Myth and Truth in *Republic* 2-3

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that myth in Kallipolis is used to communicate philosophical truths, rather than distribute politically motivated falsehoods. It first considers the function of myth in the ideal artistic culture of Kallipolis (I), and the philosophical theology that informs it (II). On this basis, it is argued that the discussion of medicinal falsehoods at 382a-d is more focused on the truth-content of myth than usually assumed (III). The final section (IV) explores the connection between myth in books 2-3 and Plato's philosophical use of myth.
Keywords: Republic*, poetry, myth, truth, falsehood, fiction.*

INTRODUCTION

It is usually assumed that the myths told by the rulers to the citizens in Kallipolis serve a political purpose which differs strongly from the purpose of Plato's philosophical myths.[1] While the first are usually taken to be educational myths that are intended to exercise social control, the philosophical myths are closely tied to argumentative analysis (thus, e.g. Morgan, 2000, p. 162). The central discussion of the function of mythology in Kallipolis is found in book 2 where Socrates describes the city's myths as useful 'medicinal' falsehoods told by the rulers to their citizens (cf. 382c10), a passage which is almost universally taken as evidence of the repressive and authoritarian nature of Plato's community.[2]

However, the discussion in books 2 and 3 is from the outset focused on the connection between myth and truth (377a); and the aim of the poetic culture, of which myth is constitutive, is to provide correct and truthful representations of the good and the beautiful. This article interprets the discussion of myth and truth, firstly, in the context of this ideal artistic culture in Kallipolis and, secondly, in light of the philosophical theology that informs it. On this basis, I suggest a new interpretation of the discussion of medicinal falsehoods at 382, according to which the aim of the passage is to show how true ethical belief, not falsehood, can be conveyed through fiction. On this picture, the opposition between political and philosophical myths disappears.

1. TRUTH IN *MYTHOS*

On the traditional view, Socrates' emphasis on the effect of myth as a vehicle to inculcate merely useful and not necessarily true beliefs

in the young guards contrasts with his focus on truth elsewhere.[3] However, when myth is first introduced, Socrates is mainly concerned with its ability to convey the truth. In the following, I attempt to clarify the connection between truth and myth in this part of the discussion, leaving the discussion of medicinal falsehoods to section 3 below.

Myth is introduced at the very beginning of the discussion of education as the key constituent of *mousike* (376e8), where *mythos* is contrasted with *logos* as inherently false form of discourse. However, this dichotomy is immediately softened, as Socrates claims that there is also truth in myth:

> 'Do you count *logoi* as part of *mousike*, or not?' – 'Yes, I do.'– 'And are *logoi* of two kinds –one true, the other false?' (Λόγων δὲ διττὸν εἶδος, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, ψεῦδος δ' ἕτερον) – 'Yes.' – 'Should we educate them in both, starting with the false?' – 'I don't understand what you mean,' he said. – 'You mean you don't understand that we start off by telling children stories? These, I take it, are broadly speaking false, though there is some truth in them (πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ).[4]

As argued by Robert Fowler, the immediate definition of *mythos* as false *logos* suggests that the *logos-mythos* distinction invoked here was taken to correspond to true and false discourse prior to Plato (Fowler 2011, p. 49-50). This strong dichotomy is carefully modified in this passage; myths, despite being false, also contain truth. Stories, or fictions,[5] do not communicate truth in the way *logos* does, but do nonetheless contain truth. It is the commitment to truth in fiction which thus seems

to be the particular Platonic contribution to the discussion (Fowler 2011, p. 63-65).

The idea of truth in myth is then immediately connected to the creation of beliefs, *doxai*, which form the soul (377a11-b9). Socrates speaks of forming the souls with stories that are beautiful or fine (καλόν, 377c2; cf. καλῶς d8; e7), suggesting that the myths must be composed beautifully in order to induce virtue (ἃ πρῶτα ἀκούουσιν ὅτι κάλλιστα μεμυθολογημένα πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀκούειν, 378e3-4). It is often assumed that this move marks a shift in the discussion from focusing on truth to focusing on usefulness (e.g. Woolf, 2009, p. 26; Heath, 2013, p. 19; Wardy, 2013, p. 125). But the assumption that truth and usefulness are mutually exclusive, which this view implies, is not necessarily warranted by the text.

Thus, when Socrates goes on to rebuke Hesiod and Homer for not telling their stories beautifully, his claim is based on the view that their depictions are in fact false. This is stated in a brief theological argument: God is good (379b1), only the cause of good (379b3-c7; 380c9-10), beneficial (379b11), perfect and therefore unchangeable (380d1-381c8) and must be represented as such by the poets. The argument effectively establishes gods as standards of perfection, goodness and beauty (cf. ἀρετή; κάλλος, 381c2; κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος, 381c6-7).[6] On this view, the poets' attributions of flaws and imperfections to the divine, in stories or images, amount to falsehoods. To represent gods and heroes "as they are" (οἷοί εἰσιν, 377c; οἷος τυγχάνει ὁ θεὸς ὤν, 379a7-9), is to represent them as entirely virtuous and beautiful. The critique of the poets for failing to obtain verisimilitude (cf. ἐοικότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὅμοια, 377e2; ἀνομοίως μιμήσασθαι, 388c3) is a critique for misrepresenting gods and heroes, that is, to represent them as imperfect and flawed.[7] Traditional stories with evil and

disorderly gods are therefore ugly, "not beautifully told falsehoods" (cf. μὴ καλῶς ψεύδηται, 377d8; ψεῦδος ὁ εἰπὼν οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο, 377e7). These stories are both ugly and untrue.

By the same token, what is scandalous about the depiction of Achilles in the *Iliad* is the implicit claim that Achilles is godlike and thus good, and that his actions are therefore admirable (387d11-e2; 388e4-6). Poets should either abstain from telling such stories, or they should not attribute the actions to divine heroes who are (by definition) good (391c8-e2). The critique of Homer's representation of Achilles is thus not grounded in a notion of factual history but in notions of divine goodness and virtue.[8] This view is famously confirmed in book 10 where tragedy is targeted for staging flawed heroes, which according to Socrates will lead to a flawed conception of the good (6064e1-4; 605c9-606b8).[9]

On this view, the demand for beautifully told stories corresponds to the initial demand for myths to contain truth, because heroes and gods are taken to be good and beautiful by definition. There is thus no opposition between the true and the morally beneficial. Poets are allowed to invent stories, and thus to 'lie', as long as they represent gods and heroes truthfully. This hierarchy of truths, where ethical truths are valued over contingent ones, corresponds to effects on the psyche of the recipient. The beliefs that shape the souls are not beliefs about specific facts or information, but moral values which gods and heroes exemplify. The inner truths of the stories in the city correspond to these beliefs.

The metaphor repeatedly used of the ethical beliefs that the stories inculcate, is that of a mould, *tupos*, which forms the soul. These *tupoi* are the general ethical and theological beliefs defined by the law-makers and contained in the stories and thus impressed on

the soul through poetry (377b2; c9; 379a2,5; 380c7; 383a2; 383c1; 387c9; 396b6; e1-9; 379c9; 398b3; d5; 412b2). The metaphor shows that the educational process is thought to internalise a set of concretely defined ethical and theological beliefs,[10] a view confirmed in a number of passages where Socrates considers the effect of the education (377b6; 378e1; 380c-d; 398b; 405b; 424d-425b). Finally, the effect of this poetic training is that the citizens themselves will become virtuous and godlike (θεοσεβεῖς τε καὶ θεῖοι γίγνεσθαι, καθ' ὅσον ἀνθρώπῳ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον οἷόν τε, 383c3-5).

There is thus no contradiction between the initial focus on ethical truth in fiction and the subsequent focus on the effect on the young. Although Socrates changes his focus to the *effect* of storytelling in the course of the discussion, the argument assumes a continuity between the 'inner' truth of the stories, their 'beauty', and their effect on the young souls. And the crucial truth in myths is the implicit statements about the nature of the divine, and, consequently, beauty, goodness and the rest of virtue. From this perspective, at least, the initial distinction between inner, ethical, truth and falsehood (i.e. fiction) can be observed throughout the discussion. Thus, if the main goal of the early education is to instil *correct* belief, and correct belief is taken to be useful, then truth remains central to the argument.

2. POETIC IDEALISM AND PHILOSOPHY

The suggestion that the early education aims to instil true ethical belief is not new; it has been argued thoroughly by e.g. Terence Irwin (1995, p. 230-236) and Christopher Gill (1996, p. 266-275) who focus on the relationship between the two stages in the philoso-

pher's training. On this view, correct belief instilled during childhood corresponds to the philosopher's stable theoretical knowledge of the Forms.

This connection between philosophical insight and the ethical beliefs transmitted through poetry is recognised retrospectively in the dialogue. The philosophers will create and uphold the poetic culture; this, in fact, is their main task as lawgivers, precisely because ethical beliefs are transmitted to the citizens through poetry (423d8-424e4, cf. also 405a6-b3; 410a7-9). Book 6 makes it clear that these laws are created as an imitation of the Forms (500d7-9).[11] The Forms that are in nature "just, beautiful, self-disciplined, and everything of that sort" (φύσει δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν καὶ σῶφρον, 501b1-3), are thus the direct model for what they put into the citizens. This is how the philosophers create "human characters as pleasing to god as human characters can be" (501c1-3, cf. 540a9-b1). That the philosophers use the Forms as models for the poetic culture suggests that the poetic education is isomorphic with the philosophical one, conveying the same values on a lower onto-epistemic level, as argued by Jonathan Lear (Lear 1992, p. 191-2).[12] The beliefs transmitted through poetry and myth are true because it made in imitation of the Forms.

Although the metaphysical roots of the education are only made clear in the middle books, the discussion of poetry is in fact informed by philosophical theology from the very beginning. As discussed in section 1 above, the paradigms of poetry are grounded in the theological argument about the nature of god at 379b1-381c8. It has long been recognised by scholars of Plato's religion that this discussion of the divine anticipates the description of the Forms in the middle books. Like the Forms in book 6, the Kallipolean

gods are perfect, ordered, unchanging and unable to wrong or be wronged (381b-382c, cf. 500c3-7). The citizens will look to and imitate these mythological paradigms (396c; 398b) in order for themselves to become as godlike as possible (383c), which is a well-known Platonic philosophical ideal.[13] Scholars have therefore taken the gods in book 3 to be a mythologized version of metaphysical reality of book 6 and 7, not least because of the recurrent use of words signifying 'form' in his description of the unchangeable, good, god (ἰδέαις, 380d2; εἶδος, d3; ἰδέας, d6, e1).[14]

God's attributes are above all the moral qualities of beauty and goodness which in turn is linked to reductive ontological properties, changelessness and sameness, which, on this argument, is a consequence of perfection (ὁ θεός γε καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντη ἄριστα ἔχει, 381b4). More strikingly, even, is the change from speaking about gods, to god in the singular, and then 'the good' (τὸ ἀγαθόν, 379b11; 15). This argument thus introduces philosophical theology, and one which is closely connected to Platonic metaphysics, as the basis of poetry. Divinity is taken to be good and beautiful by definition, which is how philosophically informed ideas of perfect goodness and beauty come to inform the entire discussion of poetry.[15]

The theological argument thus effectively makes a philosophical notion of perfection the non-negotiable framework on which the poetic culture is based. This framework, in turn, is evidence of a philosophically informed notion of the virtues embodied in poetry – one which links artistic idealism with metaphysical perfection. This does not mean that artists imitate the Forms, as has sometimes been suggested.[16] By nature, art is confined to representing or imitating instantiations and can therefore never reach beyond

the realm of belief (cf. 522a) (cf. Irwin 1995, p. 229; Gill 1996, p. 268). But the connection between the poetic theology and the later metaphysical theory shows the commitment to philosophical beauty and virtue is present already in the earlier books.

This view is confirmed by the general focus on ideal and rather abstract examples of virtue, rather than specific information, especially in the last part of the discussion: Representations of courage and moderation (esp. 386a-387c and 389d9-e3; cf. 413d6-e5; 429c-430b, esp. 429e7-430a1), thoughtful men (396d1), a "good man who acts and speaks responsibly and wisely" (396c, cf. 398a-b), brave, self-controlled, god-fearing and free men (ἀνδρείους, σώφρονας, ὁσίους, ἐλευθέρους, 395c5). And by seeing and imitating beauty and goodness, the young guardian will in turn become beautiful and good, *kalos kagathos*, as well as balanced and thoughtful (396c6).

This demand for rather generic representations of virtue culminates in a demand for artistic idealism at the end of the discussion where Socrates reflects on the nature of the artistic culture as a whole:

> Is it only the poets we have to keep an eye on, then, compelling them to put the likeness of the good nature into their poems (τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἰκόνα ἤθους ἐμποιεῖν τοῖς ποιήμασιν), or else go and write poems somewhere else? Don't we have to keep an eye on the other crafts-men as well, and stop them putting what has the wrong nature, what is undisci-plined, slavish or wanting in grace, into their representations of living things, or into buildings, or into any manufactured object? Anyone who finds this impossible is not to be allowed to be a craftsman in our city (401b).

Good character or, as Socrates goes on to phrase it, "the nature of what is beautiful and graceful" (τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ εὐσχήμονος φύσιν, 401c4-5) are the abstract ideals with which the young will become familiar through the artistic culture. The emphasis is now expressly on representation and subsequent assimilation of the abstract qualities of beauty, truth and goodness. This ideal environment is said to lead the young into "affinity, friendship and harmony with beauty and *logos*" (401c-d). Socrates explains this effect at length in terms that make it clear that he has in mind a normative standard of beauty:

> Anyone with the right kind of education in this area will have the clearest perception of things which are unsatisfactory – things which are not beautifully made or which are not beautifully grown (ὅτι αὖ τῶν παραλειπομένων καὶ μὴ καλῶς δημιουργηθέντων ἢ μὴ καλῶς φύντων ὀξύτατ᾽ ἂν αἰσθάνοιτο). Being quite rightly disgusted by them, he will praise what is beautiful and fine. Delighting in and receiving it into his soul, he will feed on them and so become beautiful and good (καταδεχόμενος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν τρέφοιτ᾽ ἂν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ γίγνοιτο καλός τε κἀγαθός). What is ugly, he will rightly condemn and hate, even before he is able to arrive at a definition (λόγον λαβεῖν). And when the definition does come (ἔλθοντος τοῦ λόγου), won't the person who has been brought up in this way recognize it because of its familiarity, and be particularly delighted with it? (401e-402a)

The emphasis here is on the display of ideal beauty and goodness as a standard of perfection. This standard is achieved through habituation, not theoretical understanding of beauty (*logos*). Socrates even suggests that being fully *mousikos* is to be able to recognize all the different virtues and reading them like letters, wherever they occur (402a7-c9). This immediate recognition of virtue and beauty in all instantiations is thus the goal of the poetic training, as opposed to an education which is concerned with certain facts.

This focus on perfection in the early discussion reveals Plato's underlying concern with normative truth, which was also evident in the discussion of gods and heroes. Precisely because myths are not concerned with mere fact, the truth relevant to myth is ethical. Indeed, the idealism that underlies the entire discussion, connects beauty and truth with a set of highly rational properties, highlighted by Socrates in the discussion. These are order (*kosmos*, 400a1; 400e3, cf. 486b6; 500d1-3), unity (380d; 381c; 381c; 382e; 404b), straightness or correctness, *orthotes* (cf. 403a7; 397b8; 401e1), concord (*symphonia,* 380c; 398c; 401d; 402d), rhythm and harmony or attunement (*harmonia,* 397b-400d; cf. 401d and 430e; 431e), and balance (*metriotes,* cf. 396c6; 399b9; 412a5). These properties are rational and normative and suggest that beauty and goodness are linked to truth because they display the conditions of functioning optimally.[17]

It is the consistent prioritising of ethical and theoretical truths over contingent ones which makes it necessary to create falsehoods in the form of fictions. In order to create ideal images, one has to look away from the actual, which, as Socrates later explains, is always inferior to what can be outlined in words (473a1-b3). That is, only through fiction can the ideal poetic culture achieve its aim. From the normative perspective of true beauty, many facts are ugly.[18]

3. 382A-D: TRUE FALSEHOODS AND MEDICINAL LIES

In light of this general concern with ethical and philosophical truth in the early education, we can, I believe, reach a new interpretation of the 'useful falsehoods' at 382a-c. Against the traditional interpretation of the passage, according to which it aims to give a justification of the use of lies or propaganda,[19] I propose an interpretation which shows that the passage is more concerned with the communication of truth than with the distribution of falsehoods. The passage follows the discussion of the nature of god at 379b-381c. Having stated that god is perfect, omniscient and consequently entirely truthful, Socrates goes on to discuss why and how falsehoods can be useful to humans, even if they are useless to gods. He contrasts two types of falsehood: a falsehood in the soul, also called pure falsehood, and a falsehood in speech which is not purely false. While the pure falsehood is hated by everyone, both gods and humans, the second, mixed falsehood, can be useful to humans.

The former is described as a falsehood "in the most important part of oneself" and "on the most important things" (τῷ κυριωτάτῳ που ἑαυτῶν […] καὶ περὶ τὰ κυριώτατα, 382a). Socrates explains:

> 'What I mean is that the thing everyone wants above all to avoid is being deceived in his soul about the things that are (περὶ τὰ ὄντα), or finding that he has been deceived, and is now in ignorance (ἀμαθῆ εἶναι), that he holds and possesses the falsehood right there in his soul. That is the place where people most hate the falsehood.' – 'I quite agree,' he said. – 'As I was saying just now, this ignorance in the soul (ἄγνοια), the ignorance of the

person who is deceived, can with absolute accuracy be called true falsehood. But the falsehood in speech (τό γε ἐν τοῖς λόγοις) is a kind of imitation of the condition of the soul, an image that comes into being later, not a wholly unmixed falsehood (μίμημά τι τοῦ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐστιν παθήματος καὶ ὕστερον γεγονὸς εἴδωλον, οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος). Don't you agree?' – 'I do.' – 'The real falsehood is hated not only by gods but also by men' (382ab1-c5).

Socrates goes on to explain that the mixed falsehood can be used as a medicine against false belief. Just like falsehoods can be useful when people are about to do something evil out of madness or ignorance (ὅταν διὰ μανίαν ἤ τινα ἄνοιαν κακόν τι ἐπιχειρῶσιν πράττειν), so myths can be useful because of our ignorance when we "make falsehood as much like the truth as possible" (382d4).

To sum up: the pure falsehood is entirely false belief residing in the soul and is hated and useless. The mixed falsehood is by contrast not entirely false, it is a falsehood in speech and can be useful for humans. And while the pure falsehood leads to false belief, the mixed falsehood can be used to avoid false belief, which is emphatically stated to be not just what Socrates wants but what *everyone* wants.

There are several difficulties in this passage, relating both to the medium or location of the two types of falsehood (speech and soul) and to their truth-status. Many scholars have understood the falsehood in speech to be a falsehood told by someone who knows the truth in order to deceive.[20] In this case, the spoken falsehood would be a form of misinformation or propagandistic falsehood often associated with Plato. But the interpretation

has the disadvantage that the falsehood in speech, spoken by someone who knows it to be false, would give rise to false belief in the receiver, thereby causing 'pure' falsehood in their soul, which is exactly what Socrates wants to avoid.

A different solution has been offered by a number of scholars who instead focus on the type of truth, Socrates is interested in here, namely ethical truth. True falsehood, as a state of deceit in the soul, is not simply about any given fact, but false belief (ἄγνοια) about reality (περὶ τὰ ὄντα) or the most important things (τὰ κυριώτατα).[21] This 'pure' or un-mixed falsehood does not contain truth but is false through and through. Many traditional myths or 'ugly falsehoods' such as Hesiod's succession myth are, according to our passage, true falsehoods and give rise to true falsehood because they present as beautiful what is in fact ugly (this is in fact the definition of pure falsehood given at *Tht.* 189c).[22]

The mixed falsehood in speech differs from the pure or 'true' falsehood precisely in rela-tion to these 'deeper' truths, as some scholars have argued.[23] The falsehood in speech is clearly thought to help the listener out of their false belief, which it can only do by convey-ing true ethical belief. It does not, then, give rise to falsehood in the soul, because it does not deceive at this deeper, ethical level. This kind of 'deep' deception pertains to ethical truths (*ta onta*), not just mere fact. The con-stitutional difference between the two types of falsehood in our passage, then, is the same as in the earlier part of the discussion, namely their ethical content. The designations 'pure' and 'mixed' falsehoods refer to their truth-content. While the pure falsehood is false through and through, the mixed falsehood is mixed by virtue of the truth it contains (thus not purely false).

The falsehood in speech does not, then, cause deception in the soul of the listener; on the contrary, by virtue of its ethical content, it helps the listener out of false belief, as Socrates explicitly claims it will (382c9-d1). When he goes on to connect this type of falsehood with the 'myths we were discussing just now' (μυθολογίαι, 382d1-2), he is thus in agree-ment with his earlier definition of myth as falsehood with truth in it (377a). If we follow this interpretation, there is no contradiction between this passage and the earlier discus-sion of myth. On the contrary, the passage maps perfectly onto that discussion: Most stories about gods and heroes told in Athens are on this picture true, or pure, falsehoods, because they are both fictional and ethically false. Myths in Kallipolis will by contrast consist only of mixed falsehoods, i.e. ideal and ethically truthful fictions.

However, even the scholars who accept (some version of) this interpretation, focus on the repression of contingent truth here and connect it to Plato's authoritarianism. This view is based on the rather obscure charac-terisation of the mixed falsehood in speech as "a kind of imitation of the condition of the soul, an image that comes into being later, not a wholly unmixed falsehood" (382b9-c1). Scholars have taken the 'condition of the soul' here to mean a preconceived false idea in the storyteller's mind.[24] In this case, what the falsehood imitates is a false condition of the soul, which again places the emphasis on the deceit, despite the focus on ethical truth.

A more straightforward rendering of *pathema* here, I suggest, is to take it to mean *epistemic condition* or *state* (rather than a false idea or concocted fiction), which is a normal usage of the word. By calling the falsehood in words an imitation of the state of the speaker's soul, Socrates thus simply refers

to the speaker's epistemic state: true, ethical belief or knowledge, which is what the fiction imitates and therefore conveys. Not only does this interpretation make better sense of the Greek (*pathema* is frequently used to express 'epistemic state' in Plato);[25] it also fits with Socrates' own view of the effect of the spoken falsehood: It is an image of the true belief in the storyteller's mind and therefore causes true belief in the soul of the recipient. The paradox is thus again the characteristic mixture of truth and falsehood: Despite being literally false, the ethical falsehood is an imitation of the truth in the storyteller's mind. It is by virtue of being an imitation of truth that this type of falsehood in speech is mixed (οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος), that is, mixed with truth.

The spoken falsehood is, in other words, a carefully created fiction which reflects ethical truth, and as such an image of the true belief in the speaker's soul, and it conveys this truth to the soul of the hearer. This interpretation fits the general focus on ethical truth and true belief in the discussion as a whole. Furthermore, it explains why falsehoods or fictions can be useful for humans (cf. 382c10). Finally, it explains why Socrates calls it a falsehood in words, as opposed to the 'pure' or 'true' falsehood in the soul. The difference is not about the medium – both types of falsehoods are by definition spoken.[26] But while the pure falsehood reflects false belief, a falsehood in speech is a falsehood in words *only*. Socrates points to the paradoxical nature storytelling to convey truth through fiction – without necessarily deceiving anyone.[27] We may recognize the fictional nature of a story and still believe it to be ethically truthful.

On this interpretation, the passage grounds the entire discussion of myth in a more overtly philosophical understanding of truth and falsehood, tying myth to questions of

ontology and epistemology which are only explained later in the dialogue. The reference to reality, *ta onta*, as the truth to which myth refers, anticipates the discussion in book 5 where the nature of the Forms is described in these terms.[28]

These epistemological undertones are heard more distinctly when Socrates concludes by saying that myths are useful to humans despite being false insofar as we, when telling myths, assimilate them to the truth (cf. 382d3-4: ἀφομοιοῦντες τῷ ἀληθεῖ τὸ ψεῦδος ὅτι μάλιστα, οὕτω χρήσιμον ποιοῦμεν). To god, who is omniscient, such approximation is useless (382d6-e6). This distinction between human ignorance and divine omniscience anticipates the later division between knowledge and belief (cf. section 2 above). The true belief which the early education creates through its myth, is thus placed between ignorance (or false belief) and divine knowledge. It is precisely an approximation to the truth (382d3).

This interpretation links the discussion of myth much more closely to the metaphysical stance of the later books and thus grounds it in the context of the ideal artistic culture of Kallipolis. It also explains the otherwise incongruent references to a more familiar Socratic intellectualism in the earlier books, especially Socrates' strong aversion to deception in this passage (382a4-9; b1-4). The use of myth here, rather than excuse or justify the use of falsehood deception, is meant to emphasise a radical commitment to truth (so strong that even the stories we tell must be committed to truth), which brings our passage in line with a familiar Socratic aversion to falsehood (couched in similar language e.g. in the *Protagoras*).[29]

This commitment to truth is confirmed a couple of pages later when Socrates states that the guards could only change the true

beliefs inculcated through myth and poetry unwillingly, since no one would willingly give up true belief. He explains:

> Isn't being deceived about the truth something bad, and knowing the truth something good? And don't you think that having a belief which agrees with the way things are is knowing the truth (τὸ μὲν ἐψεῦσθαι τῆς ἀληθείας κακόν, τὸ δὲ ἀληθεύειν ἀγαθόν; ἢ οὐ τὸ τὰ ὄντα δοξάζειν ἀληθεύειν δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι)?' – 'You're right. When people lose a true belief, it is without their consent' (413a6-10).

Socrates thus takes the poetic education to have conveyed true belief to the young guardians, and true belief is here conceived in language similar to that used about true falsehood at 382b2. Socrates clearly thinks that his own poetic culture will have conveyed truth, not falsehood to his citizens.

It remains an open question if any actual deceit is involved in the mythology under discussion here.[30] Support for the traditional view that the passage advocates an ideologically and ethically motivated suppression of contingent truths can perhaps be found in the connection Socrates draws between myth and deliberate lies to mad people and enemies, where Socrates is clearly talking about lying and deceit. However, while Socrates claims that we can use falsehoods *against* (πρός, 382c8) our enemies and mad friends who are trying to do something bad out of 'madness or ignorance', his tone changes when he goes on to talk about myth:

> And in the myths we were discussing just now, as a result of our not knowing what the truth is concerning events long ago, do we make falsehood as much like the

truth as possible, and in this way make it useful?' (382d1-4).

The use of myth, according to this passage, relates to *our own* ignorance. Our ignorance is the reason *we* assimilate the falsehood to the truth and thereby make it useful (ἀφομοιοῦντες τῷ ἀληθεῖ τὸ ψεῦδος ὅτι μάλιστα, οὕτω χρήσιμον ποιοῦμεν, 382d2-3). Myth is useful not for disguising or repressing the truth, but for conveying an image of the truth which is otherwise inaccessible. This suggests that deceit is not in fact a necessary condition for myth to be effective (as it presumably is in the case of a mad friend).

4. MYTH AND PERSUASION

In conclusion I briefly turn to Plato's philosophical myths. I suggest that the use of myth for philosophical purposes might give an indication of how storytelling can be used in Kallipolis to propagate and explain philosophical truths rather than simply indoctrinate the citizens. The philosophical myths are usually taken to be different from the 'political' myths told in Kallipolis. However, if my arguments above are along the right lines, the distinction between the politically useful and the philosophically true falls away. Indeed, the definition of myth as a form of falsehood with truth in it (377a) or an assimilation to the truth (382c-d) fits Plato's philosophical myths neatly (cf. Fowler 2011, p. 6). These myths describe higher aspects of reality, such as the soul in the afterlife (*Grg.* 523a-527e; *Phd.* 107c-115a; *R.* 613e-621d, cf. *Phdr.* 246a-249d) or the divine creation of the Cosmos (*Ti.*). They are usually clearly identified as myths (*Ti.* 29c7-d3; 68d2, *Phd.* 110b1; b4; 114d7; *Phdr.* 253c7; *R.* 621b8), in

contrast to an account, *logos*, but always purport to communicate some form of truth, even if they are considered less accurate than a full account.[31]

These stories are told in mythical language, presenting abstract reality through concrete, often anthropomorphic imagery. Famously, the cosmogonic account in the *Timaeus* is described as a 'likely myth' (εἰκὼς μῦθος, 29d2), in which the Demiurge, 'the father and creator' of the Cosmos, personifies an abstract principle of creation.[32] This anthropomorphically envisaged creator allows Timaeus to speak of abstract realities in intelligible, human terms (28c3-5), much like Socrates in the *Phaedrus* can speak mythically about the winged soul in the procession of the gods by giving an image of what soul resembles (ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν), when a full account of its nature is considered a superhuman task (246a). The myths thus provide a mediated picture of the higher levels of reality.[33]

This use of myth to describe higher levels of reality when a theoretical account of the matter is considered impossible or too difficult, parallels use of myth to reflect theoretical reality in Kallipolis. Indeed, Plato's myths often seem to provide exactly the form of revised mythology that Socrates demands in *Republic* 2-3. The eschatological myths with their emphasis on cosmic order and justice (e.g. *Grg.* 523a-527e; *Phd.* 109d-110d; *R.* 616b-617d) contradict and correct the Homeric and Hesiodic picture of divine disorder and injustice in Homer and Hesiod, in line with the theology outlined in *Republic* 2. In Timaeus' theogony, harmony and co-operation have replaced the Hesiodic narrative of strife, criticised at *Republic* 377e-378e. As Thomas Johansen has shown, the mythical narrative in the *Timaeus* can thus be seen as an attempt to rewrite myth in ac-cordance with the guidelines in *Republic* 2-3 (Johansen 2004, p. 64-68).[34]

Socrates' own stance as a recipient of these myths makes his position parallel to that of the Kallipolean citizens rather than the fully enlightened state of the philosopher-kings. He frequently emphasises that these myths of divine order and justice must simply be *believed*, because the realities they describe cannot be fully accounted for (e.g. *R.* 621c3; *Phd.* 114d1-9). This is not, of course, contrary to argument, but the stance adopted here is presented as one of pious belief in cosmic justice and closely connected to Socrates' professed ignorance.

This structure is conspicuous in the *Republic* as well, where Socrates repeatedly frames his description of Kallipolis and its philosopher-king as a *mythos* of which he is both the creator and the recipient.[35] The mythical nature of Kallipolis is pointed out at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, where the city is referred to as described "in a myth, as it were" (ὡς ἐν μύθῳ, 26c9). This remark continues Socrates' language in the *Republic*, where the vision of Kallipolis and its philosopher-king is frequently described in mythical terms or explicitly compared to a *mythos* (e.g. 376d9; 501e), just as Socrates compares his own images of city and man to ideal artworks (e.g. 361d; 420c–d; 472d; 504d; 540c). The mythical character of the city is conspicuous: It is a city that exists in speech, but not on earth (592a), a model in words of an ideal city (παράδειγμα … λόγῳ ἀγαθῆς πόλεως, 472d9). Socrates even models his city on Hesiod's Myth of the Races (e.g. 415a1-c8; 547a1),[36] and ventriloquizes the Muses, whom he invokes in Homeric fashion (545e), to describe the inevitable downfall of the city.[37]

Like the description of the city, the picture of the philosopher-king is presented as an ideal

vision, a portrait more beautiful than any existing person (472d). Several scholars have pointed out how the philosopher in the central books of the *Republic* represents a new type of hero or mythical character.[38] The philosopher is a highly idealised figure, a divine hero, whose ascent to the divine Forms is envisaged as a heroic quest, as Andrea Nightingale has shown (2004, p. 98; cf. p. 107-118). Socrates carefully points out his own inferiority in comparison with this idealised philosopher. He never claims to have the philosopher's insight, but merely describes – through images and allegories – how the philosopher ascents to the highest levels of reality.[39]

By framing his narrative as a form of myth and by calling attention to the ideal nature of the philosopher, Socrates creates a story whose function in the dialogue is very similar to that of the mythical heroes in the ideal city. Socrates' images of the just man and the just city, are created in order to have *models* or paradigms of justice (472b7-d10, cf. 368c8-369a4), which is essentially the function of the poetic heroes in Kallipolis, who personify abstract virtues (as discussed in section 2 above). His primary aim in the dialogue is protreptic rather than philosophical in the strict sense: to convince the two brothers that the just man – the philosopher – is also the happiest, and thus, that they should pursue a just life (cf. 365a4-c6).[40]

If Plato's own myths exemplify the type of myth that will be told in Kallipolis, we could see Socrates' philosophical use of myth in the dialogue as an example of how he imagines that such myths will be told in Kallipolis. Rather than instruments for indoctrination, the philosophically founded myths could be used by the philosopher-rulers to *explain* a philosophically informed world-view to their citizens. Instead of seeing the philosophical argumentation to constitute a major difference between the philosophical dialogue and the political community in Kallipolis, we could see the philosophical use of myth in combination with argument as an example of the way myth can be used to explain philosophical truths in the city. Iokovos Vasiliou has pointed out that the metaphysical arguments presented in *Republic* 5-7 are expressly aimed at *ordinary people* who are currently averse to philosophy (esp. 449c-451b; 476d-e; 499b-501a). Socrates' discussion of the philosophers, their training and grasp of the truth, is designed to convince people in general to adopt philosophy's view on the world and, consequently, to respect the true philosophers as uniquely qualified to rule (501d1-3). This optimism about the possibility to win people over by careful argumentation even outside Kallipolis, could suggest that Socrates does not think that the citizens of Kallipolis would be coaxed or indoctrinated into loving their rulers but will, like the imagined ordinary citizens in book 6 and 7, be persuaded with myths and arguments (Vasiliou 2008, p. 240-244, cf. also Kamtekar 2004, p. 160).[41]

Indeed, if the primary function of myth in Kallipolis is to convey *philosophical* truth and provide truly virtuous models for the citizen, it is difficult to see the need to indoctrinate them at all, or to assume that they need to have literal belief in their myths. All that is needed for myth to be useful is that the recipients adopt a pious stance of belief in their myths as important and philosophically true fictions, similar to Socrates' pious belief in his own myths. And given the division of labour in the city, and the loving bonds between rulers and ruled (e.g. 431d9-e2; 463b-464a; 590d6-7; cf. 442c-d), it seems likely that the citizens will be willing to trust that the myths are accurate

representations of such philosophical truths. Given the lack of detail about distribution of myth in Kallipolis, this can hardly be more than a suggestion; however, the parallels between the function of myth in the argument and myth in Kallipolis suggests, in contrast to the traditional view, that the myths may be envisioned as fictional stories whose purpose is to *explain* and disseminate philosophical truth to the citizens, rather than simply indoctrinate them.[42]

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Notes

1. For the connection between philosophical images and myths, see e.g. McCabe, 1992; Murray, 1999. For the Allegory of the Cave as a myth, see especially Nightingale, 2004, p. 94-138. For the connection between allegory and myth, see Pender, 2000, p. 7.

2. This view emphasises myth as a form of political propaganda; e.g. Annas, 1981, p. 90-6; Reeve, 1988, p. 208-13; Gill, 1993, p. 45-5; Janaway, 1995, p. 85-86; Murray, 1996, p. 150; Lincoln, 1999, p. 38-41; Ford, 2002, p. 220-224; Morgan, 2000, p. 162-3; Schofield, 2006, p. 287-288; 2007, p. 145-8; Woolf, 2009, p. 11-15; Harte, 2013, p. 146-149; Heath, 2013, p. 19; Wardy, 2013, p. 124-131. These political myths are usually treated in isolation from the philosophical myths. Thus, classical studies, such as Stewart, 1905; Frutiger, 1930, and Dodds, 1951, p. 207-224 focus solely on the philosophical use of myth, as do recent edited volumes; out of the contributions in Janka & Schäfer, 2002; Partenie, 2009; Collobert, Destrée & Gonzales, 2012, only one paper focuses on the political use of myth (Schofield, 2009). More comprehensive accounts can be found in Brisson, 1998; Morgan, 2000.

3. E. g. Woolf, 2009. p. 26; Heath, 2013, p. 19; Wardy, 2013, p. 125. This view is connected to the widespread view of the early education as a training that aims to instil a notion of the honourable (*to kalon*) in the young guardians which is essentially different from the rational values of the philosophers and thus only superficially aligned with philosophical beauty, cf. Gosling, 1973, ch. 2; see also Annas, 1981,

p. 126-128; Reeve, 1988, p 36-37; 178-184; Kamtekar, 1998, p. 334-338; Hobbs, 2000, 8-31; G. R. Lear, 2006, p. 116-119; Moss, 2005, 155-6. Psychology lies outside the scope of this paper; see, however, Thaler, 2015 for a view of psychology which is fully compatible with the discussion of myth offered here.

4   All Translations are from Ferrari & Griffith, 2001, with moderations.

5   For the use of the term 'fiction' here, cf. Halliwell, 2015, p. 345-346; on the meaning of 'mythos' as fiction, cf. Fowler, 2011, p. 63; in an influential article Christopher Gill has argued that Plato does not have a concept of fiction in the *Republic* (Gill, 1993). Gill's central point is that Plato's emphasis on ethics in myth precludes him from valuing myth as fiction; my point below works to the contrary conclusion: It is Plato's ethical concerns that make fiction necessary in the city.

6   See e. g. Benitez, 2016, p. 308 for the meta-ethical reduction here.

7   This makes sense of the claim at 378a that even if the gods had done something wrong (which we later find out would be impossible), it should not be told to the wider public.

8   This goes against Gill, 1993, p. 46 who takes Socrates to be concerned with historical facts here. For the prominence of Achilles in these examples, see especially Hobbs, 2000, p. 199-209.

9   See Moss, 2007 an analysis of the moral inversion described in this passage.

10   Cf. Lear, 1992, p. 186-190 for the early education as a process of internalisation.

11   On the education of the guards as derived from the Forms cf. also Ferrari, 2003, p. 101-102.

12   Cf. also Thaler, 2015, p. 221-228.

13   For the ideal of godlikeness as a central philosophical ideal in Plato, see Sedley, 1999, and Annas, 1999, p. 52-71. In this way, divine rule is created in the auxiliaries as well as in the philosopher.

14   For the theological argument, see especially Solmsen, 1942, p. 72-73; for the similarity between the gods here and the Forms in book 6, cf. Annas, 1981, p. 217-241; Morgan, 1990, p. 115; Murray, 1996, p. 147; Bordt, 2006, p. 135-161; McPherran, 2006, p. 248-249 (cf. Mikalson, 2010, p. 213-214). The ideal and paradigmatic nature of the poetic representations is well discussed by Janaway, 1995, p. 90-91, cf. also Moravcsik, 1986, p. 40-41 and Nussbaum, 2001, p. 157-158 who criticizes this ideal of perfection. The philosophical implications of the passage, especially the close relation between truth and beauty here, has not to my knowledge been discussed.

15   This also implies, I believe, that the education is not about theological facts, as suggested by Gill, 1993, p. 46.

16   The idea of artists imitating the Forms directly is argued most vehemently by Tate, 1928, p. 20; but see Ferrari, 1989, p. 121-123 for a response. The image of the Form is its instantiation, as is clear from book 10 (595c8-598c4).

17   Cf. Long, 2009. p. 95, commenting on similar language in the *Gorgias*. For the truth of images, cf. also *Leg.* 667e-671a. For a theoretical discussion of this understanding of truth, see Patterson, 1985, p. 110-113, and now especially Rowett, 2018, p. 40-52.

18   It is in accordance with this principle that Socrates considers potential facts (i.e. quarrels between citizens) inadequate for poetic representation (378a; 380c).

19   For the view of this passage as a justification of propaganda, see e.g. Ferrari, 1989, p. 113-114; Gill, 1993, p. 45-55; Murray, 1996, p. 150; Schofield, 2007, p. 143-149.

20   This interpretation is preferred by, e.g. Naddaff, 2002, p. 35 & 143 nn. 84 & 85; Lear, 2006, p. 31; Schofield, 2007, p. 145; Woolf, 2009, p. 15; Wardy, 2013, p. 126. A more radical version of this interpretation has recently been suggested (Baima, 2017, p. 5); according to this version, the story told by someone who feigns false belief.

21   This is a fairly standard way of referring to metaphysical reality, and ethical truth.

22   In the *Theaetetus*, the expression 'true falsehood' is used of false judgment, explained as substitution of one of "the things that are" with another, as e.g. judging beautiful what is in fact ugly as an instance of "truly judging falsely" (τότε ὡς ἀληθῶς δοξάζει ψευδῆ), thus designating the same confusion about ethical and metaphysical truths as I believe it does in the *Republic*.

23   Thus, e.g. Guthrie, 1975, p. 475-479; Reeve, 1988, p. 209-10; Gill, 1993, p. 52-54; Murray, 1996, p. 149; Murray, 1999, p. 253.

24   "An imitation of a previously conceived false idea", Nettleship, 1901, p. 91; cited in Reeve, 1988, p. 208-13; Gill, 1993, p. 45-55; Murray, 1996, p. 150.

25   The epistemic states on the divided line are referred to as four *pathemata* in the soul (παθήματα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ) at 511d7, where the word denotes the soul's being *affected* in a certain way. The widespread interpretation which takes *pathema* in our passage to refer to an idea or story made up in one's soul seems to stretch the Greek.

26   *Contra* Baima, 2017, 4.

27   I return to the theme of deceit below.

28   Before Plato, this was already used as a term for metaphysical reality, and it is the term used to denote it when the forms are introduced in Book 5 (without any further explanation of it). On the technical meaning of the term there, see Halliwell 1993, p. 215-216 *ad* 477a3; p. 217-218 *ad* 477c1.

29   Cf. *Prt.* 358c4-5: ἀμαθίαν ἄρα τὸ τοιόνδε λέγετε, τὸ ψευδῆ ἔχειν δόξαν καὶ ἐψεῦσθαι περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων τῶν πολλοῦ ἀξίων;

30   E.g. Gill, 1993, p. 52-55; Murray, 1996, p. 150.

31   Thus, in the *Phdr.* the myth of the soul is called an exposition of what the soul resembles (ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν).

In the *Phd.* the myth is not "entirely true" (108d-e) but one should believe "this or something similar" (ἢ ταῦτ᾽ […] ἢ τοιαῦτ᾽ ἄττα 114d). At *Grg.* 523a, Socrates insists on calling his *mythos* a *logos*, yet thereby seems to be insisting on the inherent truth of it rather than seriously questioning its status as myth, cf. Fowler 2011, p. 64 and Ferrari 2012, p. 67.

[32] See Sedley, 2007, p. 98-107 on the vexed question of the Demiurge and various interpretations of the principles or causes he may personify. On the use of the metaphors father, ruler and craftsman, see Pender, 2000, p. 100-110.

[33] For a full discussion of the myth, see Johansen, 2004, p. 60-64; Broadie, 2014, p. 29.

[34] For the myth as a correction of Hesiod's *Theogony*, see also Burnyeat, 2009, p. 168-169; Broadie, 2014, p. 41.

[35] For the city as a myth, see further Segal, 1978; Mc-Cabe, 1992; Rutherford, 1995, p. 208-227; Murray, 1999; Morgan, 2000, p. 201-210; Petraki, 2011, p. 109-243, cf. also Rutherford 2002. For the ways in which Plato appropriates mythical language, particularly in the discussion of the utopian nature of the city, see Halliwell, 1993, p. 199, and Petraki, 2011, p. 136-141.

[36] For the Hesiodic theme here, see esp. van Noorden, 2015, p. 106-142; cf. also O'Connor, 2007, p. 78-79; Schofield, 2009, p. 105-113.

[37] The combination of *mythos* and *logos* in the argument has suggested to some scholars that Socrates deliberately blurs the distinction between the two in order to question the hegemony of *logos* (e.g. Murray, 1999, p. 261; Rowe, 1999, p. 264-265; Partenie, 2009, p. 19-21; Collobert, Destrée & Gonzales, 2012, p. 1). However, Socrates insists on a clear theoretical distinction, claiming that myths and images are connected to an inferior epistemic position (and therefore useless for gods, cf. 382c and divine philosophers: 510b7-8, cf. 533), cf. Gill, 1996, p. 282-283; Morgan, 2000, p. 181.

[38] For further discussion of the philosopher as an idealized figure, see Nightingale, 2004, 98; Blondell, 2002, 225-6; other scholars have pointed out that the philosopher represents a new type of hero or mythical character: Hobbs, 2000, p. 235-240; Blondell, 2002, p. 229-245; O'Connor, 2007.

[39] For Socrates' epistemic inferiority and his use of myth and images, see Morgan, 2000, p. 181; Keyt, 2006, p. 198; 209; Vasiliou, 2012, p. 12; cf. also Long 2017, p. 158 for a discussion.

[40] For a discussion of the *Republic* as a protreptic dialogue, see Yunis, 2007. On the difference between the speakers in the dialogue and the ideal philosophers, see also Yunis, 2007, p. 15-24; Vasiliou, 2008, p. 234-246. Blondell, 2002, 98-122, points to the similarities between the two brothers in the dialogue and the musically trained guardians.

[41] I have not dealt with the Noble Falsehood (414b-415d) in this paper, as a full discussion would require a separate article. See, however, Lear, 2006, and Rowett, 2016, for interpretations of the Noble Falsehood which are fully compatible with the general view on myth discussed above. Rowett, especially, offers detailed arguments for her view that the Noble Falsehood is best understood as a preliminary version of the Allegory of the Cave, and that its tropes of childhood life as an underearthly, dream-like existence closely anticipate the philosophical worldview explained in the central books. On her view, the philosophers will believe the myth simply because it is (philosophically) true. Rowett's interpretation thus shows that the Noble Falsehood is, at its core, a philosophical myth. This shows, I believe, how the myth could be used in the city to disseminate philosophical ideas, in a way similar to the Allegory of the Cave in the dialogue itself.

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