

ALLEGORESIS IN THE FIFTH CENTURY BC

By

MIKOŁAJ DOMARADZKI

ABSTRACT: The article deals with the development of allegoresis in the fifth century BC. While the exegetical works of Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Diogenes of Apollonia are its main focus, the paper argues that the aim of these allegorists was not to exonerate Homer from the charges of immorality but rather to propagate the philosophical explanation of the world laid down by Anaxagoras. Thus, the parallel development of philosophy and allegory in the fifth century is taken to suggest that it was the flowering of the former that actuated the latter.

The purpose of allegorical interpretation is to discover the hidden meaning of a text. The practice arose in the sixth century BC as a result of attempts to exonerate Homer from the charges of impiety¹. In the fifth century, allegorical interpretation no longer served the purpose of exculpating the poet, since now its primary objective was to facilitate the process of replacing the mythological account of the world provided by Homer and Hesiod with a more scientific one put forward by the first philosophers. This development was reflected in two very important assumptions that were made with regard to Homer: the poet was assumed not only to have shared the full-fledged philosophical picture of the world offered by the Ionian thinkers, but also *intentionally* to have camouflaged it in his poems. Hence, the fifth-century allegorists participated in the process of rationalizing the then view of the world by interpreting the old narratives of Homer in accordance with the findings of Anaxagoras' new science as *deliberate* allegories. While this development is clearly illustrated by the exegetical work of Metrodorus of Lampsacus and, to a lesser degree, of Diogenes of Apollonia, the present paper will focus on the two thinkers as *strong* allegorists, i.e., interpreters who read into Homer the physical teachings of Anaxagoras on the assumption that Homer not only prefigured the profound philosophy of Anaxagoras but also purposefully disguised it as poetry². Accordingly, it will be shown here that

¹ The sixth century allegoresis lies beyond the scope of the present paper, but see n. 13 below.

² Thus, I agree with those scholars who assess that Metrodorus and, at least to some extent, Diogenes interpreted Homer allegorically precisely in the strong (i.e., *intentional*) sense, see especially NADDAF 2009: 117. Cf. also RICHARDSON 2006: 79 and LONG 2006: 215.

for Metrodorus and Diogenes Homer was an inspired sage who anticipated the “scientific” account of the universe and allegorically expressed it in his poems. As a result of this assumption, both exegetes aimed to demonstrate that a proper reading of the poet would contribute to a better understanding of the origin, structure and composition of the world. While the ideas of Metrodorus and Diogenes illustrate a curious symbiotic relationship between a philosophical explanation of the world and an allegorical interpretation of the poet, the fact that both thinkers were inspired by the philosophy of Anaxagoras in their exegeses of Homer makes the parallel development of philosophy and allegory a good argument for the interrelationship between the two. Thus, the scope of the thesis advanced in the present paper is twofold: firstly, to show that the outpour of allegorical readings of Homer in the fifth century BC must have been actuated by the flowering of the Ionian philosophy, and secondly, to suggest that it may have contributed to the philosophical transformation of *mythos* into *logos*.

A discussion of allegorical readings of Homer cannot avoid such important questions as why the allegorists chose the poet as the subject of their allegoresis and how they treated his poems. When trying to answer these questions, it is useful to avail oneself of Heraclitus’ *Homeric Problems*³, since the work is the largest preserved example of ancient allegoresis of Homer⁴. With regard to the first question the answer seems rather obvious and the parallels between the poems of Homer on the one hand and the Bible on the other have often been drawn. Perhaps, no one has stressed Homer’s cultural importance so fervently, though, as Heraclitus, who offers the following assessment:

From the very first age of life, the foolishness of infants just beginning to learn is nurtured on the teaching given in his [*scil.* Homer’s] school. One might almost say that his poems are our baby clothes, and we nourish our minds by draughts of his milk. He stands at our side as we each grow up and shares our youth as we gradually come to manhood; when we are mature, his presence within us is at its prime; and even in old age, we never weary of him. When we stop, we thirst to begin him again. In a word, the only end of Homer for human beings is the end of life (*Quaest. Hom.* I 5–7)⁵.

³ While the three most important editions are: OELMANN 1910; BUFFIÈRE 1962; RUSSELL, KONSTAN 2005, I use the last one, as it is based on the most recent scholarship and contains a very good English translation.

⁴ At this point, it seems advisable to offer an explanation why I mention here Heraclitus’ *Homeric Problems* rather than the Derveni papyrus. After all, the papyrus dates from the fourth century BC (cf. e.g. FUNGHI 1997: 26; BETEGH 2004: 61; KOUREMENOS, PARÁSSOGLOU, TSANTANOGLOU 2006: 9; BETEGH 2007: 135 f.; FREDE 2007: 10–12) and is, therefore, closer chronologically to the subject of the present paper than Heraclitus’ treaty which is from the first (or perhaps even second) century AD. The reasons are twofold. First of all, the subject of allegoresis in the Derveni papyrus is Orpheus rather than Homer. Secondly, and more importantly, the Derveni author does not seem to interpret Orpheus allegorically in the strong sense (cf. RANGOS 2007: 40 f.). See also n. 6 below.

⁵ Translation by RUSSELL, KONSTAN 2005: 3. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

When describing the role of the “Greek Bible”, Heraclitus points to Homer’s being the cornerstone of the then educational system. The metaphors he uses are very suggestive: children are “breast-fed” (τιτθεύεται) on Homer, his poems are their “swaddling clothes” (ἐνεσπαργανωμένοι) and so on. In fact, the allegorist suggests that the entire process of socialization pivots on the poet. Given the vital role that Homer’s poems had always performed in Greece, providing an explanation for why the fifth-century allegorists stuck to the poet is relatively easy. Clearly, Homer was still a natural candidate for a subject of allegorical interpretation, since having already shaped to a large extent the Greek language and thought, he continued to be the standard point of reference for the preponderance of literary and philosophical debates in the fifth century BC and, as the case of Heraclitus shows, afterwards. Thus, making use of his authority was enormously strategic, for proving that an idea was already present in the most revered and venerable poems could obviously lend credence to a novel and, therefore, perhaps slightly suspicious doctrine. For that reason allegorists from Metrodorus to Heraclitus willingly and frequently made use of the poet. With that we may pass on to the other question: for what purpose did the fifth-century allegorists employ Homer’s poems? Again, a confrontation with Heraclitus might shed some light on the characteristics of the fifth-century allegoresis.

Although Heraclitus’ approach to Homer is similar to Metrodorus’ in that both thinkers interpret Homer allegorically in the strong sense, it is only the former that can be labelled as a representative of apologetic exegesis. Indeed, Heraclitus puts it in no uncertain terms that the aim of his treaty is to exculpate Homer from the charges of immorality. In the opening sentence of his work, the allegorist asserts (*Quaest. Hom.* I 1) that Homer “would be totally impious, if he did not speak allegorically” (πάντα γὰρ ἡσέβησεν, εἰ μὴδὲν ἡλληγόρησεν). Thus, Heraclitus makes it clear that he is primarily concerned with the task of defending the poet⁶. The matter is quite different, however, for Metrodorus who – as we shall see below – assumes Homer to allegorically have expressed the physical doctrine of his Anaxagoras and does not busy himself with any apology. The thinker perceives the poems of Homer as a repository of hidden cosmological truths that generally anticipate many ideas of the Anaxagorean school and at no time does he try to exonerate Homer from the charges of blasphemy. When subjecting Homer to allegorical interpretation and eliciting the symbolic contents of his poems, Metrodorus looks for purely natural causes symbolically and intentionally expressed under mythological guise in the poet. While scholars generally agree

⁶ Interestingly enough, in this particular aspect there is a close parallelism between the work of Heraclitus and the Derveni author, for the latter appears to have been a pious Orphic who believed both Orpheus’ revelation and Presocratic physics to be true, and who, as a result, sought rather to reconcile religion with philosophy than merely to replace the former with the latter (cf. in this respect MOST 1997: 122, 128–131; LAKS 1997: 123, 134–138; OBBINK 1997: 40, 52–54; BETEGH 2004: 350–372 and RANGOS 2007: 69 f.).

that Metrodorus' physical exegesis of Homer was shaped by certain ideas of the Anaxagorean school⁷, there is less consensus on the cultural import of his work⁸. In what follows I shall try to estimate the significance of Metrodorus for the development of ancient allegoresis, taking into particular consideration the affinity between the exegetical work of Metrodorus and that of Diogenes of Apollonia.

1. METRODORUS OF LAMPSACUS

Metrodorus of Lampsacus is mentioned in the context of the art of interpreting Homer by Plato in the *Ion*. In the pertinent passage, Socrates observes (530c) that a “good rhapsode” (ἀγαθὸς ῥαψωδός) must “understand the words of the poet” (συνεῖη τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ), and, consequently, he “must be an interpreter of the mind of the poet to the listeners” (ἐρμηνεῖα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι). To this, Ion boastfully replies that he has mastered this “art” (τέχνη) better than Metrodorus of Lampsacus, Stesimbrotus of Thasos, Glaucon or any other man (530c–d)⁹. With regard to this testimony it needs to be emphasized that as we have very little and very uncertain information about Stesimbrotus and Glaucon our considerations will focus exclusively on Metrodorus. Naturally, Stesimbrotus and Glaucon *are* mentioned by other sources, but their reliability can be questioned. For the purpose of the present discussion, suffice it to observe that Plato enumerates Metrodorus, Stesimbrotus and Glaucon, whereas Xenophon mentions Stesimbrotus and Anaximander as those exponents of Homer who looked for the “inner and hidden meanings” (ὑπόνοιαι)¹⁰ in the poet (*Symp.* III 6). As far as Glaucon is concerned, it is plausible to assume that Plato's *Ion* refers to the same Glaucon that appears in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The Stagirite reports (*Poet.* 1461b 1) him to have opposed those critics who “unreasonably presuppose something and pass harsh sentences” (ἀλόγως προὔπολαμβάνουσί τι καὶ αὐτοὶ καταψηφισάμενοι) on the poet. Thus, although it is impossible to ascertain any facts about Stesimbrotus, Glaucon

⁷ Cf. NESTLE 1907: 503–510; WEHRLI 1928: 92–95; TATE 1929: 142–144; TATE 1934: 105–108; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 126–132; FRÄNKEL 1960: 390–397; KRAFFT 1971: 141–148; CALIFF 2003: 21–36; OBBINK 2003: 180; STRUCK 2004: 28 f.; GATZEMEIER 2005: 378; RICHARDSON 2006: 67–70; NADDAF 2009: 116–119.

⁸ Indeed, the import of Metrodorus work has been appraised very differently. TATE (1929: 142 and 1934: 105), for instance, found Metrodorus to be one of the most prominent figures in the history of allegorism. On the other hand, BUFFIÈRE (1956: 125) did not classify the thinker as a representative of “le courant classique de l'allégorisme” and asserted that Metrodorus' interpretation theory did not exert any far-reaching influence on his successors. For my assessment of Metrodorus' significance see below.

⁹ Ion's words are to be found in DK 61, 1.

¹⁰ On the history of the terms ὑπόνοια and ἀλληγορία, see WHITMAN 1987: 263–268.

can presumably be regarded as a representative of apologetic exegesis¹¹. In what follows, I shall refrain from speculating on the importance of Stesimbrotus' and Glaucon's contribution to the development of ancient allegorism, yet the fact that Plato, Xenophanes and Aristotle make passing references to these allegorists is important because it testifies beyond any reasonable doubt that allegorical exegesis must have been quite widespread in the fifth century BC. I will concentrate on Metrodorus not only because of the relative richness of the extant testimonies on the allegorist, but also because it is rather uncontroversial that his allegorical exegesis sought rather to propagate the philosophical account of the universe than merely to defend Homer.

We know for sure that Metrodorus was a disciple of Anaxagoras. Diogenes Laertios relates (II 11) that according to Favorinus of Arles, while Anaxagoras was the first "to have shown that the poetry of Homer treats of virtue and justice" (τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν ἀποφάνασθαι εἶναι περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης), his disciple, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, "took the idea further" (ἐπὶ πλεῖτον δὲ προστῆναι τοῦ λόγου) and became thereby the first "to have studied the physical doctrine of the poet" (σπουδάσαι τοῦ ποιητοῦ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν πραγματείαν)¹². Thus, according to this testimony Anaxagoras would initiate a moral exegesis of Homer, and Metrodorus would father a physical one. Although we know nothing about the moral exegesis of the Anaxagorean school, we may certainly rule out the possibility that either Anaxagoras or Metrodorus was the *first* to have come up with the idea of an allegorical interpretation¹³. Still,

¹¹ Cf. e.g. TATE 1929: 143; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 133 and RICHARDSON 2006: 78 f. For an extensive, albeit slightly speculative, discussion of Stesimbrotus, see especially BUFFIÈRE 1956: 118 and 133–136; cf. also RICHARDSON 2006: 63, 71–75. Stesimbrotus has also been suggested as the author of the Derweni papyrus by BURKERT 1986. While other proposals include Epigenes, Euthyphro, Diogenes of Apollonia, Diagoras of Melos, Metrodorus and Prodicus of Ceos (see especially BETEGH 2004: 64, 183 f., and FUNGHI 1997: 36), all these suggestions remain highly controversial and disputable. I, therefore, leave the discussion of this issue for another paper.

¹² The second part of the sentence is to be found in DK 61, 2. Cf. PÉPIN 1976: 99; STRUCK 2004: 26 and RICHARDSON 2006: 67–70. While RICHARDSON is inclined to ascribe the physical allegory of Euripides' *Orestes* (982 ff.) to the Anaxagorean school, an antithetic opinion is to be found in SCODEL 1984: 13–24.

¹³ We know that the first allegorical attempts were made already in the sixth century BC by Theagenes of Rhegium and Pherecydes of Syros. Porphyry puts it in no uncertain terms that the idea of allegorical interpretation goes back to Theagenes "who first wrote about Homer" (ὅς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου, DK 8, 2). The information is also evidenced by the *Suda* (DK 8, 4) and Tatian (DK 8, 1), who additionally places Theagenes in the times of Cambyses (i.e. 529 to 522 BC). For scholars who look for the origins of allegoresis in Theagenes, see the following works: WEHRLI 1928: 88; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 105; FORD 2002: 72; GATZEMEIER 2005: 340 and RICHARDSON 2006: 64. With regard to Pherecydes our data is less certain and, consequently, there is less agreement concerning his allegorism. One testimony has it that Pherecydes "spoke about the gods in allegory" (ἀλληγορήσας θεολόγησεν, DK 7 B 2) and Origen relates that Pherecydes "understood" the words of Homer in a particular way (*Contr. Cels.* VI 42 = DK 7 B 5). TATE (1927: 214 and 1934: 108) is positive that Pherecydes rather than Theagenes was the founder of allegorical movement. SCHIBLI

what is of paramount importance about Laertios' testimony is that it informs us that Metrodorus was taught by Anaxagoras who, as we know, was prosecuted on a charge of "impiety" (ἄσεβεία). Plutarch reports that when Diopithes suggested a decree that public accusations be levelled against people who "did not recognize the divinities or taught doctrines about the aerial things" (τοὺς τὰ θεῖα μὴ νομίζοντας ἢ λόγους περὶ τῶν μεταρσίων διδάσκοντας), Pericles furtively sent Anaxagoras out of the city (*Pericles* XXXII 2–6 = DK 59 A 17). The philosopher withdrew to Lampsacus where on his death he was given an official funeral and then honoured posthumously by the inhabitants of the city (Arist. *Rhet.* B 23 1398b 16 = DK 59 A 23). In the light of this testimony, one may venture an opinion that Metrodorus practiced allegorical interpretation motivated by the desire to exonerate his teacher from the charges of impiety and heresy¹⁴. Whatever his ulterior motives were, it is evident that being a student of Anaxagoras made it natural for Metrodorus to search in Homer for certain philosophical ideas of his master. What deserves to be pointed out here is that when reading Anaxagoras into Homer, Metrodorus participated in the process of overcoming the naïve and anthropomorphic cosmology of the first poets by propagating the philosophical view of the world worked out by Anaxagoras.

If Anaxagoras was exiled from Athens on the charge of impiety, then the views of his disciple were equally iconoclastic. In his work on Homer, Metrodorus was supposed to "transfer everything to the allegorical level" (πάντα εἰς ἀλληγορίαν μετέγων) so that gods such as Hera, Athena and Zeus became nothing but "hypostases of nature and arrangements of the elements" (φύσεως δὲ ὑποστάσεις καὶ στοιχείων διακοσμήσεις, DK 61, 3)¹⁵. To add insult to injury, Metrodorus allowed for the possibility that such heroes as Hector, Achilles and Agamemnon never existed (*ibid.*). Already this testimony makes it clear that Metrodorus did not practice apologetic interpretation. However, elsewhere he is also reported to "allegorically" (ἀλληγορικῶς) have interpreted Agamemnon as the aether (DK 61, 4). This shows that Metrodorus sought to substitute a scientific explanation of the world for conventional mythology by reducing the heroes to natural phenomena.

(1990: 99 f.) is cautious about classifying Pherecydes as an allegorist. STRUCK (2004: 26) believes SCHIBLI to be "overly cautious" with this respect. See also FORD 2002: 69; GATZEMEIER 2005: 372; RICHARDSON 2006: 77 and NADDAF 2009: 127.

¹⁴ NESTLE (1907: 504) was the first to have suggested this. Interestingly, NADDAF (2009: 116) suggests that Anaxagoras might have practiced allegorical interpretation so as to defend *himself*. More generally, GATZEMEIER (2005: 378) aptly, in my opinion, points out with regard to Metrodorus' allegorism that "Die Intention dieser Allegorese ist nicht nur die 'Rettung' Homer, sondern auch (und vor allem) die 'Rettung' der Philosophie". GATZEMEIER's appraisal is in accordance with my position that it was rather a promotion (or "Rettung" as he puts it) of philosophy than defence of poetry that was Metrodorus' intention.

¹⁵ While the translations of Metrodorus are mine, the translations of the Presocratic philosophers have been taken from KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985 (often with small modifications).

Apart from the identification of Agamemnon with the aether, Metrodorus put forward such exegetical suggestions as the idea to interpret Achilles as the sun, Helen as the earth, Alexander as the air, Hector as the moon and the others analogously (ibid.). As far as the gods are concerned, Demeter became the liver, Dionysus became the spleen and Apollo became the gall (ibid.). Again, we see clearly, that Metrodorus' primary objective was not to defend Homer. This is evident from the fact that the allegorist reduced the heroes and the gods of the *Iliad* to the heavenly bodies and the human organs, respectively. This physical interpretation of the heroes and physiological interpretation of the gods reveals Metrodorus' unbridled rationalism¹⁶. The thinker seems to have regarded reason as the only authority and repudiated all supernatural accounts of the universe. If, as already stated, there is general consent among scholars that Metrodorus' bizarre allegorical interpretations echo Anaxagoras' scientific theories¹⁷, then his exegesis built on the assumption that Homer *symbolically* expressed various fundamental cosmic and physiological processes that were *scientifically* expounded by Anaxagoras. Let us see how it became possible for Metrodorus to attribute to Homer the theological and physical doctrines of his teacher.

Following Anaximenes (DK 13 A 5), Anaxagoras presented a very similar cycle of cosmological transformations from clouds and water to earth and stones (DK 59 B 16). Without discussing Anaxagoras' cosmology in minute details, suffice it to observe that it is especially two hypotheses from the Anaxagorean physics that are of great importance for understanding the aforementioned allegorical suggestions put forward by Metrodorus¹⁸. Firstly, Anaxagoras is reported to have believed:

the earth to be flat in shape and to stay suspended where it is because of its size, because there is no void and because the air, being very strong, keeps the earth afloat on it (τὴν δὲ γῆν τῶι σχήματι πλατεῖαν εἶναι καὶ μένειν μετέωρον διὰ τὸ

¹⁶ Already NESTLE (1907: 503) characterized Metrodorus' interpretations as "Ausgeburten eines toll gewordenen Rationalismus".

¹⁷ Cf. n. 7 above. BUFFIÈRE proved beyond any doubt that Metrodorus' strange system need to be interpreted in the context of Anaxagoras' physics. The scholar demonstrated that "Métrodoire utilise, pour expliquer Homère, les théories cosmogoniques ou médicales de l'école d'Anaxagore" (BUFFIÈRE 1956: 132). This conclusion is now generally acknowledged. OBBINK 2003: 180, STRUCK 2004: 28, RICHARDSON 2006: 68 and NADDAF 2009: 117 all stress that Metrodorus' idea to identify mortal heroes with the heavenly bodies (i.e., various parts of the universe) and immortal gods with the human organs (i.e., various parts of the human body) must have been influenced by certain Anaxagorean analogies between microcosm and macrocosm (i.e., the individual and the world), cf. in this respect also KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985: 375. In a similar vein, GATZEMEIER (2005: 378), having characterized Metrodorus' physical allegoresis as "die Deutung von Götternamen als Begriffe für Naturgegebenheiten" and his physiological allegoresis as "die Deutung von Götternamen als Bezeichnungen für die Organe des Körpers", rightly observed that "der gesamte Homerische Götterstaat wird somit zu einer Allegorie des menschlichen Organismus".

¹⁸ In what follows, I draw particularly on BUFFIÈRE 1956: 128 and RICHARDSON 2006: 68.

μέγεθος καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ εἶναι κενὸν καὶ διὰ τὸ τὸν ἀέρα ἰσχυρότατον ὄντα φέρειν ἐποχουμένην τὴν γῆν, DK 59 A 42).

While Anaxagoras places the earth at the centre of the universe and considers it to be supported and surrounded by the air, Metrodorus interprets the earth as Helen for she is the central figure in the Trojan war, and the air as Alexander, for he surrounds (i.e., embraces) her. Furthermore, Anaxagoras assumed:

the sun, the moon and all the stars to be red-hot stones which the rotation of the aether carries round with it (ἥλιον δὲ καὶ σελήνην καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄστρα λίθους εἶναι ἐμπύρους συμπεριληφθέντας ὑπὸ τῆς αἰθέρος περιφορᾶς, *ibid.*).

Given the presence of Helen and Alexander, the aether which carries around with it the sun and the stars must be Agamemnon, for just as the aether kindles and sets in motion the heavenly bodies, so does Agamemnon foment and justify the Trojan war. Consequently, the interpretation of the two remaining heavenly bodies that Anaxagoras presented as fiery stones becomes obvious: the sun is Achilles and the moon is Hector, for the most prominent heavenly bodies must correspond to the most prominent heroes.

Having noticed the indisputable indebtedness of Metrodorus' allegoresis to the philosophy of Anaxagoras, we may further observe that Metrodorus was just as much a rationalist as his teacher: his primary motivation for allegorical interpretation was scientific rather than apologetic, since he sought to rationalize the life-view contained in the works of Homer and, thereby, to eliminate any mystical or supernatural elements from the cosmogony of the poet¹⁹. Hence, the allegorist could be characterized as a proponent of ancient "scientism": he interpreted Homer with the aid of the cosmological theories of the Anaxagorean school, for he believed that scientific methods should be applied in all fields of investigation. He probably perceived the divine nimbus surrounding the heroes and the gods of Homer as a product of a pre-scientific mentality that resorted to supernatural powers where it could not discern purely natural causes. While the case of Metrodorus undeniably shows that allegorical interpretation was actuated by philosophy, it seems worth considering what consequences his work had for the later development of Greek thought. According to BUFFIÈRE they were not particularly far-reaching:

Métrodoire ne fut guère suivi par les commentateurs postérieurs: sa théorie semble n'avoir pas eu d'écho chez les anciens. Ce sont les dieux, non pas les héros, que l'allégorisme classique transforme en éléments ou en forces cosmiques: on suit la direction indiquée par Théagène de Rhégium et non

¹⁹ This pertains not only to the heroes but also to the gods. Recall that Metrodorus suggested an allegorical interpretation of the gods as human organs (DK 61, 4). For an analysis of this exegetical suggestion see, for instance, BUFFIÈRE 1956: 130 f. and RICHARDSON 2006: 68.

pas celle du disciple d'Anaxagore²⁰.

Thus, while Metrodorus' originality consisted in considering the heroes rather than the gods to be the elements allegorically expressed in the *Iliad*, it was precisely this originality that prevented him from playing a major part in the history of Greek allegorism. BUFFIÈRE suggests that the reasons for this development were twofold: firstly, from an *apologetic* point of view it was more urgent to exculpate the gods rather than the heroes from the charges of immorality (evidently actions that may be pardonable among humans due to the obvious weaknesses of their nature are entirely incompatible with the notion of divinity) and, secondly, from a *scientific* point of view it was simply more natural to make the gods rather than the heroes the cosmic forces or the elements of the universe (clearly the gods were more fit for allegorical interpretation, because the historical reality of the heroes was undeniable for the then mentality)²¹. Although BUFFIÈRE's explanations seem sound and convincing, I would like to emphasize that one should not hastily belittle the cultural significance of Metrodorus' work.

The general thesis of the present paper is that allegorism can be characterized as a transitional stage between a fully mythical and a fully rational account of the universe. Subjecting a myth to allegorical interpretation is always tantamount to correcting it one way or another, for an attempt to rationalize a myth presupposes willingness to debunk it. Consequently, Metrodorus' allegoresis must have ultimately supported the then ongoing philosophical transformation of *mythos* into *logos*: the allegorist may not have proposed any influential readings himself, but he certainly stimulated the development of the allegorical movement which, in turn, promoted the philosophical account of the world. While philosophers from Thales onwards sought *rationally* to explain the whole of the universe on the basis of empirically observable phenomena rather than any supernatural forces, allegorical interpretations may have aided the process of liberating the struggling science from anthropomorphism, animism and supernaturalism that were characteristic of the early Greek cosmogonies. It is conceivable that, whether directly or indirectly, the first philosophers were supported by the first allegorists in their gradual overcoming of the naïve views of traditional mythology and supplanting them with accounts that were more scientific. If this is right and allegoresis *is* an important phase in the evolution from *mythos* to *logos*, then thinkers such as Metrodorus may have paved the way for what later was unanimously classified as philosophy proper. When using myths for the purpose of expounding the scientific cosmology of Anaxagoras, Metrodorus transformed the myths themselves. Thus, the thinker participated in the process of changing the shape of the then beliefs and prepared the ground for the development of the philosophical

²⁰ BUFFIÈRE 1956: 129.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

theories worked out by other Presocratic thinkers. As allegorizing mythology inevitably entails erosion of its mythical content, such exegetical efforts as those of Metrodorus eventually contributed to the emergence of a more scientific vision of the world and more accurate apparatus for its description. In the light of what has been said above, Metrodorus' hermeneutical activity seems to deserve a more positive appraisal than BUFFIÈRE puts forward.

Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that Metrodorus' exegetical efforts contributed to the process of propagating the very idea of *interpreting* a text. While promoting the view that there is more to a text than its literal meaning, Metrodorus strengthened the belief that one should look in Homer for profound scientific intuitions naïvely expressed in mythical language. With thinkers such as Metrodorus the idea of a hidden sense of text is definitely established in Greek culture and the quest for universal philosophical truths begins. Evidently, Metrodorus' quest for scientific concepts symbolically expressed in "the Greek Bible" produced results that often seem surprising and sometimes even fatuous. However, the idiosyncrasy and eccentricity of Metrodorus' exegetical endeavours should not obfuscate its cultural import, for it was precisely due to such extravagant efforts that ancient hermeneutics could thrive. This could be illustrated by the following development. In an important testimony (DK 61, 6), we learn that "the disciples of Anaxagoras" (οἱ Ἀναξαγόρειοι) would "interpret" (ἐρμηνεύουσι) mythical gods in such a way that Zeus would for instance become "Mind" (νοῦς). Again, the testimony makes it clear that Metrodorus appropriated myths in accordance with his philosophical concerns. Here, the thinker interprets Zeus as νοῦς so as to expound a cosmological idea of Anaxagoras with the aid of a traditional myth. If we agree that Metrodorus used the old mythical narratives of Homer so as to buttress the new cosmological theories of Anaxagoras, then a remarkable exegetical parallelism between Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Diogenes of Apollonia seems worth noting: if the former identified Zeus with Anaxagoras' νοῦς, then the latter identified the god with Anaximenes' air. While due to the scarcity of the extant testimonies we cannot be certain that Metrodorus' hermeneutical activity exerted *direct* influence on any other allegorist, the parallelism certainly deserves further investigation.

2. DIOGENES OF APOLLONIA

With regard to the practice of allegorical interpretation, a valuable testimony reports Diogenes of Apollonia to have "praised" (ἐπαινεῖ) Homer for speaking "truly" (ἀληθῶς) about "the divinity" (τοῦ θείου) rather than "mythically" (μυθικῶς) and to have considered Zeus to stand for air in the poet (DK 64 A 8). Considering what has been said above about Metrodorus, the similarity between Metrodorus' and Diogenes' exegeses can hardly be regarded as a matter of pure coincidence, especially given the fact that they were both disciples of

Anaxagoras. In fact, I will try to show that the case of Diogenes of Apollonia, as well as that of Metrodorus, perfectly illustrates the thesis about the symbiosis of philosophy and allegoresis in the fifth century BC. When trying to account for the same allegorical identification in Diogenes and Metrodorus, we must first observe that Diogenes of Apollonia aimed to reconcile the views of Anaximenes with those of Anaxagoras. Knowing what Diogenes took from the two philosophers is a prerequisite for comprehending his allegorical interpretation of Zeus.

As far as Anaximenes is concerned, the following ideas of his philosophy are crucial for our understanding Diogenes' allegoresis. First of all, Anaximenes rendered air the originative substance of the universe and explained the emergence of the world in terms of air's "difference in rarity and density" (διαφέρειν δὲ μανότητι καὶ πυκνότητι, DK 13 A 5). The philosopher posited a correlation between rarefaction and condensation of air, on the one hand, and its transformation from gaseous through fluid to solid body, on the other²². Secondly, Anaximenes' all-underlying principle became more than just the building material of the universe: not only do such components of the world as winds, clouds, sea and earth originate from its condensation and rarefaction, but air is also the cause of life. Anaximenes is reported to have drawn a parallel between air, on the one hand, and "breath" or "wind" (πνεῦμα), on the other (DK 13 B 2). If air was, thus, "the cosmic equivalent of the life-soul in man"²³, then the idea of air animating both people and the world must have contributed to Anaximenes' equation of air with divinity. Accordingly, the philosopher recognized air as the principle "from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and that shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being" (ἐξ οὗ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ γεγονότα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ θεοὺς καὶ θεῖα γίνεσθαι, DK 13 A 7). Not surprisingly, Anaximenes hailed air as God (DK 13 A 10) and – as Augustinus relates – maintained that the gods "did not make air, but rather arose from it" ("non tamen ab ipsis [*scil.* deis] aere factum, sed ipsos ex aere ortos", *ibid.*). If Anaximenes assumed all things, ranging from the material cosmos and living organisms to the immortal gods, to owe their existence to the omnipresent air, then it was quite consistent of him to deify air. Subsequently, this deification was echoed in Diogenes' identification of air with Zeus.

As far as Anaxagoras is concerned, it is especially his idea of the intelligent force arranging the whole of the universe that is relevant for Diogenes' exegesis. Anaxagoras' νοῦς has, again, all the characteristics of a deity. In order to justify its ability to "control" (κρατεῖν) everything, the philosopher characterized his Mind as "infinite" (ἄπειρον), "self-ruled" (αὐτοκρατές), "mixed with nothing" (μέμικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι) and "all alone by itself" (μόνος αὐτὸς ἐπ' ἑωυτοῦ ἐστιν, DK 59 B 12). Furthermore, Mind was considered to "have all knowledge

²² Cf. BARNES 1982: 33 and GRAHAM 2006: 46.

²³ KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985: 161.

about everything and the greatest power” (γνώμην γε περί παντός πᾶσαν ἴσχει καὶ ἰσχύει μέγιστον), to “control all things” (πάντων [...] κρατεῖ), to “have come to know all things” (πάντα ἔγνω) and to “have arranged all things” (πάντα διεκόσμησε): the stars, the sun, the moon, the air and the aether (ibid.). While Anaxagoras made his Mind the sole causative factor behind the emergence of the world, the philosopher came closest from all Presocratic thinkers to the idea of an immaterial and incorporeal being, even though he did remain within the naturalistic view that did not distinguish between the material and immaterial²⁴. What is especially important for the present discussion of Diogenes’ allegoresis is that Mind was deified in Anaxagoras as air was deified in Anaximenes. Again, it was natural for Diogenes to make use of this deification.

When combining the teachings of Anaximenes’ with those of Anaxagoras’, Diogenes of Apollonia, on the one hand, assumed air to be the ultimate substance of the universe from whose “condensation, rarefaction and change in its dispositions (πυκνουμένου καὶ μανουμένου καὶ μεταβάλλοντος τοῖς πάθεισι) the form of other things comes into being” (DK 64 A 5) and, on the other, ascribed intelligence to air (DK 64 B 3, 4 and 5). Thus, air, according to Diogenes, “has intelligence” (τὴν νόησιν ἔχον), by air “all men are steered and all things are controlled” (πάντας καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν), air “has reached everywhere, disposed all things and is in everything” (ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀφῖχθαι καὶ πάντα διτιθέσθαι καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἐνεῖναι) and, consequently, air is “god” (θεός, DK 64 B 5). This deification of air is also confirmed by Augustinus who relates that Diogenes characterized air as “partaking in the divine reason” (“compos divinae rationis”, DK 64 A 8). So far, Diogenes has merely summarized the views of Anaximenes and Anaxagoras: air is god and its divinity manifests itself in the fact that it is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and all-governing. However, the philosopher stressed also that the divine intelligence governs everything *for the best*. Diogenes made it clear that “without intelligence” (ἄνευ νοήσιος) nothing would “have measures” (μέτρα ἔχειν): there would be no harmony between winter, summer, night, day, rains, winds and fair weather (DK 64 B 3). Hence, for Diogenes it does not suffice to say that the principle which organizes the universe is the source of life. The principle must be endowed with intelligence, for otherwise it would not be able to bring order to the universe and administer it properly. Diogenes posits thereby a *teleological* interpretation of the universe: all natural processes are directed toward a definite end, since the universe has been designed by the divine Intelligence in accordance with an ultimate purpose. The purposefulness of nature is reflected in the harmony between the four seasons, day-cycles and meteorological phenomena.

If the all-underlying principle was air for Anaximenes and Mind for Anaxagoras, then both intuitions coalesced in Diogenes, who identified the

²⁴ Cf. BARNES 1982: 319.

principle with Zeus. The testimony quoted above has it that Diogenes identified Zeus with air “because Zeus knows everything” (ἐπειδὴ πᾶν εἰδέναι τὸν Δία, DK 64 A 8). The identification was probably due to the parallel between omniscience and omnipresence that the philosopher drew. While the philosophical foundations of this allegorical interpretation are now quite clear, its important ramifications need to be pointed out. First of all, Diogenes is clearly a representative of this stream of philosophical thought that was responsible for the flourishing of allegorical interpretation in the fifth century BC. Consequently, those scholars who accused him of lack of originality failed, thereby, to notice his contribution to the development of ancient allegorism. Secondly, and I have already stressed it with regard to Metrodorus, allegorical interpretation had important cultural consequences, since it challenged conventional religion and its underlying world picture. If Zeus was assumed to be air personified because of his sagacity and ubiquity, then attributing divinity to air implied a repudiation of various traditional beliefs.

In this context, Aristophanes’ caricature of Diogenes’ cosmology deserves mentioning. It is common knowledge that it is Diogenes of Apollonia whose views Socrates represents in the *Clouds*²⁵. Thus, Socrates says that he has mingled his “rarefied intelligence (τὴν φροντίδα λεπτήν) with air of like kind” (τὸν ὁμοιον ἄερα, *Nub.* 229 f.)²⁶, he prays to the “unlimited Air” (ἄμετρητ’ Ἄηρ), which keeps the earth “suspended above” (μετέωρον) and to the “shining Aether” (λαμπρὸς τ’ Αἰθήρ, 264 f.), he denies the existence of Zeus (367: οὐδ’ ἐστὶ Ζεὺς) and replaces him with the “aethereal whirlwind” (αιθέριος δῖνος, 380). Evidently, Aristophanes mocks here at the philosophers who substitute air and/or aether for the venerable gods of the ancestral tradition and castigates the scientific erosion of religion that he finds in the Presocratic thinkers. Aristophanes’ criticism seems to justify the appraisal that Diogenes of Apollonia, similarly to Metrodorus, read Anaxagoras into Homer so as to substitute the philosopher’s rational account of the universe for the naïve views of the early poets. Like Metrodorus, Diogenes was a rationalist whose allegoresis was scientific rather than apologetic: the thinker aimed to rationalize the then picture of the world by expurgating any anthropomorphic and supernatural elements from it. Consequently, Diogenes, as Metrodorus, must have ultimately participated in the gradual transformation of *mythos* into *logos*.

²⁵ Cf. e.g. BUFFIÈRE 1956: 91; KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985: 450 and STRUCK 2004: 41. I follow VANDER WAERDT 1994 who, in my opinion, has convincingly argued that the Aristophanic Socrates should in general be seen as an adherent of the views held by Diogenes of Apollonia. Still, for a critical assessment of this position, see BETEGH 2004: 307, 321–324 and 377.

²⁶ Translation of these verses by KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985: 450.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Where does that leave us with the two most important fifth-century allegorists that have been the subject of the present paper? The cases of Metrodorus and Diogenes clearly show that the philosophical explanation of the world and the allegorical interpretation of Homer went hand in hand in the fifth century BC. Given the bloom of philosophy in the times of Metrodorus and Diogenes, it comes as no surprise that these allegorists read the achievements of the new science into the old mythical narratives. Moreover, since both exegetes were disciples of Anaxagoras, it was natural for them to assume Homer to have prefigured and allegorically expressed various physical conceptions of their teacher. While their allegorical interpretations were supposed to discover purely natural causes symbolically presented under mythological guise, Metrodorus and Diogenes contributed to the process of rationalizing the then account of the world: as the development of philosophy ran parallel with the development of allegorism, anthropomorphic, animistic and supernatural components were consistently eliminated from the then vision of the universe. This progressing rationalization of the then world picture was a joint achievement of both philosophers *and* allegorists.

The parallel development of philosophy and allegoresis in the fifth century BC cannot be accidental. As both Metrodorus and Diogenes were inspired by Anaxagoras, his philosophical legacy is clearly present in their work: they both sought to rationalize the then picture of the world by reinterpreting it with the aid of Anaxagoras' science. They both read into Homer such physical issues as the genesis, structure and composition of the universe. With the situation being as it is, the works of Metrodorus and Diogenes show that the development of allegorism in ancient Greece was inextricably linked to the quest for scientific truths in Homer. While in the long run it is hard to ascertain to what extent they were inclined to seriously think that the naïve mythology offered by the early poets concealed profound and deliberately disguised scientific knowledge, they definitely expected mythology to become cosmology and they definitely transformed conventional religion into physics.

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BARNES 1982: J. BARNES, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London–New York 1982.
 BETEGH 2004: G. BETEGH, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation*, Cambridge 2004.
 ——— 2007: *The Derveni Papyrus and Early Stoicism*, Rhizai IV 2007, pp. 133–152.
 BUFFIÈRE 1956: F. BUFFIÈRE, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, Paris 1956.

- 1962: *Héraclite, Allégories d'Homère*, Paris 1962.
- BURKERT 1986: W. BURKERT, *Der Autor von Derveni: Stesimbrotos Περὶ τελετῶν?*, ZPE LXII 1986, pp. 1–5.
- CALIFF 2003: D.J. CALIFF, *Metrodorus of Lampsacus and the Problem of Allegory: An Extreme Case?*, *Arethusa* XXXVI 2003, pp. 21–36.
- FORD 2002: A. FORD, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*, Princeton 2002.
- FRÄNKEL 1960: H. FRÄNKEL, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens. Literarische und philosophiegeschichtliche Studien*, München 1960.
- FREDE 2007: M. FREDE, *On the Unity and the Aim of the Derveni Text*, *Rhizai* IV 2007, pp. 9–33.
- FUNGI 1997: M.S. FUNGI, *The Derveni Papyrus*, in: A. LAKS, G.W. MOST (eds.), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, Oxford 1997, pp. 25–37.
- GATZEMEIER 2005: M. GATZEMEIER, *Philosophie als Theorie der Rationalität*, Bd. I: *Zur Philosophie der wissenschaftlichen Welt*, Würzburg 2005.
- GRAHAM 2006: D.W. GRAHAM, *Explaining the Cosmos: The Ionian Tradition of Scientific Philosophy*, Princeton 2006.
- KIRK, RAVEN, SCHOFIELD 1985: G.S. KIRK, J.E. RAVEN, M. SCHOFIELD, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Cambridge 1985.
- KOUREMENOS, PARÁSSOGLU, TSANTANOGLU 2006: T. KOUREMENOS, G.M. PARÁSSOGLU, K. TSANTANOGLU, *The Derveni Papyrus: Edited with Introduction and Commentary*, Florence 2006.
- KRAFFT 1971: F. KRAFFT, *Geschichte der Naturwissenschaft*, Bd. I: *Die Begründung einer Wissenschaft von Natur durch die Griechen*, Freiburg 1971.
- LAKS 1997: A. LAKS, *Between Religion and Philosophy: The Function of Allegory in the Derveni Papyrus*, *Phronesis* XLII 1997, pp. 121–142.
- LONG 2006: A.A. LONG, *Stoic Readings of Homer*, in: A. LAIRD (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Ancient Literary Criticism*, Oxford 2006, pp. 211–237.
- MOST 1997: G.W. MOST, *The Fire Next Time. Cosmology, Allegoresis, and Salvation in the Derveni Papyrus*, *JHS* CXVII 1997, pp. 117–135.
- NADDAF 2009: G. NADDAF, *Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy*, in: W. WIANS (ed.), *Logos and Mythos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature*, New York 2009, pp. 99–132.
- NESTLE 1907: W. NESTLE, *Metrodors Mythendeutung*, *Philologus* LXVI 1907, pp. 503–510.
- OBINK 1997: *Cosmology as Initiation vs. the Critique of Orphic Mysteries*, in: A. LAKS, G.W. MOST (eds.), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, Oxford 1997, pp. 39–54.
- 2003: *Allegory and Exegesis in the Derveni Papyrus: The Origin of Greek Scholarship*, in: G.R. BOYS-STONES (ed.), *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, Oxford 2003, pp. 177–188.
- OELMANN 1910: F. OELMANN, *Heracliti quaestiones Homericæ*, Leipzig 1910.
- PÉPIN 1976: J. PÉPIN, *Mythe et allégorie: Les Origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, Paris 1976.
- RANGOS 2007: S. RANGOS, *Latent Meaning and Manifest Content in the Derveni Papyrus*, *Rhizai* IV 2007, pp. 35–75.
- RICHARDSON 2006: N.J. RICHARDSON, *Homeric Professors in the Age of the Sophists*, in: A. LAIRD (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Ancient Literary Criticism*, Oxford 2006, pp. 62–86.
- RUSSELL, KONSTAN 2005: D.A. RUSSELL, D. KONSTAN, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems*, Atlanta 2005.
- SCHIBLI 1990: H.S. SCHIBLI, *Pherekydes of Syros*, Oxford 1990.
- SCODEL 1984: R. SCODEL, *Tantalus and Anaxagoras*, *HSPH* LXXXVIII 1984, pp. 13–24.
- STRUCK 2004: P.T. STRUCK, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*, Princeton 2004.
- TATE 1927: J. TATE, *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, *CR* XLI 1927, pp. 214–215.
- 1929: *Plato and Allegorical Interpretation*, *CQ* XXIII 1929, pp. 142–154.
- 1934: *On the History of Allegorism*, *CQ* XXVIII 1934, pp. 105–114.
- VANDER WAERDT 1994: P.A. VANDER WAERDT, *Socrates in the Clouds*, in: P.A. VANDER WAERDT (ed.),

The Socratic Movement, New York 1994, pp. 48–86.

WEHRLI 1928: F. WEHRLI, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum*, Borna–Leipzig 1928.

WHITMAN 1987: J. WHITMAN, *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique*, Cambridge 1987.