular. First, they will live forever “without bodies”⁶⁴ (ἄνευ σωμάτων ζῶσι) and their abodes will be the most beautiful of all possible places: εἰς οἰκῆσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους ἀφικνοῦνται.

The end of the description is very important to understand the meaning of *myth* in Plato: if you are a wise man you must not interpret it *ad pedem litterae*. The essential element is the *message*, the core of the account: the most reasonable is to accept that things may be so or something like that. Socrates affirms that he uses the myth as an ἐπωδή, and the effect of this enchantment is to understand that the best adornment of the soul is “self-restraint, justice, courage, freedom and truth.” Socratic humour appears at the very end when he links the reference to his destiny with the indication that “it is about time for me to go to the bath.” A clean body must accompany a pure soul.

4.2 Republic: the myth of Er

This account comprises two parts: the first, placed in the subterranean realms, describes the path the souls follow to be judged and condemned or purified, respectively, with some new details if compared with the other descriptions of these procedures – for instance, no presence of rivers-, whereas the second part brings us to the heavenly realms, the luminous space where we find the spindle of Necessity presiding over the universe, the elements of which are described in detail. This part contains the description of the choice souls make for their new life, by the system of κλήροι. If compared with the previous dialogues, we see that this account again focuses on the different destinies of the souls according to their nature, but it introduces a new important cosmic dimension, elevating our sight to a level higher than the ‘true earth’ and arriving at the *axis mundi*, mixing astronomic and Pythagorean precedents under a new perspective – in perfect coherence with the *Timaeus*, as Neoplatonics will realize –, and specifying also the procedure of παλιγγενεσία, merely alluded to in the *Phaedo*. As for the fluvial factor, it has almost disappeared, at least as a substantial physical milieu necessary for the process of classification of the souls – in the first part the meeting point of the souls, placed in the center of the chastic ways up and down, is referred to just as a λειμών⁶⁵ –, but it reappears at the end of the description in a surprising and highly symbolic manner. After their choice of new lives and their new destiny having been ratified by Lachesis, Clotho

64. This phrase could support my reflections on the degree of corporality attributed to the other dead (see above).

65. Here reappears an old eschatological motif of the Indo-European cultures, as I have underlined above, p. 68. See M^a H. VELASCO LÓPEZ (2000).

and Atropos, the ‘renewed’ souls – and bodies? – pass beneath the throne of Necessity:

And after it had passed through that, when the others also had passed, they all journeyed to the Plain of Oblivion, through a terrible and stifling heat, for it was bare of trees and all plants, and there they camped at eventide by the River of Forgetfulness, whose waters no vessel can contain. They were all required to drink a measure of the water, and those who were not saved by their good sense drank more than the measure, and each one as he drank forgot all things⁶⁶.

Once again the exact location of a place of the world beyond remains dubious: it seems that the subterranean setting of the orphic description – in which the choice between the right source is decisive for the dead – has been adapted to a vague ‘liminal’ zone⁶⁷ where water again has a decisive function, not for those who arrive at the realm of the dead, but for those who return from it: on the one hand it is impossible for them not to drink from this river, because they have traversed a ‘wasteland’, but they must do so with measure – precisely they must drink just ‘one measure’, μέτρον. Thus, here water becomes a tool to prove the φρόνησις of the reincarnated. As Socrates says to Glaucon, the aim of the μῦθος is to help us cross safely the river of Oblivion (he makes the equation Ἀμέλης - Λήθη) in order to keep the soul uncorrupted. Once again, the μῦθος fits with the dialogue in which it appears, this time dealing substantially with justice and φρόνησις, a dialogue in which the parallel between *polis* and soul is essential.

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66. Translation by P. SHOREY (1935). The Greek text reads: καὶ δι’ ἐκείνου διεξελθόντα, ἐπειδὴ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διήλθον, πορεύεσθαι ἅπαντας εἰς τὸ τῆς Λήθης πεδῖον διὰ καύματός τε καὶ πνίγους δεινοῦ· καὶ γὰρ εἶναι αὐτὸ κενὸν δένδρων τε καὶ ὅσα γῆ φύει. σκηναῖσθαι οὐκ ὄνσφας ἤδη ἐσπέρας γιγνομένης παρὰ τὸν Ἀμέλιτα ποταμὸν, οὗ τὸ ὕδωρ ἀγγεῖον οὐδὲν στέγειν. μέτρον μὲν οὖν τι τοῦ ὕδατος πᾶσιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πιεῖν, τοὺς δὲ φρονήσει μὴ σφροσμένους πλέον πίνειν τοῦ μέτρον· τὸν δὲ αἰεὶ πίνοντα [621a] πάντων ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι.

67. A. BERNABÉ (2013), p. 138-139, after comparing the Platonic description with that of the Hipponium tablet (*OF* 474) rightly comments – against W. K. C. GUTHRIE (1952), p. 177f. – that “everything in fact suggests that the parallels between the Platonic description and the references in the tablets are only superficial.”

5. Main ideas and conclusions.

It is now time to summarize the main ideas and conclusions that emerge from the foregoing remarks and arguments.

— First of all, and despite the different chronologies and content of the Platonic dialogues, I dare to say that the image of the afterlife resulting from them is quite coherent in general terms and has fewer contradictions than it may seem at first sight.

— Plato incorporates features taken from almost all the models of eschatology known in his times, as much in the geographical, material and physical aspects as in the possibilities of destinies of the souls – or souls and bodies. However, he reshapes them all and reorganizes many aspects. It is in fact a *new eschatological cosmology*, inseparable from his conception of the soul, the virtues, and the supreme moral entities.

— This picture implies a break from or, perhaps, an implementation of the tripartite model predominant in literary texts, such as Pindar's, and in the Orphic tablets. This implementation is used to improve the design of an afterlife that fits much better with the alternative classes of souls and their destinies.

— In this reshaping of the landscape of the afterlife the role assigned to the Tartarus and to the traditional rivers of the underworld becomes substantial for the Platonic theory, as can be seen in the strict correspondence between behaviours, moral perfection, and alternative destinies.

— Concerning the presence of water in Platonic afterlife it is important to consider the influence of and the contrast with Orphic beliefs. Two points must be emphasized: the question of oblivion and the status of body/soul⁶⁸. The relevance of the incorporeal status of the philosophers marks a profound difference, and, at the same time, it supports the idea of a certain 'corporeity' of the rest. I do not argue that Orphics accepted that there was an eternal life in body and soul, only that Plato suppressed all possible remnants of 'corporeity' in the philosophers' souls.

— The need to retain memory is a strong coincidence, justified by reincarnation⁶⁹, but also implies an important difference. In Orphism, the need

68. See J. N. BREMMER (2014), p. 70-72. It must be added also an important difference between Platonic and Orphic eschatology, as A. BERNABÉ (2013), p. 145-146, has emphasized, and this is the importance of the trial, that becomes essential in Plato, but – as for the Orphic texts – appears only in the *Bologna Papyrus* (perhaps under Platonic influence).

69. See again F. GRAF and S. I. JOHNSTON (2007), p. 118-120; A. BERNABÉ and A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL (2008), p. 29-35. In Orphism, to drink the water of Forgetfulness is really a tragedy, because then the souls must return to life and "this is the

to retain memory is important for the dead in order to have “their recollections intact”⁷⁰, and thus enjoy the rewards of paradise fully. But in the case of Plato, the need to have ‘recollections’ intact is not related to the arrival in Hades’ realm, but to the return of the soul from the underworld / or the ‘world beyond’ and to continue the cycle of reincarnation.

— However it may be, there is a point of contact between Orphism – and even mystery cults in general – and Plato’s theories that must be underlined. The final prize for the initiates that pass all the tests and cycles is to become gods and goddesses, to be assimilated to supreme divine beings, as some of the tablets specify⁷¹. This is not far from the status assigned to the philosophers in the Platonic eschatology, though there is a substantial difference: the divinities are somatic entities in Greek religion, whereas the philosophers will reach even –if I may be allowed the expression– a purest status.

— As a final thought I would like to point out that between an eschatological design of meadows, prairies and/or islands for the blessed, prizes for the initiates (at least to ‘feel good’, even in the underworld) on the one hand, and terrible rivers, mud, and punishments for the condemned, on the other, the literary tradition up to the 5th century was more or less consistent, though with some remarkable disparities. But the question of reincarnation and the weight of Pythagorean and Orphic beliefs have drastically changed the picture. Plato has assimilated the old traditions, mixed, and distorted them, has absorbed and modified the newer traits of the two above mentioned movements, and has superimposed a new model, a revolutionary picture that neutralized and surpassed all those precedents – even those of the mystery cults – by overlaying the picture of the *paradise of the soul that has seen the truth: the new initiate, but also the best recompensed in the world beyond, is the philosopher*. But he has not excluded other alternatives for souls that have followed an ethical and reasonable life, or even for those who, despite their errors, could be somehow ‘saved’ and ‘recovered’. He was forced to adapt his own theoretical ‘system’ to the belief in reincarnation and in the final price for the just. *As a consequence of all this, the*

real exile of the soul, and the worst thing that can happen” (A. BERNABÉ and A. I. JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL [2004], p. 33).

70. Cf. F. GRAF and S. I. JOHNSTON (2007), p.118-120, quotation from p. 120.

71. *Asimismo, con respecto al final del camino, el filósofo prefirió aceptar, con Píndaro, que las almas de los justos (que él interesadamente identifica con las de los filósofos), estarán cerca de los dioses, antes que admitir que se convierten en dioses, como parecía ser el postulado órfico* (A. BERNABÉ [2011], p. 114). My proposal is that the divine or heroic status was not for Plato sufficiently ‘pure’ ...

rivers and waters of the world beyond have known a complete adaptation to these doctrines. In other words, they have been 're-mythicized'⁷².

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72. To limit the extension of this paper I renounce to include references to other texts and contexts in which the rivers and the experiences of the soul have an important role: I mean, for instance, the Trophonion of Lebadeia, the Plutarchean version of the afterlife and so on. A good analysis of both traditions can be found in P. BONNECHÈRE (2003), p. 273-291. See also the excellent analysis made by J. N. BREMMER (2009) of the antecedents of the description of the underworld in Vergil.

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