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Antisthenes and Allegoresis

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1. Introduction

Allegoresis belongs among the most curious inventions of antiquity. While the practice accompanies philosophy from its inception through Late Antiquity, it bridges philosophical and poetic discourse. Most generally, this technique of unveiling the hidden meanings of a work serves two major purposes. When the first philosophers impugn the authority of Homer and Hesiod, allegoresis is employed with a view to defending the venerated poetry (*apologetic* allegoresis). When the doctrines of the Presocratic *physiologoi* come under attack, allegoresis is used to justify these new and suspect theories (*appropriative* allegoresis). With the development of philosophy, the two functions of allegoresis frequently coalesce, as the allegorists provide poetry with an *aggiornamento*, on the one hand, and philosophy with legitimation and prestige, on the other. In the course of doing so, the allegorists contribute to the transformation of the existing *paideia* and stimulate critical investigations into the nature of myth, poetry and figurative language. My question here is whether Antisthenes is a representative of this important tradition.

There has been a long and heated debate about the allegorical dimension of Antisthenes' hermeneutical activity. While it is impossible to quote all the relevant literature here,[1] suffice it to mention the well-known exchange between Ragnar Höistad[2] and Jonathan Tate,[3] as it perfectly illustrates the diametrically opposed conclusions that have been reached in the debate. The latter scholar even went so far as to deny Antisthenes any place in the history of allegoresis.[4] Yet Antisthenes has continued to appear in numerous studies on the development of this practice, whether their authors considered him to be an allegorist[5] or not.[6] To avoid definitive statements, some scholars have emphasized that

[1] G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* [*SSR*], vol. 4 (Naples, 1990), 338–9 n. 41, provides a useful overview from the 1860s onward, while himself taking a skeptical view (338–46, esp. 343).

[2] R. Höistad, "Was Antisthenes an Allegorist?" ["Antisthenes"], *Eranos* 49 (1951), 16–30.

[3] J. Tate, "Antisthenes was not an Allegorist" ["Antisthenes"], *Eranos* 51 (1953), 14–22.

[4] J. Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation" ["Plato"], *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1930), 10: "Antisthenes ought to have no place whatever in the history of allegorical interpretation, since there is no evidence or probability that he was an allegorist."

[5] See, e.g., J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* [*Mythe*] (Paris, 1976), 105–9; L. Brisson, *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe*. Vol. 1: *Sauver les mythes* [*Introduction*] (Paris, 1996), 57; I. Ramelli, "Saggio integrativo. Breve storia dell'allegoresi del mito" ["Saggio"], in I. Ramelli, ed., *Anneo Cornuto: Compendio di teologia greca* (Milan, 2003), 441–7; I. Ramelli and G. Lucchetta, *Allegoria*. Vol. 1: *L'età classica* [*Allegoria*] (Milan, 2004), 72–6; G. Naddaf, "Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy" ["Allegory"], in W. Wians, ed., *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature* (Albany, 2009), 118.

[6] See, e.g., P. Steinmetz, "Allegorische Deutung und allegorische Dichtung in der alten Stoa" ["Deutung"], *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 129 (1986), 20; M. Hillgruber, "Dion Chrysostomos 36 (53), 45 und die Homerauslegung Zenons," *Museum Helveticum* 46 (1989), 17–18, 23–4; A. A. Long, "Stoic Readings of Homer" ["Readings"], in R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney, eds., *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes* (Princeton, 1992), 60; K. Algra, "Comments or Commentary? Zeno of Citium and Hesiod's

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Antisthenes' approach was at the very least conducive to the development of allegoresis,[7] whereas others have dismissed the problem of Antisthenes' allegoresis as insignificant and overblown.[8] A noteworthy contribution to the debate was made by Renato Laurenti,[9] who reopened the question both for editors of Antisthenes' fragments[10] and for scholars who have otherwise found no allegorical interpretation in his *Ὁμηρικά*.[11]

Given how much ink has been spilt on the subject of Antisthenes' allegoresis, one should probably have qualms about adding to the plethora of discussions. However, this chapter will proceed somewhat differently. First of all, this chapter will show that at least some part of the enduring disagreement among researchers arises from their divergent understandings of what qualifies as allegorical interpretation. Second, this study will demonstrate that those Antisthenean interpretations that are most frequently categorized as allegorical nicely illustrate such broader controversies in research on allegoresis as: whether allegoresis should be defined in terms of its intentionality (i.e., an interpretation qualifies as allegorical when it presupposes a deliberate composition on part of the author) and whether allegoresis should be defined in terms of its obviousness (i.e., an interpretation qualifies as allegorical when it is esoteric). Third and finally, this chapter will also address the question why it matters whether or not Antisthenes was an allegorist. In what follows it will be suggested that making sense of Antisthenes' diversified approach to epic poetry and traditional mythology is important for understanding not only his specific contribution to ancient ethics and theology but also his general influence on the development of two distinct traditions in antiquity: a rationalist one and an allegorist one.

As our concept of allegoresis is determinative of what we categorize as its examples, it is advisable to begin with an explanation of how the practice will be understood in the

Theogonia," *Mnemosyne* 54 (2001), 562 n. 1 and C. van Sijl, *Stoic Philosophy and the Exegesis of Myth* (diss. Utrecht, 2010), 210–12.

[7] Most notably, N. J. Richardson, "Homeric Professors in the Age of the Sophists" ["Professors"], *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 21 (1975), 81 and J. Pépin, "Aspects de la lecture antisthénienne d'Homère" ["Aspects"], in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet, eds., *Le cynisme ancien et ses prolongements* (Paris, 1993), 13.

[8] See, e.g., L. E. Navia, *Antisthenes of Athens: Setting the World Aright* [*Antisthenes*] (Westport, CT, 2001), 48 and W. J. Kennedy, *Antisthenes' Literary Fragments: Edited with Introduction, Translations, and Commentary* [*Fragments*] (diss. Sydney, 2017), 110. Ironically enough, these works show the importance of the problem as their authors reach mutually incompatible conclusions regarding the issue of Antisthenes' allegoresis: the former operates with a diffuse concept of allegoresis (see below n. 39) and the latter with a reductionist one (see below n. 52).

[9] R. Laurenti, "L'iponoia di Antistene" ["L'iponoia"], *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* 17 (1962), 123–32.

[10] F. Decleva Caizzi, *Antisthenis Fragmenta* [DC] (Milan, 1966), 116 and S., Prince, *Antisthenes of Athens: Texts, Translations, and Commentary* [*Antisthenes*] (Ann Arbor, 2015), 374. The latter work contains excellent English translations which the present paper frequently relies on.

[11] Thus, e.g., both Steinmetz, "Deutung," 20 n. 7 and A. Brancacci, *Oikeios logos. La filosofia del linguaggio di Antistene* [*Oikeios logos*] (Naples, 1990), 65 n. 41, cite approvingly Tate's criticism of Höistad, while at the same time quoting Laurenti in support of the view that Antisthenes' interpretations of Aphrodite (*SSR* VA 123 = DC 109) and Dionysus (*SSR* VA 197 = DC 41) are somehow different. Steinmetz, "Deutung," 20 n. 7, regards them as "erste Schritte auf dem Weg zu einer allegorischen Deutung der Götter des Volksglaubens," whereas Brancacci, *Oikeios logos*, 262 n. 62, classifies them as cases of "interpretazione allegorica delle figure divine." In another paper, A. Brancacci, "Érotique et théorie du plaisir chez Antisthène" ["Érotique"], in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet, eds., *Le cynisme ancien et ses prolongements* (Paris, 1993), 51, takes the Aphrodite interpretation to conform to the style and interests of "exégèses homériques d'Antisthène." F. Caizzi, "Antistene," *Studi Urbinati di Storia, Filosofia e Letteratura* 38 (1964), 83, on the other hand, espouses the opposite view: she contrasts Antisthenes' interpretation of Aphrodite with his *Ὁμηρικά* and stresses that on the basis of this interpretation alone it is not possible to give a positive answer to the question of Antisthenes' allegoresis: our judgment should be "sospensivo," since we cannot say whether this interpretation "fosse estesa anche ad altri dei." It is important to note though that Caizzi is inclined to view this interpretation as allegorical (see also her edition of Antisthenes' fragments cited above in n. 10).

ensuing discussion. Most generally, allegoresis can be characterized as an interpretation that brings to light the hidden (i.e., "allegorical") meaning of a work. A classic example of allegoresis is Theagenes' interpretation (DK 8.2) of the Homeric theomachy (*Il.* 20.23–75). There are various problems surrounding the testimony,[12] but for the purpose of the present considerations, it should suffice to say that Theagenes allegorically identifies the gods with the elements (Apollo, Helios and Hephaestus with fire; Poseidon and Scamander with water; Artemis with the moon; Hera with the air) and with various traits (Athena with thoughtfulness, Ares with thoughtlessness, Aphrodite with passion, Hermes with reason). Thus, the battle of the gods is interpreted as a clash of the elements and a conflict of dispositions. While Theagenes thereby reveals the physical and the ethical sense of the notorious theomachy, it has become customary in research on allegorical interpretation to differentiate between physical and ethical allegoresis.[13]

Furthermore, however, when excavating the latent (i.e., "allegorical") sense from underneath a work, allegorists tend to presuppose an intention on the part of the author. Thus, for example, the Derveni author explicitly attributes to Orpheus the desire to present allegorically a complex cosmology under the guise of the Orphic theogony. In column 7, the allegorist forcefully asserts (6–7) that Orpheus "did not intend to say contentious riddles but rather great things in riddles" (*[ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[ι]ν δὲ [μεγ]άλα*).[14] Such statements make it clear that the Derveni author considers Orpheus' poem to be a deliberate allegory. Hence, we might say that *prototypically* allegoresis is a technique of interpretation that (1) discloses the hidden meaning of a work and (2) ascribes to its author the intention of such an esoteric composition.

Prior to examining the issue of Antisthenes' allegoresis, we should also note that allegoresis (i.e., mode of *interpreting*) needs to be clearly distinguished from allegory (i.e., mode of *composing*).[15] At first sight this may seem to be a philological triviality, but the tendency to use the term "allegory" with regard to both the strategy of composing a work and the strategy of its interpretation has generated a significant confusion in literature on the subject.[16] A fairly straightforward example of allegory could be Prodicus' celebrated story of Heracles at the existential crossroads (DK 84 B 2).[17] The young hero meets two women that allegorically personify two distinct paths of life between which the hero is supposed to choose: *Ἀρετή* calls for numerous sacrifices (i.e., "the steep

[12] For a recent discussion, see M. Domaradzki, "The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis" ["Beginnings"], *Classical World* 110 (2017), 299–321, with further references (in this chapter, I use some of the findings presented there).

[13] On this distinction, see, e.g., Steinmetz, "Deutung," 19 or C. Blönnigen, *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik* [*Ursprung*] (Frankfurt, 1992), 21.

[14] The text along with translation is that of T. Kouremenos, G. M. Parássoglou, and K. Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Florence, 2006).

[15] While the two are frequently and regrettably conflated in English and French literature, the difference between allegory and allegoresis has been aptly characterized by Pépin, *Mythe*, 488, according to whom the former "consiste à cacher un message sous le revêtement d'une figure" and the latter, "à décrypter la figure pour retrouver le message." See further Domaradzki, "Beginnings," 300–3.

[16] In scholarship on Antisthenes, H. D. Rankin, *Anthisthenes* [sic!] *Sokratikos* [*Anthisthenes*] (Amsterdam, 1986), 174, illustrates this perfectly: the scholar lumps together Antisthenes' speeches (on which see below n. 18) and Xenophon's testimony on Homer's *ὑπόνοιαι* (on which see below section 2).

[17] J. Whitman, *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* [*Allegory*] (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 22, regards Prodicus' narrative as the "first true personification allegory in the West." It is noteworthy that in his narrative Prodicus allegorized Hesiod, on which see D. Wolfsdorf, "Hesiod, Prodicus, and the Socratics on Work and Pleasure," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 35 (2008), 6–8.

road"), but ultimately leads to authentic happiness, whereas *Κακία* promises a life of ease (i.e., "the smooth road"), but only entices the hero to an insatiable pursuit of pleasures.

Providing an example of Antisthenes' allegory is more difficult. While Julian famously relates (*Or*. 7.209a = *SSR* VA 44A = DC 8A) that Antisthenes communicated his views "through myths" (*διὰ τῶν μύθων*), this is scarcely surprising: like many other thinkers before and after him, Antisthenes appropriated traditional myths and employed them for various pedagogical purposes. However, the fact that Antisthenes used many Homeric scenes and characters to illustrate his ethical tenets does not entail that his *μυθογραφία* (*SSR* VA 44B = DC 8B) can straightforwardly be categorized as allegorical composition. The two forensic speeches, *Ajax* (*SSR* VA 53 = DC 14) and *Odysseus* (*SSR* VA 54 = DC 15), for example, hardly qualify as instances of allegory.[18] Both Homeric heroes are portrayed as real historic persons who represent particular virtues and idealized modes of conduct. They serve as certain models or examples. Crucially, neither Ajax nor Odysseus is a personification of an abstract concept. Of course, the boundaries between the various literary techniques may at times be rather fuzzy. For example, if Heracles' slaying of the Centaurs (*SSR* VA 92A = DC 24A) was part of Antisthenes' narrative, then it could perhaps be construed as "an allegory for slaying false or fictional beliefs."[19] Yet, most importantly, such appropriations of conventional mythology should not be identified with allegorical *interpretation*.[20] That a thinker appropriates various myths when (allegorically) presenting his views is by no means tantamount to allegorical interpretation of the poet(s).[21] The fact that in his *Republic* Plato presents his famous allegory of the cave (514a1–17a6) does not prevent him from rejecting any search for hidden meanings in Homer (378d6–8). Thus, an author can have recourse to allegory (allegorical *composition*) without resorting to allegoresis (allegorical *interpretation*). Let us, now, investigate whether there is any allegoresis in Antisthenes.

2. Two Dubious Testimonies

There are two testimonies that can (charitably) be construed as attributing allegoresis to Antisthenes. Both are highly problematic, which is why they are have been both accepted and rejected, depending on the scholar's persuasion.

[18] *Pace* Brisson, *Introduction*, 57 n. 1. Höistad, "Antisthenes," notes that the two speeches are not allegories, but stresses that they "nevertheless belong here" (17), upon which he concludes that the two speeches serve "the same function as the parable" and that "the allegorical presentation is not far from this" (24). Rankin, *Anthisthenes*, 174, is even more vague: on the one hand, he believes that it is "impossible to exclude some notion of allegory from the speeches of Aias and Odysseus in which underlying themes interact beneath the surface of the indicated drama" and, on the other hand, he observes that "this also can be said of many Attic tragedies, and we should be hesitant to call these allegories." Rather than allegorical, the two speeches are exemplary: they serve rhetorical and dialectical purposes. For a recent discussion, see V. Suvák, "On the Dialectical Character of Antisthenes' Speeches *Ajax* and *Odysseus*," in A. Stavru and C. Moore, eds., *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* (Leiden, 2018), 141–60.

[19] As Prince, *Antisthenes*, 321, ingeniously conjectures.

[20] See, e.g., F. Wehrli, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum* (Borna/Leipzig, 1928), 71: "Irgendeine Geschichte kann auch als bloßer Vergleich herangezogen werden, ohne daß man von einer Umdeutung eigentlich sprechen kann."

[21] Thus, one can scarcely agree with Höistad, "Antisthenes," 24, who believes that "to write parables on the basis of the Homeric myths needed allegorical interpretation of the elements that did not harmonize with the new ethical views."

In Xenophon's *Symposium* (3.6 = *SSR* VA 185 = DC 61) Antisthenes derides Niceratus' admiration for the rhapsodes by asking whether there is any "tribe more stupid than the rhapsodes" (*ἔθνος* [. . .] *ἠλιθιώτερον ῥαψῳδῶν*), to which Socrates adds that "they do not know the hidden meanings" (*τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται*) of Homer's poetry. While Socrates is presumably ironical,[22] it is not immediately clear whether his irony flagellates Niceratus (for his faith in the rhapsodes) or Antisthenes (for his skepticism toward them). Most importantly, however, it is Socrates not Antisthenes, who explains that the foolishness of the rhapsodes consists in their ignorance of Homer's esoteric message. Thus, on the basis of this testimony one cannot assert categorically that Antisthenes himself was after the poet's *ὑπόνοιαι*.

However, the undeniable value of this testimony is that along with Plato's *Republic* (378d6–8) it attests beyond any doubt that in the classical period the term *ὑπόνοια* was used in the context of allegorical interpretation of poetry. While Plutarch relates (*de aud. poet.* 19e–f) that the term was later replaced by *ἀλληγορία*,[23] it has been well ascertained in contemporary research on allegoresis that the term most frequently employed by the early allegorists was neither *ὑπόνοια* (which is rare) nor *ἀλληγορία* (which is late), but rather *αἴνιγμα*.[24]

The other testimony comes from Dio Chrysostom, who relates (*Or.* 53.5 = *SSR* VA 194 = DC 58) that Antisthenes distinguished between things said by Homer "in opinion" (*δόξῃ*) and things said by him "in truth" (*ἀληθείᾳ*).[25] The opinion/truth distinction can be understood in various ways. On the one hand, it can be attributed to the poet himself. Thus, Homer might have differentiated (1) between the various uncritical beliefs of the many and the well-founded knowledge of the few or, perhaps, (2) between his characters' fictitious views and his own ones. On the other hand, the opinion/truth distinction can be ascribed to Homer's interpreter, who would, thereby, differentiate between inaccurate and accurate statements in the poet. In the former case, the contradictions in Homer would be apparent, in the latter they would be real. However, the problem with this testimony is that the distinction between opinion and truth does not necessarily imply a division of meaning into exoteric and literal, on the one hand, and esoteric and allegorical, on the other. Again then, this testimony does not warrant the conclusion that Antisthenes was after Homer's *ὑπόνοιαι*.

Irrespective of how one values both of these testimonies, the indisputable fact is that they provide no examples of Antisthenes' approach. Thus, to answer the question about Antisthenes' allegoresis, we need to examine the actual instances of his hermeneutical activity. In what follows, these have been arranged in order from the most attractive candidates to the least attractive ones.

[22] As surmised already by H. J. Lulofs, *De Antisthenis studiis rhetoricis* [*De Antisthenis*] (diss. Amsterdam, 1900), 45: "fortasse haud sine ironia."

[23] For useful discussions of the relation between the earlier term *ὑπόνοια* and its later equivalent *ἀλληγορία*, see, for example, F. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* [*Les mythes*] (Paris, 1956), 45–8; Pépin, *Mythe*, 85–92; Whitman, *Allegory*, 263–8 and Blönnigen, *Ursprung*, 11–19.

[24] See especially P. T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* [*Symbol*] (Princeton, 2004), 39–50 and 171–9. Cf. also Buffière, *Les mythes*, 48–9.

[25] While Dio reports (*Or.* 53.4 = *SVF* 1.274) that the distinction between things written by Homer *κατὰ δόξαν* and things written by him *κατὰ ἀλήθειαν* was adopted and further developed by Zeno, the controversies surrounding Antisthenean allegoresis are very similar to those surrounding Stoic allegoresis. For a discussion of the latter, see M. Domaradzki, "Stoic Allegoresis: The Problem of Definition and Influence," *Classical Philology* [forthcoming].

3. The Most Attractive Candidates

Ever since the seminal paper by Renato Laurenti, scholars have been wondering whether Antisthenes' "monotheism"[26] might have led him to allegorically interpret various traditional gods.[27] Philodemus (*de piet.* 7a3–8 = *SSR* VA 179 = DC 39A) attributes to Antisthenes the view that "by custom (*κατὰ νόμον*) there are many gods, but by nature (*κατὰ φύσιν*) one." While this "monotheism" is also ascribed to Antisthenes by Cicero, Minucius Felix and Lactantius (*SSR* VA 180 = DC 39B–E), still other sources report (*SSR* VA 181 = DC 40) Antisthenes to have maintained that the god is similar to "nothing" (*οὐδενί*) and, therefore, cannot be known "from an image" (*ἐξ εἰκόνος*). In light of this theology, one might legitimately ask whether Antisthenes treated various conventional deities as allegories of one natural divinity. Particularly relevant in this context are Antisthenes' interpretations of Aphrodite and Dionysus.

Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 2.20.107.2 = *SSR* VA 123A = DC 109A) and Theodoret of Cyrus (*Graec. aff. cur.* 3.53 = *SSR* VA 123B = DC 109B) cite Antisthenes' famous desire to "shoot down" (*κατατοξεύειν*) Aphrodite for having destroyed many great women. Unfortunately, the testimonies are somewhat ambiguous as to the number of deities and the corresponding identifications. When reporting on Antisthenes' account, Clement (*Strom.* 2.20.107.3) continues with the following:

> And he says that *ἔρως* is an evil of nature (*κακία φύσεως*), and those ill-fortuned (*κακοδαίμονες*) who are overcome by it call the disease (*νόσος*) a *θεός*. He shows through this that the less educated (*ἀμαθέστεροι*) are overcome by it because of their ignorance of pleasure (*ἄγνοια ἡδονῆς*), which one must not seek, even if it is called a *θεός*, that is, even if it happens to be divinely given for the necessity of making children.

The problem with the above testimony is that it is not immediately clear whether the original *θεός* refers to the "goddess" (i.e., Aphrodite) or the "god" (i.e., Eros). Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain whether Antisthenes subjected two distinct deities to his interpretation[28] or whether he conflated Aphrodite with Eros.[29] While the testimony of Theodoret (*Graec. aff. cur.* 3.53) does not help to solve the conundrum, the latter option seems to me more likely. Thus, in what follows, I will assume that Antisthenes (1) identified Aphrodite with "sexual love" (*ἔρως*), i.e., "natural evil" (*κακία φύσεως*) and (2) further held

[26] On the idiosyncrasies of this "monotheism," see A. Brancacci, "La théologie d'Antisthène," *ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ* 15–16 (1985–1986), 218–30, who rightly emphasizes that Antisthenes' "monotheism" should be understood as "l'expression d'une critique philosophique qui pourtant se développe dans un univers théorique polythéiste" and not as "une vision transcendante de dieu" (228). On the uniqueness of Antisthenes' theological position among the Cynics, see M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, "Les premiers cyniques et la religion," in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet, eds., *Le cynisme ancien et ses prolongements* (Paris, 1993), 143–5.

[27] Laurenti, "L'iponoia," 123–32. For Steinmetz and Brancacci, see above n. 11. Most recently, Prince, *Antisthenes*, 374, has characterized Antisthenes' interpretation of Aphrodite (*SSR* VA 123A = DC 109A) as "the clearest surviving evidence for his allegorization of the gods." With regard to Antisthenes' interpretation of Dionysus (*SSR* VA 197 = DC 41), on the other hand, we may cite the recent characterizations by Ramelli, "Saggio," 445–6: "interpretazione allegorica" or Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria*, 75–6: "esegesi allegorica."

[28] Thus, e.g., Laurenti, "L'iponoia," 126: "Eros e Afrodite, che secondo l'opinione dei *πολλοί* sono *θεοί*, secondo la verità non sono altro che passioni umane."

[29] Thus, e.g., Brancacci, *Oikeios logos*, 262 n. 62: "Afrodite, simbolo dell' *ἔρως*."

that it was in fact a "sickness" (νόσος) deified by those who were defeated by this so-called lower "pleasure" (ἡδονή).[30]

If Antisthenes' interpretation of Aphrodite is somewhat problematic, then his account of Dionysus must be labeled as frightfully arcane. It comes from a passage so recondite that it is hard to say what was interpreted and how. Aelius Aristides mentions (Ἱερῶν λόγων Γ = *Or.* 49.33 = *SSR* VA 197 = DC 41) Antisthenes' book *On Use* which was about "wine" (οἶνος) and "certain symbols" (τινα σύμβολα) of Dionysus:

> And the book itself seemed to be Antisthenes' *On Use* (περὶ χρήσεως). It told about wine (οἶνος), and there were some symbols (τινα σύμβολα) of Dionysus present.

While the context is clearly abstinence from wine, the testimony is extremely obscure: Aristides relates his dream in which Asclepius instructs him how much wine to consume. The work referred to was presumably *On Use of Wine or On Drunkenness or On the Cyclops* (D.L. 6.18 = *SSR* VA 41 = DC 1).[31] It is probable that in his work Antisthenes did interpret Dionysus as deified wine and/or grapes (the σύμβολα of the god).

To answer the question whether the two aforementioned Antisthenean interpretations qualify as instances of allegoresis it is useful to contrast them with the interpretations of Aphrodite and Dionysus advanced by Heraclitus the Allegorist in his *Quaestiones Homericae* (Ὁμηρικὰ προβλήματα).[32] This work from the end of the first century C.E. is a passionate apology of the poet. Heraclitus famously begins his treatise with the assertion (1.1) that Homer "was completely impious, if he meant nothing allegorically" (πάντα γὰρ ἠσέβησεν, εἰ μηδὲν ἠλληγόρησεν) and devotes a great deal of space to refuting Plato's (76.6–79.1) and Epicurus' (79.2–11) criticisms of Homer, accusing both philosophers (Plato in particular) of having actually plagiarized the poet (4.1–4, 17.4–18.1). As Heraclitus is motivated by the desire to exculpate Homer from any charges of immorality made by the philosophers, he bends over backwards to demonstrate that there is nothing impious in the poet. Crucially, he explicitly attributes to Homer the intention of an esoteric composition and allegorically interprets specific passages in the poet. In connection with *Il.* 3.424–7, Heraclitus offers (28.4–5) the following explanation:

> "But it is unseemly (ἀπρεπῶς) to have Aphrodite procuring (μαστροπεύει) Helen for Alexander." One fails to understand that [Homer] here means (λέγει) the thoughtlessness (ἀφροσύνη) of erotic passions (ἐρωτικοῖς πάθεσιν), which is always the go-between (μεσίτης) and servant (διάκονος) of youthful desire (μειρακιώδους ἐπιθυμίας).

The portrayal of Aphrodite as a pimp arranging Helen for Paris requires an explanation. Heraclitus first cites the objection and then proceeds to exonerate Homer by showing that

[30] While this testimony contains an unequivocal repudiation of ἔρως and ἡδονή, Antisthenes recognized that in certain circumstances both sexual love and pleasure could have value. For the former, see Brancacci, "Érotique," 47–55, for the latter, see D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2013), 18–20.

[31] While the title is listed in the ninth volume of Diogenes Laertius' catalogue (9.7), A. Patzer, *Antisthenes der Sokratiker: Das literarische Werk und die Philosophie, dargestellt am Katalog der Schriften* (diss. Heidelberg, 1970), 133, classifies the theme of volumes 8 and 9 as "poetologisch."

[32] The text along with translation (at times modified) is that of D. A. Russell and D. Konstan, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems* [*Heraclitus*] (Atlanta, 2005).

the poet actually describes the process of erotic infatuation: the goddess (Ἀφροδίτη) is in fact an allegory of folly (ἀφροσύνη) that produces sexual love. In a similar vein, the story of Dionysus pursued by Lycurgus is interpreted by Heraclitus (35.2) as an "allegory of the farmers' wine-harvest" (οἴνου συγκομιδῆς γεωργοῖς ἀλληγορία). Thus, in connection with *Il.* 6.132–7, Heraclitus offers a very elaborate explanation, which begins (35.3–5) with the following:

> "Mad" (μαινόμενον) is said (εἴρηκεν) not about Dionysus but about wine (οἶνον), since those who abuse this drink lose their reason. It is like when the poet calls (λέγει) fear "pale" (χλωρόν)[33] or war "piercing" (πευκεδανόν),[34] for he attaches (περιῆψεν) the effects of events to the events themselves from which those effects arise. Lycurgus, who was the owner of an estate good for winegrowing, had gone out in the autumn, when Dionysus' crops are harvested, to the very fertile region of Nysa. By "nurses" (τιθήνας) one must understand (νομίζειν δεῖ) the vines (ἀμπέλους). Then, when the bunches are still being gathered (δρεπομένων), the poet says (φησί) that "Dionysus was in terror" (Διώνυσος δὲ φοβηθείς), since fear usually turns (τρέπειν) the mind, just as the fruit of the grape is "turned" (τρέπεται) as it is crushed to make wine. [...]

Even a cursory glance at Heraclitus' sophisticated interpretations reveals that the allegorist considers the passages in question to be deliberate allegories.[35] Thus, Heraclitus demonstrates that through the ostensibly shocking story about Aphrodite the poet in fact describes how passion arises, whereas through the seemingly disturbing story about Dionysus—how wine is produced. Both pieces of allegoresis show Homer to be in full control of his esoteric message.

While Heraclitus clearly ascribes to the poet the intention of an allegorical composition, Antisthenes' interpretations of Aphrodite and Dionysus are certainly different. As has been noted, the latter comes from a passage so cryptic that it is difficult to say what was interpreted and how. Let us, however, assume that Antisthenes interpreted Dionysus as deified wine and/or grapes (the σύμβολα of the god). It is evident that he interpreted Aphrodite as a deified "sexual love" (ἔρως). Can we infer that Antisthenes regarded these deities as deliberate personifications? The evidence available to us does not warrant this conclusion. First, none of the authors (Clement, Theodoret, Aristides) cites any specific passage from Homer.[36] Second, even if we say that Antisthenes unraveled some hidden dimension of the conventional mythology (Aphrodite is ἔρως, Dionysus is οἶνος), the testimonies of Clement and Theodoret suggest that he perceived the deities as unconscious

[33] See, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 7.479. [34] See, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 10.8.

[35] The Dionysus interpretation may seem somewhat problematic. F. Buffière, *Héraclite: Allégories d'Homère* (Paris, 1962), xxv, characterizes it as "exégèse historique" which "cherche aux mythes une explication rationnelle." However, I side with Konstan, *Heraclitus*, xviii, who stresses that the brunt of Heraclitus' treatment of the Dionysus episode "is not so much historical as symbolic." In my opinion, the excerpt cited above shows unequivocally that Heraclitus attributes to Homer the *intention* of an esoteric composition (cf. εἴρηκεν, λέγει, περιῆψεν, νομίζειν δεῖ, φησί, etc.), which is precisely what allows him to conclude his sophisticated allegoresis with a eulogy of the poet's ability to φιλοσοφεῖν ἀλληγορικῶς (35.9). Evidently, Heraclitus does not assume that Homer allegorizes involuntarily (see further below in the main text).

[36] With regard to the Aphrodite interpretation, one can conjecture *Il.* 3.373–420 (see, e.g., Prince, *Antisthenes*, 374) or perhaps *Il.* 5.330–80 (see, e.g., Decleva Caizzi, 116 and Brancacci, "Érotique," 51), but neither is certain.

human projections (as contemporary psychologists might say).[37] This is clear from the fact that those who are beaten by ἔρως are labeled as κακοδαίμονες, i.e., "miserable because of" and "possessed by" this κακία φύσεως. Also, it is noteworthy that according to Theodoret Antisthenes explicitly contrasted the virtue of "self-control" (σωφροσύνη) with mindless indulgence in pleasure: Aphrodite destroys people who are oblivious to the true nature of this νόσος. It appears, then, that this approach to myth is an instance of rationalization rather than a search for a purposefully encoded ὑπόνοια.

In fact, Antisthenes' approach is very similar to that of Prodicus, who interpreted (DK 84 B 5) the conventional deities as "useful things" (τὰ ὠφελοῦντα), diagnosing that in the days of old bread was deified as Demeter, wine as Dionysus; water as Poseidon; fire as Hephaestus and so on. Such rationalizing interpretations resemble allegoresis,[38] but the two should not be hastily identified.[39] When trying to make sense of this approach, it is tempting to assume that Prodicus and Antisthenes were after a certain *Weltanschauung* that had been inadvertently preserved in myths rather than after some allegorical lesson carefully concealed by the poet(s).[40] Thus, their hermeneutical activity could be said to have an *ethnographic* dimension: Prodicus and Antisthenes would be examining the origins of religious beliefs.[41]

Nevertheless, one should also acknowledge that ascertaining intentions is far from easy. This means that the difference between deliberate and nondeliberate allegories can be very fuzzy,[42] as we have no an access to the allegorist's state of mind.[43] While I am, then, inclined to regard the aforementioned interpretation by Antisthenes and Prodicus as instances of rationalization rather than allegoresis, one could perhaps argue that these thinkers reduce Aphrodite to (an allegory of) ἔρως, Dionysus to (an allegory of) οἶνος, Demeter to (the allegory of) ἄρτος and so on. This, however, would require a rather inflated concept of allegoresis. Let us illustrate the problem with Xenophanes' well-known reduction (DK 21 B 32) of Iris to a "cloud" (νέφος). Given that Xenophanes explains the rainbow as a cloud so as to debunk the popular conception of Iris, his demythologization invites the label of rationalization rather than allegoresis. Clearly, the purpose of this explanation is to demystify myth rather than look for its ὑπόνοια.[44] Evidently, Xenophanes makes no assumption about the intentionality of the conception from which he distances himself. He simply opposes (DK 21 B 32) his new account of the rainbow to "what [men] call Iris" (ἥν τ' Ἶριν καλέουσι). It seems, then, this rationalization of mythology should not be conflated with these interpretations that assume their *interpretanda* to be deliberate

[37] Thus, I disagree with Laurenti, "L'iponoia," 125, who seems to assume some intentionality here: "il dio o la dea è inteso come proiezione morale di sentimenti umani." Brancacci, "Érotique," 51, is more cautious but also inclines to deliberate composition: "Homère fait blesser Aphrodite par Diomède."

[38] See M. Domaradzki, "The Sophists and Allegoresis" ["Sophists"], *Ancient Philosophy* 35 (2015), 254–6 (in this chapter, I use some of the findings presented there).

[39] As does Laurenti, "L'iponoia," who characterizes Antisthenes' approach as a form of "razionalismo" (126), on the one hand, and an "allegoria" (130), on the other. For a similar conflation of rationalization and allegoresis, see also Navia, *Antisthenes*, 39–52. I agree with Steinmetz, "Deutung," 19, who, rightly cautions against equating the two: "Wollte man auch die rationalistische Mythendeutung zur Allegorese zählen, wären zum Beispiel Thukydides oder Euhemeros Allegoriker." This important point has recently also been made by Konstan, *Heraclitus*, xvii: "Not all rationalizing interpretations of myth involve allegory."

[40] Long, "Readings," 41–66, has made the argument for the Stoics.

[41] For Prodicus, see Domaradzki, "Sophists," 254.

[42] As noted by Naddaf, "Allegory," 119.

[43] As stressed by Struck, *Symbol*, 14.

[44] As I have argued in M. Domaradzki, "Democritus and Allegoresis" ["Democritus"], *Classical Quarterly* 69 (2019) [forthcoming].

compositions. After all, an ancient exegete of Homer would be unlikely to assume that the poet was not in control of his text and that he allegorically presented something that he did not realize. As a matter of fact, Antisthenes' Ὁμηρικά clearly show that he distinguished between the surface meaning of the text and the meaning that was actually *intended* by the poet (see below for the discussion).

Hence, given that there is no specific work upon which Antisthenes performs his interpretation and given that no explicit assumption is made about the intentionality of the author, I would categorize Antisthenes' interpretations of Aphrodite and Dionysus as instances of rationalization rather than allegoresis. On the other hand, Antisthenes' interpretation of Nestor's cup is a completely different matter.

Another candidate for Antisthenes' allegoresis is his celebrated interpretation of Nestor easily raising the drinking cup. The relevant lines from *Iliad* are 11.636–7:

> Another man would have moved it from the table only with effort (μογέων),
> as it was full, but the old man Nestor was lifting it effortlessly (ἀμογητὶ ἄειρεν).

The problem lies in that the elderly Nestor raises the cup with ease, while younger and stronger men should have difficulties in doing so. Porphyry reports (*Schol. ad Il.* 11.636 = *SSR* VA 191 = DC 55) that Antisthenes proposed a very ingenious solution to this ἀπορία. Thus, according to the philosopher, Homer:

> does not speak (λέγει) about the heaviness in the hand (κατὰ χεῖρα βαρύτητος), but signals (σημαίνει) that [Nestor] did not become drunk; rather, he carried his wine easily (ἔφερε ῥᾳδίως τὸν οἶνον).

Antisthenes' λύσις consists in abstracting from the literal meaning of a verse that clearly describes physical lifting of an object. First, Antisthenes has recourse to synonymy, which allows him to substitute ῥᾳδίως for ἀμογητί and ἔφερε for ἄειρεν. Then, he exploits the ambiguity of the verb φέρειν, which means both "carry/bear" (= ἀείρειν) and "endure/suffer" (see LSJ). Thus, the sense that Antisthenes extracts from the Homeric passage is that the poet does not describe Nestor's physical strength (which makes it easy for him to raise the heavy cup with his hands), but rather "indicates" (σημαίνει) that the king of Pylos has—*sit venia verbo*—"mental" strength (which makes it easy for him to tolerate wine).[45] The passage is, therefore, not about the weight of the cup, but rather about Nestor's being able to "carry" his wine without getting intoxicated. Is this allegoresis?

According to the criteria adopted in the present study, Antisthenes' interpretation falls into the category of allegorical interpretation. Not only does Antisthenes unveil the hidden meaning of the Homeric passage,[46] but he also explicitly ascribes to the poet the intention of an esoteric composition: let us stress here that Porphyry credits Antisthenes with the distinction between what Homer λέγει and what the poet σημαίνει. However, what is noteworthy about the Nestor interpretation is that it spectacularly illustrates another important controversy in research on allegorical interpretation: whether allegoresis should

[45] See also Pépin, "Aspects," 7; Navia, *Antisthenes*, 44 and Prince, *Antisthenes*, 658.

[46] As stressed by Richardson, "Professors," 79, who aptly concludes that Antisthenes' explanation of the problem of Nestor's cup "surely ranks as a ὑπόνοια." See also Höistad, "Antisthenes," 29.

be characterized in terms of its obviousness (i.e., an interpretation qualifies as allegorical when it is esoteric) and, relatedly, whether allegoresis requires complete nullification of the literal sense (i.e., an interpretation qualifies as allegorical when the reality of the *interpretandum* is questioned).

For example, Richard Goulet categorizes the Nestor interpretation as non-allegorical on the grounds that Antisthenes "n'entend pas dévoiler une vérité philosophique cachée sous la lettre, mais simplement mettre en lumière la véritable signification du passage, exprimée par le poète grâce à l'emploi métonymique de la coupe."[47] The idea that the Nestor interpretation is an instance of "métonymie" also appears in the classic paper by Jean Pépin,[48] who, nevertheless, is "tenté" to characterize this interpretation as allegorical.[49] Goulet, on the other hand, distinguishes figurative meaning from allegory and argues (1) that the two have nothing to do with each other[50] and (2) that the former is easily grasped by normal readers, whereas the latter is not.[51] A somewhat more radical account of the Nestor interpretation has recently been advanced by William John Kennedy, who denies even its figurative character: "Antisthenes seems to have intended his interpretation to be as a literal reading, possible for those who were skilled in reading the 'indications' in the text."[52] While this assessment builds on a rather diffuse concept of literalness, it seems to go back to Jonathan Tate, who offered the following explanation as to why the Nestor interpretation should not be characterized as allegoresis: "The cup does not become a symbol of a moral quality or a physical endowment; (...). Nor is the individuality of Nestor merged into a universal concept."[53] Thus, all these scholars agree that the Nestor interpretation is non-allegorical, though Goulet considers it to be figurative, whereas Kennedy and Tate regard it as literal. Additionally, Goulet and Tate assume that allegoresis impugns the literal meaning of the text and/or the reality/historicity of the *interpretandum*. Contrary to this, I am inclined to categorize the Nestor interpretation as allegorical for the following reasons.

First of all one should note that Antisthenes' interpretation exploits the ambiguity of the verb *φέρειν*, which is precisely what makes it possible for him to move from the literal strength (manifest in lifting the heavy cup) to the figurative one (manifest in not getting intoxicated).[54] Second and relatedly, the very concept of allegory presupposes an ambiguity, in which (at least sometimes) the literal and the figurative are associated with each other: the Homeric theomachy depicts the battle of the gods (the literal sense) and, at the same time, brings to mind the fight between the elements (the allegorical sense). This is

[47] R. Goulet, "La méthode allégorique chez les stoïciens" ["La méthode"], in G. Romeyer Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat, eds., *Les stoïciens* (Paris, 2005), 97.

[48] Pépin, "Aspects," 7.

[49] Pépin, "Aspects," 13.

[50] Goulet, "La méthode," 97: "La portée figurative du langage n'a rien à voir avec l'allégorie."

[51] Goulet, "La méthode," 101: "l'allégorie se distingue nettement du sens littéral figuré, qui, lui, est immédiatement saisi par un lecteur normalement constitué."

[52] Kennedy, *Fragments*, 231. The scholar approvingly cites Giannantoni *SSR* 4, 343. It should be noted though that somewhat earlier Kennedy, *Fragments*, 110, observes that it is possible to interpret Antisthenes' explanation of Nestor's cup as allegorical, but he nevertheless insists that "it is more in keeping with the rest of Antisthenes' commentary on Homer to view it as a quite literalistic reading of the text" (see also above n. 8).

[53] Tate, "Antisthenes," 18. Elsewhere, Tate, "Plato," 7, stresses that "attempts to point the moral are not allegorical interpretations" as "they do not deny or replace the literal sense." In a similar vein, Goulet, "La méthode," 102, observes: "l'allégorie implique normalement la négation du sens littéral et le rejet de l'historicité des récits mythiques."

[54] This point has been brilliantly recognized by Pépin, "Aspects," 7, who rightly stresses that it is precisely "l'ambiguïté qui permet de passer de 'soulever la coupe' à 'supporter le vin'."

actually reflected in Heraclitus' famous definition of allegory (5.2) as "the trope saying (*ἀγορεύων*) one thing but signaling (*σημαίνων*) something other than what it says (*λέγει*)." Third, a sharp opposition between allegory and metonymy is often difficult to maintain, as metonymy frequently becomes allegory: Hephaestus stands for fire which battles with water represented by Poseidon and so on. Fourth, one should not expect allegoresis always to deny the literal meaning of a text *in toto*. Clearly, Jewish and Christian allegorists were not prepared to repudiate completely the literal sense of the Bible and yet many of their interpretations are rightly classified as allegorical.[55] While much of Jewish and Christian exegesis is both allegorical and literal, we may safely categorize Antisthenes' interpretation as allegorical even if it preserves a significant part of the Nestor episode in its literal sense. It is true that the cup does not become a symbol of anything and the individuality of Nestor is not dissolved into an abstract concept. Yet Antisthenes negates the literal meaning of *ἀμογητὶ ἄειρεν* and abstracts from the literal heaviness of the cup that the poet actually describes. Thus, he unravels the esoteric meaning about Nestor's mental strength, which in my opinion qualifies as a *ὑπόνοια*. What makes this allegoresis so interesting is precisely that it shows how the problem of the unpalatability of a text can be resolved by invalidating only a part of the literal meaning. Finally, one should also emphasize that the concept of "un lecteur normalement constitué" is scarcely useful, since people rarely see eye to eye on what is literal, figurative, allegorical, etc. Obviously, this is reflected not only in the enduring debate about the Nestor *ἀπορία*, but also more generally in the fierce controversy over Antisthenes' allegoresis.

Let us briefly recapitulate. The following Antisthenean interpretations are most often classified as allegorical: Aphrodite (*SSR* VA 123 = DC 109) and Dionysus (*SSR* VA 197 = DC 41), on the one hand, and Nestor's cup (*SSR* VA 191 = DC 55), on the other. These interpretations nicely illustrate much broader debates in research on allegoresis: whether (and, if so, to what extent) allegorical interpretation presupposes (1) conscious and/or (2) esoteric composition on part of the author. Naturally, the controversy over Antisthenes' allegoresis shows the prodigious challenges of determining the deliberateness, naturalness and literalness of an interpretation. Yet what makes the aforementioned interpretations fairly attractive candidates for instances of Antisthenean allegoresis is that they (1) are explicitly attributed to Antisthenes and (2) can be construed as revealing some hidden layer of the narrative in question (Aphrodite signifies "love," Dionysus stands for "wine," Nestor's physical strength symbolizes his "mental strength," etc.). The other Antisthenean interpretations are far more problematic.

4. The Less Attractive Candidates

In several cases, the evidence for allegorical nature of Antisthenes' interpretations is indirect at best and the uncertainty cannot be resolved.

In the scholium to *Iliad* 15.123 (= *SSR* VA 192 = DC 56) Antisthenes is reported to have commented on Athena's rebuke of Ares at *Il.* 15.123–42 in the following manner: "if the

[55] Goulet, "La méthode," 100, senses that it may seem "excessif" to question the allegorical nature of various interpretations advanced by thinkers such as Philo or Origen, which is why he suggests that their hermeneutical efforts be characterized as "une forme édulcorée de l'allégorie."

wise man does anything, he acts in accord with utmost virtue, just as Athena admonishes Ares in three ways" (*εἴ τι πράττει ὁ σοφός, κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἐνεργεῖ, ὡς καὶ ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ τριχῶς νουθετεῖ τὸν Ἄρην*). While the comment reflects Antisthenes' (Socratic) conviction that knowledge is indispensable for virtue,[56] the idea that Athena warns Ares *three* times could perhaps somehow be connected with Democritus' interpretation of Tritogeneia as producing *three* human capacities.[57] We know that Democritus identified Athena with "thought" (*φρόνησις*), deriving her epithet Tritogeneia from the fact that "three" (*τρία*) things "are born" (*γίνεται*) from the goddess: reasoning well, speaking well and doing what one should (DK 68 B 2). Also in his *Cratylus*, Plato might be alluding to Antisthenes, when he mentions (407a8–b2) "the contemporary experts on Homer" (*οἱ νῦν περὶ Ὅμηρον δεινοί*) who interpret Athena as "mind" (*νοῦς*) and "intellect" (*διάνοια*). Thus, in one of his works Antisthenes might have equated Athena with *φρόνησις*. Diogenes Laertius' catalogue (6.17 = *SSR* VA 41 = DC 1) suggests *Athena or On Telemachus* to be the most likely candidate. Yet, in its preserved form, the above cited comment by Antisthenes should not be categorized as an instance of allegoresis.[58] While both Democritus and Socrates identify Athena with "an intellectual capacity," Antisthenes does not interpret the goddess in any allegorical way: he merely comments on Athena's activity of restraining Ares and his comment reveals no immediate *ὑπόνοια*. Thus, nothing justifies classifying this as allegoresis.

However, several scholars suggested that the scholium to *Odyssey* 1.96 might preserve (traces of) Antisthenes' view,[59] and Susan Prince prints the scholium as 192B:

> *τὸ λέγειν τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν καλὰ πέδιλα φορεῖν οὐκ ἄλλο δηλοῖ ἢ ὅτι τῆς φρονήσεως αἱ ἐνεργητικαὶ δυνάμεις στιβαραὶ καὶ ἄλκιμοί εἰσι. τὸ δὲ ἐπέχειν ἔγχος ἐν ᾧτινι δαμάζει τοὺς ἥρωας τὸ πληκτικὸν ὑποσημαίνει τῆς φρονήσεως. ὁ γὰρ φρόνιμος διὰ τοῦ οἰκείου λόγου πλήττει τὸν ἀτακτοῦντα. τὸ δὲ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κατελθεῖν οὐκ ἄλλο αἰνίττεται ἢ ὅτι ἡ φρόνησις ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ κατέρχεται.*
>
> To say that Athena wears "beautiful sandals"[60] shows nothing other than that the active powers of thought are "strong"[61] and "stout."[62] And to hold a "spear"[63] by which "she masters the heroes"[64] suggests the striking power of thought. For the thoughtful man strikes the rebellious one through his proper discourse. And that "Athena comes down from the heaven"[65] hints enigmatically at nothing other than that thought comes down from the mind.

While one can hardly impugn the allegorical nature of this elaborate interpretation, Antisthenes' inspiration for it can always be doubted. The parallels in nomenclature are interesting (especially the *οἰκεῖος λόγος*), but ultimately prove nothing. Were Antisthenes

[56] See Brancacci, *Oikeios logos*, 116 and A. Brancacci, "The Socratic Profile of Antisthenes' Ethics," in U. Zilioli, ed., *From the Socratics to the Socratic Schools: Classical Ethics, Metaphysics and Epistemology* (New York, 2015), 54.

[57] For a recent discussion, see Domaradzki, "Democritus," with further references.

[58] *Pace* Ramelli, "Saggio," 445, who finds here "una chiara interpretazione allegorica." See also Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria*, 75.

[59] Lulofs, *De Antisthenis*, 54 with n. 2 and Brancacci, *Oikeios logos*, 261–2 n. 62. For a more recent discussion, see A. Brancacci, "*Episteme* and *Phronesis* in Antisthenes," *Méthexis* 18 (2005), 20–1.

[60] See Hom. *Od.* 1.96. [61] See Hom. *Od.* 1.100. [62] See Hom. *Od.* 1.99.

[63] See Hom. *Od.* 1.99. [64] See Hom. *Od.* 1.100–1. [65] See Hom. *Od.* 1.102.

mentioned by name, the matter would be settled and the above passage could fairly be hailed as the most clear-cut example of Antisthenean allegoresis. As a matter of fact, given the complexity and extensiveness of this interpretation one could try to make the case that some of Antisthenes' work(s) included a running allegorical commentary on Homer (this would be a truly remarkable result since in their preserved form Antisthenes' Ὁμηρικά bear no resemblance to Heraclitus' Ὁμηρικὰ προβλήματα). However, as Antisthenes is not referred to, this testimony must be approached with extreme caution.[66] Although this may *prima facie* seem like philological nitpicking, the following example will show why it is advisable to follow the rule that the only criterion for recognizing Antisthenes as a proponent of a given allegorical interpretation is an explicit mention of the philosopher's name in the particular testimony.

Given the meagre and fragmentary nature of the evidence available to us, one might be tempted to conjure up an allegorical interpretation by Antisthenes. To see why this temptation should be resisted let us consider the following case. We know that Antisthenes authored a work entitled *On Circe* (D.L. 6.18 = *SSR* VA 41 = DC 1), where he might have touched upon the theme of Odysseus overcoming the enchantress' spells, possibly commending the hero's self-control and temperance in pleasure. This conjecture might be supported by the passage in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.3.7), where Socrates humorously diagnoses that while Circe turned men into pigs by exploiting their immoderate indulgence in "dining" (δειπνίζουσαν), Odysseus was saved from this fate not only by Hermes' "counsel" (ὑποθημοσύνῃ), but also by his own "self-restraint and abstinence" (ἐγκρατῆ ὄντα καὶ ἀποσχόμενον). Furthermore, Dio Chrysostom reports (8.20–5 = *SSR* VB 584) that Diogenes of Sinope equated Circe with "pleasure" (ἡδονή) which deceitfully seduces men, illustrating, thereby, the difficulties that every person must overcome in their fight against pleasure. By juxtaposing the above testimonies, one can try to argue that Antisthenes allegorically interpreted Circe.[67] Nonetheless, the argument remains tenuous to say the least, for even if Antisthenes' teacher and Antisthenes' student (allegorically?) interpreted the sorceress in this way the fact remains that we do not have an actual testimony on Antisthenes' allegoresis of Circe.

5. The Least Attractive Candidates

Finally, there are also several interpretations by Antisthenes which can be categorized as allegorical only if the concept of allegoresis is stretched to include practically any kind of interpretation. But when the concept of allegoresis is inflated to this extent, it loses all heuristic value as virtually any hermeneutical activity can be viewed as allegorical. Let us consider such a case.

In their otherwise excellent and thought-provoking study, Ilaria Ramelli and Giulio Lucchetta characterize Antisthenes' account of Apollo (*SSR* VA 190 = DC 54) as "esegesi

[66] The reconstructions put forward by, for example, Buffière, *Les mythes*, 359–62 and, especially, V. Di Benedetto, "Tracce di Antistene in alcuni scoli all' 'Odissea'" ["Tracce"], *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 38 (1966), 208–28, are different in that they attribute to Antisthenes *literal* exegesis that is well attested throughout his Ὁμηρικά (see below in the main text).

[67] See, e.g., Pépin, *Mythe*, 107: "il faut rapporter à Antisthène l'allégorie éthique de cet épisode que le Xénophon des *Mémorables* met sur les lèvres de Socrate." For a more recent account, see J. Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana, 1994), 74.

allegorica" on the basis of the fact that Antisthenes attributed to the god "la qualifica di medico."[68] It is only according to a very diffuse concept of allegoresis that this Antisthenean explanation can be categorized as "allegorical." In the scholium to *Odyssey* 9.525 (= *SSR* VA 190 = DC 54) Antisthenes is reported to have tackled the following problem: why did Odysseus "so foolishly" (*οὕτως ἀνοήτως*) insult Poseidon (*Od.* 9.525) by denying the god the ability to heal his son? To solve this *ἀπορία*, Antisthenes pointed to the fact that it was not Poseidon but Apollo who was a "physician" (*ἰατρός*). Thus, as Félix Buffière aptly observes, Odysseus "n'insulte pas Poseidon, il marque seulement les limites de son pouvoir."[69] The purpose of this explanation was to eliminate the contradiction (the wise Odysseus lacks knowledge and acts unwisely) and/or to refute the charge of unethicality (Odysseus' actions are wrong) as well as that of blasphemy (Odysseus' words are impious).[70] Yet the resulting *λύσις* reveals no hidden meaning of the Homeric passage whatsoever. First of all, by ascribing to Apollo the power of healing, Antisthenes hardly unveils any *ὑπόνοια*, since the god was generally recognized as responsible for the domain of medicine and, therefore, commonly referred to as *ἰατρός* (see, e.g., Ar. *Av.* 584). Second and relatedly, both gods as well as the ability to heal are taken literally rather than figuratively: neither Apollo nor Poseidon becomes identified with an abstract concept (i.e., they retain their divine status), while healing means nothing else than curing the actual injury (i.e., the skill of a real physician). Thus, to classify this interpretation as allegorical, one must have recourse to a rather diluted concept of allegoresis.

The same applies to Antisthenes' interpretations of Odysseus *πολύτροπος* (*SSR* VA 187 = DC 51), the hero's rejection of Calypso's offer (*SSR* VA 188 = DC 52) or the unjust Polyphemus (*SSR* VA 189 = DC 53). It is only on a very distended concept of allegoresis that these explanations of poetry can be characterized as allegorical. It is much safer to categorize them as instances of apologetic exegesis, in which literal "solutions" (*λύσεις*) are offered to elucidate various "difficulties" (*ἀπορίαι*) or "questions" (*προβλήματα*) that the Homeric text poses. Generally, Antisthenes' exegetical strategy seems to have consisted precisely in identifying an *ἀπορία* or *πρόβλημα* at the surface meaning of the text and, then, proposing a *λύσις* that vindicated Homer. While the poet was thus exculpated from accusations of inconsistency, unethicality, and so on, the revealed deeper meaning was rarely allegorical (though not never). There can be no doubt that Antisthenes systematically employed this type of defensive exegesis, contributing, thereby, significantly to the development of ancient literary criticism. It will not be an exaggeration to say that his approach anticipated a great deal of later Homeric and biblical scholarship.

6. Conclusions

Antisthenes had a multifarious view of myth and poetry: on the one hand, he frowned upon many conventional images of the gods, and, on the other, he appropriated numerous mythical figures, characters and themes for various explanatory and rhetorical purposes.

[68] Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria*, 75–6. [69] Buffière, *Les mythes*, 371.

[70] While Di Benedetto, "Tracce," 215, stresses that the wise Odysseus knew and acted "senza mentire," Brancacci, *Oikeios logos*, 115–16 with n. 76, emphasizes that Odysseus' wisdom included "il sapere morale." Drawing on these observations, S. Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (Ann Arbor, 2011), 34 with n. 65, aptly points out that Odysseus "simply stated a 'theological truth.'"

Most obviously, Antisthenes adopted and adapted traditional material to illustrate and promote his original ethical views. At the same time, however, his approach to the epic poetry had a clear apologetic dimension: Antisthenes evidently held Homer in high esteem and frequently employed his exegesis with a view to defending the poet. The above discussed interpretation of Nestor's cup shows that Antisthenes' apology did not shun allegoresis. This interpretation meets all the criteria of allegoresis, since it (1) unravels the hidden meaning of a specific Homeric passage and (2) explicitly ascribes to the poet the intention of an esoteric composition (as is clear from the *λέγει*/*σημαίνει* distinction). Of course, the allegorical dimension of Antisthenes' hermeneutical activity should not be overemphasized, but it should not be completely denied either. The Nestor interpretation is an important instance of ethical allegoresis of which we have only very few instances from the early period.

While the controversy over the allegorical dimension of Antisthenes' hermeneutical activity has been ongoing for over a century, this paper has suggested that at least some part of this dispute results from conflicting definitions of allegorical interpretation. For the purpose of the present considerations, allegoresis has been defined as a technique of interpretation that (1) brings to light the latent meaning of a work and (2) assumes the allegory to be deliberate. The former qualification is fairly uncontroversial, but the latter may seem contentious, as determining intentions is anything but easy. Notwithstanding this, it needs to be stressed that Antisthenes' *Ὁμηρικά* incontestably shows him to have differentiated between the surface meaning of the text and the meaning actually intended by the poet (e.g., that Odysseus was in fact not unwise, immoral, or impious). This speaks against categorizing Antisthenes' interpretations of Aphrodite and Dionysus as instances of allegoresis. There is no evidence that Antisthenes considered the deities to be consciously designed personifications (i.e., purposefully encoded allegories of sexual love or wine). As has been noted, if the concept of allegoresis is expanded to include such rationalizations of mythology, then it loses its heuristic value and the preponderance of Greek freethinkers transmogrify into allegorists (i.e., one is saddled with the unsavory consequence that Xenophanes' demystification of Iris is an instance of allegoresis).

Things look even worse when the concept of allegoresis is inflated to include such instances of literal exegesis as, say, the Polyphemus or the *πολύτροπος* interpretations. On such a diffuse concept of allegoresis, any hermeneutical activity becomes "allegorical," which, again, entails that the majority of Greek interpreters metamorphose into allegorists. Apart from diluting the concept of allegoresis, some scholars are also inclined to ascribe to Antisthenes interpretations that contain no explicit references to the philosopher's name. This chapter has argued that one should be extremely cautious with such testimonies, lest one end up conjuring up an allegorical interpretation by Antisthenes and rush to the conclusion that Antisthenes wrote running allegorical commentaries on Homer. Hence, it is best to agree that the only criterion for hailing Antisthenes as an author of a given allegorical interpretation is an explicit mention of the philosopher's name in the particular testimony.

On a more general level, this chapter has aimed to show that the controversy over Antisthenes' allegoresis reflects such broader problems in research on allegorical interpretation as: (1) whether allegoresis should be characterized in terms of its intentionality (i.e., an interpretation is allegorical when it assumes a deliberate composition on part of the author), (2) whether allegoresis should be characterized in terms of its obviousness (i.e., an

interpretation is allegorical when it aspires to esoterism), and (3) whether allegoresis demands complete denial of the literal sense (i.e., an interpretation is allegorical when it abolishes the reality of the *interpretandum*). Given the contested and elusive nature of such properties as deliberateness, naturalness and literalness, debates among scholars about whether (and, if so, to what extent) Antisthenes' hermeneutical activity can be labeled as "allegorical" will surely persist. Also, the meager and fragmentary nature of the testimonies on Antisthenes' hermeneutical efforts will undoubtedly continue to cause disagreement among scholars. What can be said with certainty is that Antisthenes' hermeneutical activity is too diverse to be subsumed under a single category.[71]

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