The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis

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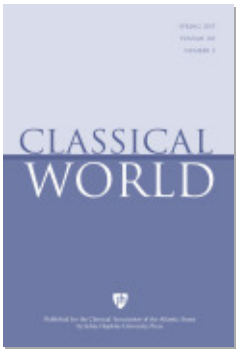

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ARTICLES

The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis*

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ABSTRACT: The present article examines the question of who was the first to have allegorically interpreted Homer. The fragmentary and indirect character of the extant testimonies on the beginnings of allegoresis makes it very difficult to adjudicate between the candidates Theagenes of Rhegium and Pherecydes of Syros. This paper argues that while the surviving testimonies suggest that Theagenes was the first allegorist of Homer, Pherecydes' appropriation of mythology is likely to have created premises for allegorical interpretation of poetry. Thus, it is argued that both Theagenes and Pherecydes be considered as important figures in the emergence of allegoresis.

Allegorical interpretation of poetry belongs, undoubtedly, to one of the most fascinating inventions of antiquity. Yet, while the emergence of this practice has attracted substantial scholarly interest over the last decades, it continues to be an area full of heated controversy. The following issues deserve particular attention. First of all, there is no clear consensus on terminology and definitions. Secondly and relatedly, scholars differ on what qualifies as allegorical interpretation and disagree as to who was the first to have thus interpreted the poets. Finally, they dispute the major functions of allegorical interpretation. The purpose of the present paper is to shed some light on these thorny issues and to offer a reconsideration of certain accounts that have been suggested in the debate.

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I. Allegory or Allegoresis?

Ninety years ago Jonathan Tate wrote his seminal article, "The Beginnings of Greek Allegory."[1] This classic paper is noteworthy not only because of its highly influential theses (on which see below) but also because it nicely illustrates the ambiguity that has bedeviled the debate on allegorical interpretation. As is revealed by the title and the contents of his paper, Tate uses the term "allegory" with reference to the strategy of *interpreting* a poem.[2] Problematically though, the term is also employed with reference to the mode of *composing* a text.[3] Although this may prima facie appear as a merely terminological triviality, it should be noted that one's concept of allegory is ultimately determinative of whom one hails as its originator (see below the discussion of Pherecydes).

Confusingly, the use of the term "allegory" in relation to both the technique of interpretation and the technique of composition is fairly common in English and French literature on the subject. This has already been bemoaned by Jean Pépin, who has noted that allegorical *expression* and allegorical *interpretation* are "unfortunately confused under the same word 'allegory'" (*malheureusement confondues sous le même vocable d'«allégorie»*).[4] Naturally, the decision to employ the term in both (clearly related) senses is very frequently a conscious one. For example, Jon Whitman distinguishes between "interpretive" and "compositional"

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[1] J. Tate, "The Beginnings of Greek Allegory," *CR* 41 (1927) 214–15.

[2] Tate (above, n.1) 214: "It is true that, according to Porphyry on the *Theomachy* (*Iliad* XX. 67), allegory—as a mode of defending apparently blasphemous passages—dates from Theagenes." This use of the term is still common. Recently, for example, R. Radice ("Dall'allegoria all'allegoresi," *Itinera* 9 [2015] 11 n.9) has spoken of allegory attested in Theagenes: "L'allegoria è attestata molto presto anche nella storia della filosofia, ad esempio nel presocratico Teagene di Reggio." See also below, n.16.

[3] See for example S. G. P. Small, "On Allegory in Homer," *CJ* 44 (1949) 423–30. When inquiring into the origins of allegorical interpretation, Small points to the fact that "the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, like Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, undoubtedly contain not a few genuine allegories" (423). Following Small, F. Buffière (*Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* [Paris 1956] 104 n.13) also draws attention to the fact that Homer makes sometimes use of "allégorie."

[4] J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris 1976) 487. [Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.]

While the roots of this ambiguity may of course be traced back to antiquity (see below, nn.7–8), R. Lamberton (*Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* [Berkeley–Los Angeles 1986] 20) bewails this fact: "There is a general failure in antiquity to make a clear distinction between allegorical expression and allegorical interpretation."

allegory, upon which he notes that the two might "converge in a systematic form."[5] The decision to use the term "allegory" in both meanings can also be easily justified by referring to cases where the difference between allegorical composing and allegorical interpreting becomes fuzzy and elusive.[6] Furthermore, it could be argued that a deliberately ambiguous use of the term is warranted because the Greek verb ἀλληγορεῖν means both "to speak allegorically"[7] and "to interpret allegorically."[8]

Notwithstanding all this, it seems advisable to follow those scholars who for the sake of clarity choose to employ two separate terms to better distinguish between the strategy of allegorical *composing* a text, that is, *allegory*, and the strategy of its allegorical *interpreting*, that is, *allegoresis*.[9] In connection with this, it is worth noting that this distinction has been particularly well established in German literature, where *Allegorie* is nearly always used with reference to allegorical "poetry" (*Dichtung*) and *Allegorese* with reference to its allegorical "interpretation" (*Deutung/Auslegung*).[10] While Pépin has even commended the German language for being "better divided" (*mieux partagée*) in its distinguishing

[5] J. Whitman, *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, Mass. 1987) 10. D. Dawson (*Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* [Berkeley–Los Angeles 1992] 3–4), who likewise differentiates between the two types allegory, also observes that "this distinction is often blurred" (4).

[6] As it is, for example, in the case of the sophists. See M. Domaradzki, "The Sophists and Allegoresis," *AncPhil* 35 (2015) 247–58. In this paper, I use some of the findings presented there.

[7] See for example Strabo 1.2.7: Ὅμηρος . . . μυθολογεῖται . . . πρὸς ἐπιστήμην ἀλληγορῶν.

[8] See for example Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 363D: Ἕλληνες Κρόνον ἀλληγοροῦσι τὸν χρόνον.

[9] Laudably, there is a growing tendency to do that. See M. Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca 1979) 25–26; G. W. Most, "Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report," *ANRW* 2.36.3 (1989) 2014–65; A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton 2002) 67–89; I. Ramelli, "Saggio integrativo. Breve storia dell'allegoresi del mito," in I. Ramelli, ed., *Anneo Cornuto: Compendio di teologia greca* (Milan 2003) 419–549; G. Naddaf, "Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy," in W. Wians, ed., *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature* (Albany 2009) 99–131.

[10] See for example J. C. Joosen and J. H. Waszink, "Allegorese," *RAC* 1 (1950) 283–93; P. Steinmetz, "Allegorische Deutung und allegorische Dichtung in der alten Stoa," *RhM* 129 (1986) 18–30; C. Blönnigen, *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik* (Frankfurt 1992); G. W. Most, "Die früheste erhaltene griechische Dichterallegorese," *RhM* 136 (1994) 209–12; J. Hammerstaedt, "Die Homerallegorese des älteren Metrodor von Lampsakos," *ZPE* 121 (1998) 28–32; M. Gatzemeier, *Philosophie als Theorie der Rationalität*, Bd. 1:

between *Allegorie* and *Allegorese*,[11] maintaining this terminological distinction seems heuristically useful for capturing the difference between the prototypical activity of the poet and that of the interpreter.

Let us illustrate this with an example. Homer's portrayal of Eris in the *Iliad* (4.440–443) is an example of *allegory*: the poet describes how Discord arises from a trivial cause, but once roused she grows until she seems to be reaching the sky.[12] Heraclitus' interpretation of this depiction as an instance of *allegoresis*: when commenting on the poet's portrayal of Eris, the allegorist diagnoses that "it is not a goddess to which Homer has given shape" (οὐ θεά τις . . . ὑφ' Ὁμήρου μεμόρφωται), since the poet "has used this allegory to portray vividly what always happens to quarrelsome people" (ὃ συμβέβηκεν ἀεὶ τοῖς φιλονεικοῦσι πάθος ἐκ ταύτης τῆς ἀλληγορίας διετύπωσεν).[13] As is typical of allegoresis, Heraclitus suggests that the passage must not be reduced to its literal sense only.

When, thus, differentiating between allegorical expression (i.e., *allegory*) and allegorical interpretation (i.e., *allegoresis*), this study will follow their characterizations as suggested by Pépin, according to whom the former "consists in hiding a message under the cover of a figure" (*consiste à cacher un message sous le revêtement d'une figure*) and the latter "in deciphering the figure to retrieve the message" (*à décrypter la figure pour retrouver le message*).[14] It needs to be emphasized here that although not all scholars opt for employing two distinct terms, there is a general consensus that the mode of allegorical composition has to be somehow distinguished from the mode of allegorical interpretation.[15]

Zur Philosophie der wissenschaftlichen Welt (Würzburg 2005); R. Pichler, *Allegorese und Ethik bei Proklos: Untersuchungen zum Kommentar zu Platons* Politeia (Berlin 2006).

[11] Pépin (above, n.4) 487–88 n.2.

[12] Heraclitus the Allegorist classifies this as an allegory (see below, n.13), though strictly speaking, it is an allegorical *personification*. Whitman (above, n.5) 20, characterizes this "emerging personification" as "nearly a prophecy of the allegory to come." For scholars who speak of an "allegory" here, see for example Small (above, n.3) 424; Buffière (above, n.3) 104 n.13; R. Hahn, *Die Allegorie in der antiken Rhetorik* (Tübingen 1967) 51, 130.

[13] Heraclit. Alleg. *Quaest. Hom.* 29.5–6. The text along with translation is that of D.A. Russell and D. Konstan, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems* (Atlanta 2005).

[14] Pépin (above, n.4) 488.

[15] J.A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm: Theories of Interpretation of the Later Neoplatonists* (Leiden 1976) 25; Pépin (above, n.4) 78, 91, 487–88; Quilligan (above, n.9) 25–26; Whitman (above, n.5) 3–10; Lamberton (above, n.4) 20; Blönnigen (above, n.10) 11–19; Dawson (above, n.5) 3–4; Ford (above, n.9) 67–68; Pichler (above, n.10) 30–31; Naddaf (above, n.9) 111; R. Copeland and P. T. Struck, "Introduction," in R. Copeland and P. T. Struck eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge 2010) 2.

Unsurprisingly, this distinction will also prove crucial for understanding the hermeneutical efforts of the first allegorists.[16]

Before concluding the section on allegorical nomenclature, one should highlight that historically neither of the terms is accurate. While *allegoresis* is, of course, a modern coinage,[17] Plutarch relates that it is only "now" (νῦν) that ἀλληγορία has superseded what "long ago" (πάλαι) used to be called ὑπόνοια.[18] Although in the classical period the latter term does appear occasionally in the relevant sense (Xen. *Symp*. 3.6; Pl. *R*. 2.378D6–8), it has been well ascertained in research on allegorical interpretation that the word most frequently used by the early allegorists was neither ἀλληγορία (which is late) nor ὑπόνοια (which is rare), but rather αἴνιγμα.[19] Indeed, the importance of this latter term is spectacularly confirmed by the Derveni papyrus[20] and by the extant testimonies on Pherecydes' theology (see below for the discussion).

II. Theagenes or Pherecydes?

Allegoresis is, then, a technique of interpretation that brings to light the hidden (i.e., "allegorical") meaning of a poem. The question that now

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[16] One can, therefore, scarcely agree with R. Radice ("Introduzione," in I. Ramelli and G. Lucchetta, *Allegoria*, vol. 1: *L'età classica* [Milan 2004] 7), who defines *allegoria* as "an accidental and rhapsodic interpretation of symbols" (*un'interpretazione casuale e rapsodica dei simboli*) and *allegoresi* as "a systematic as well as philosophically motivated interpretation of these" (*una interpretazione sistematica, oltre che filosoficamente motivata dei medesimi*). See also Radice (above, n.2) 11–12. Defining both *allegory* and *allegoresis* as kinds of interpretation makes it very difficult to do justice to the theology of Pherecydes.

[17] As, for example, Pichler (above, n.10) 31, stresses: "Der Terminus Allegorese stammt nicht aus der Antike, sondern wurde erst in der deutschen Sprache als Unterscheidung zum Begriff *Allegorie* geprägt."

[18] Plutarch, *De aud. poet.* 19E–F. See also G. Lanata, *Poetica preplatonica: Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence 1963) 107. For excellent discussions of the relation between the earlier term ὑπόνοια and its later equivalent ἀλληγορία, see Buffière (above, n.3) 45–48; Pépin (above, n.4) 85–92; Whitman (above, n.5) 263–68; Blönnigen (above, n.10) 11–19.

[19] See esp. P. T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton 2004) 39–50, 171–79. See also Buffière (above, n.3) 48–49; Ford (above, n.9) 72–76, 85–87; Naddaf (above, n.9) 112; D. Obbink, "Early Greek Allegory," in Copeland and Struck (above, n.15) 16. Naturally, with development of allegoresis various other terms have also been used: μεταφορά, μῦθος, παραβολή, πλάσμα, σύμβολον, τρόπος, τύπος, etc.

[20] Thus, αἴνιγμα (VII.6), αἰνιγματώδης (VII.5) and αἰνίζεσθαι (IX.10, X.11, XIII.6, XVII.13). 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).

arises is who was the first to have thus interpreted the poets? Two possible candidates come into play: Theagenes of Rhegium and Pherecydes of Syros.[21]

With regard to the former, Porphyry relates that Theagenes interpreted Homer's notorious battle of the gods (*Il.* 20.23–75) as a set of physical and moral "allegories" (ἀλληγορίαι), stressing, at the same time, that Theagenes "first" (πρῶτος) wrote about the poet in this manner.[22] With regard to the latter, Origen reports that Homer's words[23] were understood by Pherecydes in the same way as they were interpreted by Celsus, who took them to "hint enigmatically" (αἰνίττεσθαι) at the poet's hidden teachings.[24] Before a fuller discussion is undertaken, it should be noted that both testimonies are fragmentary, indirect, and late. Consequently, their reliability may be easily called into question.

As for the first source, one should note it cannot be ruled out that the Porphyrian scholion offers a somewhat distorted or at least exaggerated picture of Theagenes' allegoresis. Clearly, Porphyry might have attributed to Theagenes some later concepts.[25] After all, in accord with Plutarch's

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[21] Interestingly, Most (above, n.10) 210–12, has persuasively argued that the earliest instance of allegorical interpretation can actually be found in Homer's Patroclus (*Il.* 16.28–35), who, when rebuking Achilles for his *Unmenschlichkeit*, allegorically equates the hero's parents with "rocks" and "sea" on the grounds that Peleus brings to mind Mount Pelion and Thetis is a sea nymph. See also Ford (above, n.9) 69; Pichler (above, n.10) 33, n.68.

[22] Porph. *Quaest. Hom.* 1.240.14–241.12 Schrad. = *Schol. B in Il.* 20.67 = DK 8.2 = Lanata 14.3. Theagenes was called a γραμματικός and reported to have initiated the study of ἑλληνισμός (DK 8.1a = Schol. Dionys. Thrac. 164.23 = Lanata 14.2). That he wrote about Homer is also what one finds in the *Suda* (DK 8.4: περὶ Ὁμήρου γράψας). Tatian (*Or. ad Graec.* 31 = DK 8.1 = Lanata 14.1) reports him to have studied "Homer's poetry, descent, and floruit" (τῆς Ὁμήρου ποιήσεως γένους τε αὐτοῦ καὶ χρόνου καθ' ὃν ἤκμασεν) and he is also known to have suggested a specific reading of *Iliad* 1.381 (DK 8.3 = *Schol. Hom. A*).

[23] It is not easy to determine exactly which verses are here referred to. H. S. Schibli, (*Pherekydes of Syros* [Oxford 1990] 100 n.54) seems to be right though in pointing to Hom. *Il.* 8.13–16 rather than Hom. *Il.* 15.18–24.

[24] Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.42 = DK 7 B 5. See also Schibli F 83.

[25] F. Wehrli (*Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum* [Borna–Leipzig 1928] 89) points to the similarity between the Porphyrian scholion and Ps.-Plutarch's *De vita et poesi Homeri* 99, which, as he believes, must be "recognized as Stoic" (*als stoisch erkannt*). For a more recent discussion, see Ramelli (above, n.9) 423–24, n.9; Ramelli and Lucchetta (above, n.16) 53–54. Yet Pépin (above, n.4) 99 n.16 rightly points out that the doctrine of the elements is "much earlier than Stoicism" (*bien antérieure au stoïcisme*). While he mentions Empedocles and Heraclitus, I argue below that it was rather the Milesians (Anaximander and Anaximenes) who provided the background for

testimony, one must recognize the very term ἀλληγορία as coming from Porphyry rather than Theagenes.[26] Furthermore, Theagenes' invention of both physical and moral allegoresis has been contested.[27] Relatedly, various Pythagorean influences have been suggested.[28]

As for the other source, one needs to observe that Origen's testimony is at least equally problematic because of its thirdhand character: Origen quotes Celsus, who is said to have cited Pherecydes. The mediated nature of this source makes it impossible to ascertain whether Pherecydes shared Celsus' conviction that Homer spoke "enigmatically" about the gods. Consequently, it is debatable whether the interpretation that Origen attributes to Pherecydes can be labeled as properly "allegorical."[29]

Given the nature of the aforementioned testimonies, it is only understandable that scholars have been unable to reach consensus regarding the first instance of allegorical interpretation of Homer and some have

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Theagenes' allegoresis. For scholars who share this view, see Buffière (above, n.3) 82, 88–89, 103–104; Gatzemeier (above, n.10) 340, 370; Naddaf (above, n.9) 105–106, 109, 123 nn. 22–25. I have discussed the issue in M. Domaradzki, "Theagenes of Rhegium and the Rise of Allegorical Interpretation," *Elenchos* 32 (2011) 205–27. In what follows, I both use and modify some of the concepts developed there.

[26] See above, n.18.

[27] Pépin (above, n.4) 98 n.16; Lamberton (above, n.4) 32; L. Brisson, *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe*, vol. 1: *Sauver les mythes* (Paris 1996) 55.

[28] For scholars who search for Pythagorean influences, see especially A. Delatte, *Études sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (Paris 1915) 114–15 and M. Detienne, *Homère, Hésiode et Pythagore. Poésie et philosophie dans le pythagorisme ancien* (Brussels 1962) 65–67. Wehrli (above, n.25) 90 compares Alcmaeon (DK 24 B 4) and concludes (94) that Pythagorean influence is "probable" (*wahrscheinlich*). For various reservations, see W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, E. L. Minar, tr. (Cambridge, Mass., 1972) 291 n.67; N. J. Richardson, "Homeric Professors in the Age of the Sophists," *PCPS* 201 (1975) 74; G. M. Rispoli, "Teagene o dell'allegoria," *Vichiana* 9 (1980) 253–55. Lamberton (above, n.4) 31–43 has since discussed the possibility of the first Pythagoreans' influence and surveyed the relevant literature on the topic. Tellingly, he found the evidence for early Pythagorean allegoresis of Homer to be "slim at best" (43). Decisively dismissive is C. Huffman ("Philolaus and the Central Fire," in S. Stern-Gillet and K. Corrigan, eds., *Reading Ancient Texts. Vol. 1: Presocratics and Plato* [Leiden 2007] 64 n.4), who rejects "the fallacious 'argument from proximity,' according to which any idea that arises in southern Italy or Sicily is supposed to be Pythagorean, simply because Pythagoreans were active in that region at that time" and concludes: "There is no evidence connecting Theagenes to the Pythagoreans."

[29] As Schibli (above, n.23) 99–100 n.54 cautions. While Struck (above, n.19) 26 n.14 finds Schibli to be "overly cautious about calling Pherecydes' reading an allegory," it will be argued below that some caution is in order here.

credited Pherecydes with that achievement, whereas others have opted for Theagenes. Thus, for example, in a series of highly influential articles, Tate strongly argued in favor of Pherecydes rather than Theagenes.[30] More recently, this position has been embraced by Peter Struck, who characterized Origen's testimony as "our earliest known instance of allegorical reading."[31] On the other hand, the opposing view that Theagenes should be hailed as the father of allegorical interpretation was most forcefully argued by Félix Buffière, who insisted that Theagenes "laid the foundation for this allegorical exegesis that was to last until the demise of Hellenism" (*jetait les bases de cette exégèse allégorique qui devait se prolonger jusqu'à la mort de l'hellénisme*).[32] Tellingly, Buffière attributed to Theagenes the invention of both physical and moral allegoresis.[33] In one way or another, the view that Theagenes was the first allegorist of Homer has been espoused by the majority of scholars (albeit sometimes with various qualifications and reservations).[34]

The fragmentary and indirect character of the above sources makes it very difficult to adjudicate between the two competing candidates. However, even if one chooses (rather generously) to recognize both the testimony of Porphyry and that of Origen as completely reliable and uncontaminated, the controversy cannot be properly settled by merely pointing to the allegorists' floruits: that of Pherecydes being around 544 B.C.[35] and that of Theagenes' being around 525 B.C.[36] This is due to the debate over the beginnings of allegoresis being primarily a debate about the functions of allegorical interpretation. Thus, scholars tend to belittle the relevance of either Theagenes or Pherecydes depending on how they understand the primary purpose of allegoresis.

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[30] Tate (above, n.1) 214–15 and J. Tate, "On the History of Allegorism," *CQ* 28 (1934) 107–108.

[31] Struck (above, n.19) 27.

[32] Buffière (above, n.3) 105; see also 2–3 and 136.

[33] Buffière (above, n.3) 105: "La distinction entre les dieux qui représentent les éléments et ceux qui incarnent des notions morales a pu fort bien être posée par Théagène."

[34] Wehrli (above, n.25) 88–91, 94; Small (above, n.3) 423; Lanata (above, n.18) 104–11; Burkert (above, n.28) 291 n.67; Pépin (above, n.4) 97–98; Rispoli (above, n.28) 248–57; Blönnigen (above, n.10) 20–21; Ford (above, n.9) 71–72, 76; Ramelli (above, n.9) 423–24; Ramelli and Lucchetta (above, n.16) 53–55; Gatzemeier (above, n.10) 339–40, 366, 369–78.

[35] As ascertained by Schibli (above, n.23) 2.

[36] Tatian (*Or. ad Graec.* 31 = DK 8.1 = Lanata 14.1) reports Theagenes to have lived in the times of Cambyses (529–522 B.C.).

III. Apology or Appropriation?

While Porphyry (*Quaest. Hom.* 1.240.14–241.12 = DK 8.2 = Lanata 14.3) puts it in no uncertain terms that the motive of Theagenes' allegoresis was a "defense" (ἀπολογία) of Homer, it has become customary in research on allegorical interpretation to clearly differentiate between the "negative" (or "defensive") and the "positive" (or "exegetical") allegoresis: the former aims to exculpate the poet from accusations of impiety and immorality, whereas the latter seeks to employ his poetry to sanction various novel and suspect theories.[37] Although it cannot be denied that this distinction may at times be very useful, it can also result in a vast oversimplification of the issue at hand. The following caveats should be particularly noted.

The first major problem with this evaluative dichotomy is that dividing allegoresis into a "negative" and a "positive" type frequently leads to an unwarranted denigration of the role of an allegorist that is dismissed as "solely defensive." Thus, some scholars depreciate the importance of Theagenes, since they are determined to demonstrate that the practice of allegorical interpretation could not have been actuated by the desire to defend the authority of Homer (or any other poet).[38] Other researchers, on the other hand, disregard Pherecydes, because they seem to overrate the importance of apologetic allegoresis.[39] Secondly and relatedly, it has to be emphasized that the two types of allegorical interpretation should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary.[40] Clearly, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the desire to exempt the poet from criticism and the desire to make use of his authority for propagating a new theory might work hand in hand. Finally, the sharp

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[37] J. Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation," *CQ* 23 (1929) 142–44 and Tate (above, n.30) 105–108. More recently, Lamberton (above, n.4) 15 n.40 has accepted this division: "The primacy of 'positive' over 'defensive' allegory was convincingly maintained by J. Tate."

[38] Tate (above, n.1) 215 n.5: "The work of Theagenes cannot have been of great importance" and Tate (above, n.30) 108: "Far too much importance has been attached to Theagenes."

[39] In their pioneering works, Buffière (above, n.3) 82, 98 n.65, 178 and Pépin (above, n.4) 449, 450, 451 only occasionally mention Pherecydes, whereas, for example, Lamberton (above, n.4); Whitman (above, n.5); Blönnigen (above, n.10) and Brisson (above, n.27) ignore him completely.

[40] Coulter (above, n.15) 26; Whitman (above, n.5) 20; Struck (above, n.19) 14; Pichler (above, n.10) 35; Naddaf (above, n.9) 114.

differentiation between the "negative" and the "positive" allegoresis presupposes the radical opposition between μῦθος and λόγος, which has been seriously challenged by recent scholarship.[41] Evidently, the positivistic opposition between "primitive" myth and "enlightened" reason has no ancient attestation and is fraught with difficulties (mainly because it fails to do justice to the constant and conspicuous interactions between mythology and cosmology).

For all these reasons, it seems better to speak of an "apologetic" and an "appropriative" allegoresis (in lieu of a "negative" and a "positive" one),[42] while at the same time acknowledging that the two functions of allegorical interpretation frequently coalesce. Indeed, it will be argued below that the testimonies on Theagenes and Pherecydes show that when these thinkers promulgated a new cosmology or theology, they did not want to discard the venerable poetry of Homer. Let us now turn to the specifics of their accounts.

IV. Homer's Cosmology?

Porphyry provides us with crucial testimony on Theagenes' allegoresis of Homer:

> τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου μὲν ὁ περὶ θεῶν ἔχεται καθόλου λόγος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς· οὐ γὰρ πρέποντας τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους φησίν. πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην κατηγορίαν οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐπιλύουσιν, ἀλληγορίαι πάντα εἰρῆσθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως, οἷον <ἐν> ἐναντιώσεσι τῶν θεῶν. καὶ γάρ φασι τὸ ξηρὸν τῶι ὑγρῶι καὶ τὸ θερμὸν τῶι ψυχρῶι μάχεσθαι καὶ τὸ κοῦφον τῶι βαρεῖ. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μὲν ὕδωρ σβεστικὸν εἶναι τοῦ πυρός, τὸ δὲ πῦρ ξηραντικὸν τοῦ ὕδατος. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς στοιχείοις, ἐξ ὧν τὸ πᾶν συνέστηκεν, ὑπάρχειν ἐναντίωσιν, καὶ κατὰ μέρος μὲν ἐπιδέχεσθαι φθορὰν ἅπαξ, τὰ πάντα δὲ μένειν αἰωνίως. μάχας δὲ διατίθεσθαι αὐτόν, διονομάζοντα τὸ μὲν πῦρ Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ Ἥλιον καὶ Ἥφαιστον, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ Ποσειδῶνα καὶ Σκάμανδρον, τὴν δ' αὖ σελήνην Ἄρτεμιν, τὸν ἀέρα δὲ Ἥραν καὶ τὰ λοιπά. ὁμοίως ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ταῖς διαθέσεσιν ὀνόματα θεῶν τιθέναι, τῆι μὲν φρονήσει τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, τῆι δ' ἀφροσύνηι τὸν Ἄρεα, τῆι δ'

[41] The opposition goes back to W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos. Die Selbstentfaltung des griechischen Denkens von Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates* (Stuttgart 1940). For a critical assessment of this perspective, see R. Buxton, ed., *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford 1999) and Wians (above, n.9).

[42] As I have argued in Domaradzki (above, n.6) 248.

ἐπιθυμίαι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, τῶι λόγωι δὲ τὸν Ἑρμῆν, καὶ προσοικειοῦσι τούτοις· οὗτος μὲν οὖν <ὁ> τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος ὢν πάνυ καὶ ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὁμήρου, τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως.

(*Quaest. Hom.* 1.240.14–241.12 = DK 8.2 = Lanata 14.3)

The [Homeric] account of the gods is generally held to be useless and inappropriate, for it tells stories about the gods that are not seemly. Against this accusation, some apply a solution from diction, considering everything to have been said as allegories about the nature of the elements, as, for example, in [the case of] the oppositions of the gods. For they say that the dry battles with the wet, the hot with the cold, and the light with the heavy; furthermore, that water extinguishes fire, whereas fire dries up water. Likewise, with all the elements from which the universe is composed: there arises an opposition and although once in a while a partial destruction is admitted, the whole endures eternally. [They say] that it [*sc*. the account of the gods] sets forth [these] battles, naming fire "Apollo," "Helios" or "Hephaestus," water "Poseidon" or "Scamander," the moon "Artemis," air "Hera," and so on. Similarly, when it gives the names of the gods also to dispositions: "Athena" to thoughtfulness, "Ares" to thoughtlessness, "Aphrodite" to desire, "Hermes" to reason, and they associate [these dispositions] with them. This mode of defense from diction is, then, very old and [originates] from Theagenes of Rhegium, who first wrote about Homer.

Porphyry relates, then, that Theagenes allegorically interpreted Homer's theomachy so as to defend the poet. Tatian, on the other hand, reports the allegorist to have lived in the times of Cambyses.[43] Thus, Theagenes lived roughly at the same time as when the first "physicists" censured Homer and Hesiod. Diogenes Laertius informs us that Pythagoras (8.21), Heraclitus (9.1), and Xenophanes (9.18) repudiated vehemently the gods of the poets. While Xenophanes' criticism of conventional religion was presumably the most devastating, this detractor of Homer was also a contemporary of Theagenes and—as Andrew Ford stresses—"Rhegium was near the center of Xenophanes' activity."[44] Hence, Theagenes must have responded to such charges as those that can be found in Xenophanes (see DK 21 B 1.21–22, 11–12, 14–16).

Several points need to be made here. First of all, Theagenes' simultaneous invention of both physical and moral allegoresis has been

[43] See above, n.36.

[44] Ford (above, n.9) 68.

impugned.[45] Secondly, the importance of Theagenes' moral (and quite trivial) allegoresis should not be exaggerated.[46] Finally, it should be emphasized that Porphyry does not provide us with an exact quotation from Theagenes' allegoresis, but merely gives some examples and says that "this manner" (οὗτος τρόπος) of interpreting the poet goes back to Theagenes. Thus, we cannot be absolutely certain that Porphyry is actually paraphrasing Theagenes. However, the physical allegoresis of the battle of the gods appears to be echoing Milesian theories of the opposites. Thus, the early Ionic cast of this interpretation makes it plausible to assume that Porphyry does provide us with a glimpse of Theagenes' authentic allegoresis of Homer. If so, then particularly relevant are the cosmological teachings of Anaximander and, possibly, Anaximenes.[47]

When accounting for the formation of the universe, Anaximander (fl. c. 560 B.C.) developed a cosmology that exerted a powerful impact on the entire Presocratic tradition. Indeed, the following observation made by Charles H. Kahn is hardly an overstatement: "All later Greek formulas for the cosmos must accordingly be understood as developments or modifications of this Milesian view."[48] In the context of Theagenes' allegoresis, special attention should be given to how Anaximander's

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[45] See above, n.27 As no compelling case for Pythagorean influences has been made (see above, n.28), Buffière might very well be right in ascribing this achievement to Theagenes (see above, n.33).

[46] Rispoli (above, n.28) 252 rightly notes that the way the allegory is introduced in the text suggests its secondary importance: "il modo in cui l'allegoria psicologica è introdotta nel testo (ὁμοίως ἔσθ' ὅτε . . . καὶ . . .) suggerisce non solo la secondarietà presso Omero dell'allegoria psicologica ma anche la sua secondarietà presso gli interpreti omerici, essendo la forma primaria di apologia ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως l'allegoria fisica, su cui assai piú diffusamente Porfirio ha sentito il bisogno di soffermarsi." Buffière (above, n.3) 105 aptly points out that it "would be obvious to any reader of Homer" (*saute aux yeux de tout lecteur d'Homère*) to identify Athena with wisdom or Ares with madness.

[47] See Buffière (above, n.3) 82, 88–89, 103–104 and especially Naddaf (above, n.9) 105–106, 109, 123 nn.22–25. See also Domaradzki (above, n.25) 212–19. Gatzemeier (above, n.10) 340 points rather to Anaximander and Thales: "Den philosophischen Hintergrund für diese Allegorese bildet die altionische Naturphilosophie (Thales und Anaximander) mit ihrer Theorie der Gegensätze und der Annahme, dass man das Naturgeschehen als Kampf zwischen einander widerstreitenden Prinzipien und Kräften erklären könne" (see also 370). Yet, given our knowledge of Thales' cosmology, it is very difficult to establish a connection between his views and Theagenes' allegoresis. Such a connection can relatively easily be made between Theagenes, on the one hand, and Anaximander as well as Anaximenes, on the other.

[48] C. H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York 1960) 199. See also G. Vlastos, "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," *CP* 42 (1947) 173.

cosmology explained the emergence of the world as well as all natural phenomena in terms of a sophisticated theory of the opposites.[49]

Thus, Anaximander is reported to have maintained that the generation of the cosmos began when "the productive of hot and cold" (τὸ γόνιμον θερμοῦ τε καὶ ψυχροῦ) formed a sphere of flame ("the hot") that surrounded the air ("the cold") around the earth ("like bark around a tree"), upon which the bursting of this fiery ball brought about the formation of the sun, the moon, and the stars.[50] While this testimony shows the paramount importance that Anaximander attributed to the opposites of hot and cold,[51] another source reveals that he attached equal importance to the opposites of dry and wet. Anaximander held also that at first the whole area surrounding the earth was "wet" (ὑγρός), but gradually was "dried up" (ξηραινόμενος) by the sun so that the part that evaporated produced the winds and the turnings of the sun and moon, whereas the part that was left became the sea, which is continuously "dried up" (ξηραινομένη), and eventually bound to become completely "dry" (ξηρά).[52] Finally, the last pair of the opposites that Theagenes is reported to have read into Homer's theomachy (the light and the heavy) can be traced back to Anaximander's account of meteorological phenomena and, arguably, also to Anaximenes' theory of condensation and rarefication.

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[49] It seems that these opposites prefigure Empedocles' elements, as suggested by Buffière (above, n.3) 88 and Naddaf (above, n.9) 123 n.25. See DK 12 A 16 = Arist. *Phys*. Γ.5. 204b 22–29. See also Kahn (above, n.48) 119–65 and D. W. Graham, *Explaining the Cosmos: The Ionian Tradition of Scientific Philosophy* (Princeton 2006) 39–44.

[50] DK 12 A 10 = Ps.-Plut. *Strom*. 2. See also Kahn (above, n.48) 57; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1: *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge 1962) 90; G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge 1983) 131–33; Schibli (above, n.23) 31. For the formation of the heavenly bodies, see also DK 12 A 11 = Hippol. *Ref*. 1.6.4.

[51] J. Barnes (*The Presocratic Philosophers* [London 1982] 32) stresses that the hot and the cold become here "the basic materials of the cosmos."

[52] DK 12 A 27 = Arist. *Meteor*. B1.353b6–11. Anaximander accounted for the occurrence of rains by pointing to the moist vapor evaporated "from the earth under the sun" (DK 12 A 11 = Hippol. *Ref*. 1.6.7) and his zoogony built on the assumption that living creatures arose from the wet evaporated by the heat of the sun, upon which they moved to the drier part (DK 12 A 11 = Hippol. *Ref*. 1.6.6: <ἐξ ὑγροῦ> ἐξατμιζομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου and DK 12 A 30 = Aet. 5.19.4: ἐν ὑγρῶι . . . ἐπὶ τὸ ξηρότερον as well as Censorin. *De die nat*. 4.7: *ex aqua terraque calefactis*). Naddaf (above, n.9) 123 n.24 aptly notes that in Anaximander life "results from the action of the hot and the dry on the cold and the wet." See also DK 12 A 9 = Simpl. *Phys*. 150.24: ἐναντιότητες δέ εἰσι θερμόν, ψυχρόν, ξηρόν, ὑγρόν, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα. See further Kahn (above, n.48) 163.

When explaining the occurrence of thunder, lightning, thunderbolts, hurricanes, and typhoons, Anaximander pointed to wind: "Whenever it is shut up in a thick cloud and then bursts out forcibly, through its fineness and lightness (κουφότητι), then the bursting makes the noise, while the rift against the blackness of the cloud makes the flash."[53] This testimony explicitly mentions, then, yet another opposite that appears in Theagenes' allegoresis ("the light"). However, Anaximander also accounted for the occurrence of winds in terms of the separation of the finest vapors of air[54] and this brings him very close[55] to Anaximenes (fl. c. 546 B.C.), who, as is well known, followed Anaximander in recognizing the importance of opposites for the generation of the world.[56] Having made air the originative substance, Anaximenes maintained that as it rarifies it becomes fire, and as it condenses it becomes wind, cloud, water, earth, and stones.[57] Importantly, Anaximenes combined these opposites with Anaximander's hot and cold, for he characterized what is condensed as "cold" (ψυχρόν) and what is rarefied as "hot" (θερμόν).[58] Thus, Anaximenes, too, attached great cosmogonical importance to the opposites that Theagenes discovered in Homer.

Finally, one should note that Anaximander's only surviving fragment shows him to have portrayed the interaction of opposites in terms of a conflict. Famously, he said that opposites "pay penalty and retribution to one another for their injustice according to the assessment of time."[59] There is a general consensus that when Anaximander equated the coming-to-be of things and their perishing with an ἀδικία that calls for δίκην καὶ τίσιν, he metaphorically (allegorically?) described the constant transformations of opposites into one another: the wet is dried into wind, the hot is cooled into cloud, and so on.[60] The extent to which he

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[53] DK 12 A 23 = Aetius 3.3.1–2, tr. Kirk (above, n.50) 138.

[54] DK 12 A 11 = Hippol. *Ref.* 1.6.7.

[55] Kirk (above, n.50) 138 suspects here "a degree of conflation."

[56] Kahn (above, n.48) 205 stresses that Anaximenes' derivation of all things from air "by the operation of heat (as the force of loosening and expansion) and of cold (as that of hardening and contraction) is in basic agreement with the physics of Anaximander."

[57] DK 13 A 5 = Simpl. *Phys*. 24.26–31. See also DK 13 A 7 = Hippol. *Ref.* 1.7.3.

[58] DK 13 B 1 = Plut. *De prim. frig.* 947F. See also DK 13 A 7 = Hippol. *Ref.* 1.7.2: τῶι ψυχρῶι καὶ τῶι θερμῶι.

[59] DK 12 B 1 = Simpl. *Phys*. 24.19–20, tr. Naddaf (above, n.9) 105, to whose excellent discussion this paper is greatly indebted here.

[60] Vlastos (above, n.48) 168–73; Guthrie (above, n.50) 80–81; Kirk, Raven, Schofield (above, n.50) 119–21; Graham (above, n.49) 35–37.

realized the metaphoricity of his language is open to discussion, but it is tantalizing to think that this metaphoricity might also have been conducive to Theagenes' allegorical identification of the battle of the gods with an interplay of the elements.

Of course, parallels do not prove influence. Yet, when we compare the above excerpts from the Ionian cosmologies with Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the battle of the gods, the similarities seem sufficient to suggest the possibility of an impact. The opposites of hot, cold, dry, wet, and light are explicitly mentioned by the Milesians. Also, the opposites of rarefied (thin) and condensed (thick) can, perhaps, be somehow related to Theagenes' light and heavy (given that Anaximenes combined them with Anaximander's hot and cold). Then, there is the depiction itself: the construal of the interaction between opposites in terms of a conflict (an ἀδικία that demands δίκην καὶ τίσιν) is likely to have created additional premises for Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the Homeric theomachy as the battle of the elements. Lastly, both Milesians substituted their principles or originative substances for the traditional gods,[61] which would have made it all the more natural for Theagenes to equate the Ionian opposites with the Homeric deities. If all this is true, then what was the purpose of his allegoresis?

Porphyry says that this purpose was an ἀπολογία of Homer. But it is tempting to follow those scholars who hypothesize that the desire to protect the authority of the poet and, thereby, to save the traditional *paideia* was not the only motive behind Theagenes' allegoresis. Gioia Maria Rispoli has cautiously suggested that Theagenes was a member of Rhegium's aristocracy, who might have sought to provide his community (the famous "1000") with an ideology that could strengthen its political supremacy.[62] Following Rispoli, Andrew Ford has convincingly argued that when Theagenes and other Homerists invented epic allegoresis, they "converted panhellenic epic into an esoteric text."[63] If that was so,

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[61] Thus, Anaximander's ἄπειρον is explicitly hailed as τὸ θεῖον (DK 12 A 15 = Arist. *Phys*. Γ4.203b13) and so is Anaximenes' air (DK 13 A 10 = Cic. *De nat. d.* 1.10.26: *aera deum* and Aet. 1.7.13: τὸν ἀέρα θεόν), from which, additionally, gods are to originate (DK 13 A 7 = Hippol. *Ref.* 1.7.1: ἐξ οὗ . . . θεοὺς καὶ θεῖα γίνεσθαι and DK 13 A 10 = Augustin. *C. D.* 8.2: *ipsos* [scil. *deos*] *ex aere ortos*).

[62] Rispoli (above, n.28) 256.

[63] Ford (above, n.9) 76. See also 78: "With allegoresis, the authoritative and venerable ancient history presented by Homer to all of Greece became a riddle to be deciphered by the wise."

Theagenes made Homer "enigmatic" so as to establish a select community, a secret fraternity of wise men, that could set their intellectual aristocracy against οἱ πολλοί by their arcane and recondite knowledge of the panhellenic song. Very much like the Orphics and Pythagoreans, this elite brotherhood or sect would thus be employing esotericism to secure a position of a certain cultural leadership. If this hypothesis is accepted,[64] then there is no reason to sharply separate the apologetic function of allegoresis from the appropriative one.

In all probability, Theagenes did want to exempt Homer from criticism by showing his poetry to represent allegorically various Milesian teachings. Yet, when demonstrating the Ionian cosmologies to be prefigured in Homer, he also had to appropriate his poems in such a way as to lend credence to the view that a skillful expounder of the poet could excavate the new physics from underneath the mythical narrative. Thus, the desire to exonerate Homer from the charges leveled at him by the first "physicists" and the desire to make use of his authority to sanction the position of a distinguished, knowledgeable audience would not be mutually exclusive. On the apologetic side, the traditional *paideia* was rescued, whereas on the appropriative side it became a domain of those who were privy to the wisdom hidden beneath the veneer of a seemingly naïve and/or outrageous myth.

V. Homer's Theology?

Origen provides us with a crucial testimony on Pherecydes' use of Homer:

> καὶ διηγούμενός γε τὰ Ὁμηρικὰ ἔπη φησὶ [ὁ Κέλσος] λόγους εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην τοὺς λόγους τοῦ Διὸς πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην λόγους αἰνίττεσθαι, ὡς ἄρα ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτὴν πλημμελῶς ἔχουσαν διαλαβὼν ἀναλογίαις τισὶ συνέδησε καὶ ἐκόσμησεν ὁ θεός, καὶ ὅτι τοὺς περὶ αὐτὴν δαίμονας, ὅσοι ὑβρισταί, τούτους ἀπορριπτεῖ κολάζων αὐτοὺς τῆι δεῦρο ὁδῶι. ταῦτα δὲ τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη οὕτω νοηθέντα τὸν Φερεκύδην φησὶν εἰρηκέναι τὸ 'κείνης δὲ τῆς μοίρας ἔνερθέν ἐστιν ἡ ταρταρίη μοῖρα· φυλάσσουσι δ' αὐτὴν θυγατέρες Βορέου Ἅρπυιαί τε καὶ Θύελλα· ἔνθα Ζεὺς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν ὅταν τις ἐξυβρίσηι'. τῶν τοιούτων δέ φησιν ἔχεσθαι νοημάτων καὶ τὸν [περὶ] τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς πέπλον ἐν τῆι πομπῆι τῶν Παναθηναίων ὑπὸ πάντων θεωρούμενον. δηλοῦται

[64] Naddaf (above, n.9) 109, for example, finds it "very persuasive."

> γάρ, φησίν, ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἀμήτωρ τις καὶ ἄχραντος δαίμων ἐπικρατεῖ θρασυνομένων τῶν γηγενῶν.
>
> (*C. Cels*. 6.42 = DK 7 B 5)

> Interpreting the Homeric verses, he [*sc*. Celsus] says that the words of Zeus to Hera are the words of god to matter, and that the words to matter hint enigmatically that the god took the matter, which from the beginning was in [a state of] disharmony, bound it by certain proportions and ordered it, and that the insolent *daimones* surrounding it, he casts them forth, punishing them by a journey to this world. He says that Pherecydes, having thus understood these Homeric verses, said: "Beneath that portion is the portion of Tartarus; the daughters of Boreas, the Harpies and Thyella, guard it; there Zeus expels any of the gods whenever one acts insolently." Connected to such concepts, he says, is the *peplos* of Athena that is seen by all in the Panathenaic procession. For it is clear from it, he says, that a motherless and immaculate *daimon* prevails over the arrogant giants.

In all probability, the quotation from Pherecydes' comes from his depiction of world divisions that must have been connected with the allocation of portions among the gods after the battle against Ophioneus.[65] Yet, even if Pherecydes did have in mind here Homer (*Il*. 8.13–16) and/or Hesiod (*Th.* 720–743), it is by no means obvious that his "understanding" of the relevant verses can be straightforwardly classified as an instance of allegoresis. This becomes evident when one compares Origen's testimony with that of Porphyry. The latter clearly reports Theagenes to have brought to light a hidden (i.e., allegorical) meaning of the Homeric theomachy (see above). Origen, on the other hand, merely relates how Pherecydes described the place to which Zeus banishes rebellious gods. Such a description does not yet warrant categorizing Pherecydes' approach as allegoresis.

Origen puts it in no uncertain terms that Celsus "interpreted" (διηγούμενος) Homer's words in a particular way, and the interpretation he cites can definitely be classified as allegorical: Celsus shows the verses of the poet to "enigmatically hint" (αἰνίττεσθαι) at another meaning of the poem. Thus, on Celsus' interpretation the binding of Hera (*Il*. 15.18–24) stands allegorically for the ordering of matter and the chastising of the *daimones*, whereas the *peplos* of Athena signifies the

[65] As suggested by Schibli (above, n.23) 100, to whose excellent discussion this paper is greatly indebted here. See also below, n.73.

daimon's mastery over the boastful giants.[66] Nevertheless, the problem with the testimony is that while Celsus purports Pherecydes to have understood Homer's words "in the same manner" (οὕτω) as he did, there is a serious discrepancy between Celsus' *interpretandum* and that of Pherecydes. The former refers to a passage where Zeus hurls gods to *earth* (*Il.* 15.21–24) and the latter—as Hermann Schibli notes[67]—alludes to a passage where gods are hurled into *Tartarus* (*Il.* 8.10–16). As it clearly would be a stretch to try to obfuscate the difference between γῆ and Τάρταρος, Origen's thirdhand citation should be regarded as a very suspect source for reconstructing Pherecydes' allegoresis.[68] After all, the direct quotation from Pherecydes does not appear to contain any obvious ὑπόνοια.

What we can say with certainty, then, is that Celsus allegorically interpreted poetry, but Origen's testimony does not make a compelling case that Pherecydes did the same. It only shows him to have appropriated traditional myths in an original way. Still, it has been very well established that Pherecydes made idiosyncratic use of various conventional myths for the purpose of elucidating his theology and, in the course of so doing, he also rationalized some of them. What remains doubtful is the extent to which such an approach to mythology can be equated with allegoresis.[69] It seems that many a scholar stampeded into doing so because they were misled by Pherecydes' common reputation, already in antiquity, as "enigmatic."[70] Yet, although Pherecydes himself was enigmatic, it does not necessarily follow that he also considered others to be

[66] While Celsus' primary motives must have been defensive, Pépin (above, n.4) 447–53 offers a very good discussion of this allegoresis.

[67] Schibli (above, n.23) 100 n.54.

[68] *Pace* Struck (above, n.19) 26–27. See also above, nn. 29, 31.

[69] With respect to the former (narrative) strategy, Wehrli (above, n.25) 71 rightly cautions that "any story can be cited as a mere comparison without it being an actual reinterpretation" (*Irgendeine Geschichte kann auch als bloßer Vergleich herangezogen werden, ohne daß man von einer Umdeutung eigentlich sprechen kann*). With respect to the latter (interpretative) strategy, Steinmetz (above, n.10) 19 aptly notes that "if one wanted to count also rationalistic interpretation of myths as allegoresis, then, for example, Thucydides or Euhemerus would be allegorists" (*Wollte man auch die rationalistische Mythendeutung zur Allegorese zählen, wären zum Beispiel Thukydides oder Euhemeros Allegoriker*).

[70] In one way or another, "enigmaticity" is attributed to Pherecydes by Diogenes Laertius (1.122: αἰνίσσομαι), Porphyry (*De antr. nymph.* 31 = DK 7 B 6 = Schibli F 88: αἰνιττομένου) and Proclus (*In Tim.* 23C = DK 7 A 12 = Schibli F 89: αἰνιγματώδης).

so. According to the distinction suggested above, we might say that a use of allegory by no means entails a recourse to allegoresis.

That we find allegory in Pherecydes is unquestionable. Suffice it to mention here the wedding of Zas with Chthonie and the embroidering of the robe,[71] the winged oak and the embroidered robe upon it,[72] or the battle between Kronos and Ophioneus.[73] The highly enigmatic nature of these depictions is nicely captured in Isidorus' diagnosis that Pherecydes

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[71] Schibli F 68 = DK 7 B 2 = B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, eds., *Greek Papyri*, Series II (Oxford 1897) 23 col. 1. Kirk (above, n.50) 61 interprets the embroidering as "an allegory of an actual creation-act" (see also 69). So does Naddaf (above, n.9) 111: "Is it plausible to consider the wedding of Zas and Chthonie and the embroidering of the cloth (DK 7B2) as anything but allegory?" While Schibli (above, n.23) 51 also interprets Zas' making of the robe as representing "his demiurgic function in the creation of the world," he abstains from using the term "allegory" here on the grounds that (56 n.12) "Pherekydes' creation account does not appear to be a deliberate form of extended metaphor" (contrast this position with Naddaf [above, n.9] 111: "It seems evident from a modern perspective that Pherecydes is 'consciously' allegorizing"). Whether intentionality is an inherent feature of allegory may be debated. Evidently, the boundary between deliberate and nondeliberate allegory can be very difficult to arbitrate (as acknowledged by Naddaf [above, n.9] 119), for it presupposes an access to the allegorist's state of mind (cf. Struck [above, n.19] 14). Still, for the purpose of present considerations, it suffices to point out that Schibli does perceive Pherecydes' narrative as a *composition* rather than *interpretation*. This is clear from his remarks that the robe woven by Zas is a mythical "image" that illustrates abstract ideas "through personifications and concrete images" (55–56).

[72] Schibli F 76 = DK 7 B 2 = Isidorus *apud* Clem. Al. *Strom*. 6.6.53.5. Whether Pherecydes allegorically presented (some aspects of) Anaximander's theory is questionable. Diels and von Fritz suggested this (critically discussed in Kirk, Raven, Schofield [above, n.50] 63–64) and scholars have been disputing about it ever since. Schibli (above, n.23) 70 n.53 follows Kirk in rejecting this hypothesis. H. Granger, ("The Theologian Pherecydes of Syros and the Early Days of Natural Philosophy," *HSCP* 103 [2007] 136 n.7) finds the interpretation offered by Diels and von Fritz to be "perhaps the most fantastic interpretation of Pherecydes." On the other hand, Naddaf (above, n.9) 127 n.55 believes that "given the dates and the parallels, it could be plausibly argued that Pherecydes is allegorizing Anaximander" (albeit he does not specifically refer to DK 7 B 2). It is noteworthy that in his discussion of the winged oak and the embroidered robe, Kirk (above, n.50) 65–66 n.2 eventually does speak (twice) of "Pherecydes' allegory."

[73] Schibli F 78 = DK 7 B 4 = Orig. *C. Cels*. 6.42. While the fight of Kronos against Ophioneus must be an episode from "the battle of the gods" (ἡ θεῶν μάχη) that Maximus mentions (*Philos*. 4.4.5–8 = DK 7 A 11 = Schibli F 73), it is probably connected with Pherecydes' description of world divisions and the assignment of portions to the gods after the battle against Ophioneus (see above, n.65). Schibli (above, n.23) 99 n.54 is cautious about characterizing this narrative as an allegory: "Whether Pherekydes also had an allegorical purpose for the Kronos–Ophioneus conflict may be debated (. . .), but we have no sure evidence thereof in the fragments." Again though, for the purpose of our considerations, the most important thing is that he understands Pherecydes' narrative as a *composition* rather than *interpretation* (cf. his argument [98–99] that Ophioneus is "a

"theologized allegorically" (ἀλληγορήσας ἐθεολόγησεν).[74] The question is, however, whether such uses of myths can be immediately categorized as instances of allegoresis. For, to reiterate, it is one thing to say that Pherecydes appropriated various myths when allegorically expounding his theology, and quite another to assert that he allegorically interpreted the poet(s).

It seems that the closest to allegoresis that can be found in Pherecydes appears in his etymologically based equations. A prime case in point could be his famous identification of Κρόνος with Time.[75] That this resembles allegoresis is due to the well-known fact that in antiquity etymology was basically a (very peculiar) technique of interpretation.[76] Given that the adjective ἔτυμος means "true" and the related technical term τὸ ἔτυμον stands for "the true sense of a word according to its origin,"[77] one may point to a crucial difference between ancient ἐτυμολογία and modern etymology: both study the origin of words or names, but the former also enquires into their "true" meanings. Consequently,

figure of evil and opposition" who represents "personified forces of nature that had to be subdued" so that order could be brought to the worlds of gods and men).

[74] Isidorus *apud* Clem. Al. *Strom*. 6.6.53.5 = DK 7 B 2 = Schibli F 76.

[75] Schibli F 65–66 = DK 7 A 9 = Probus *In Verg. Buc.* 6.31 and Hermias *Irr*. 12. Time is already personified in Solon (West F 36.3: ἐν δίκηι Χρόνου), but it is debatable whether the same can be said of Anaximander's time (DK 12 B 1: κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν). The connection between Kronos and Chronos appears in the Orphic authors (Kern F 68) and Plutarch reports (see above, n.8) this identification to have been quite common. One can only hypothesize that it might have originated with Pherecydes. See Kirk, Raven, Schofield (above, n.50) 57, n.1; M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971) 10; Schibli (above, n.23) 17 n.9, 27–33; Granger (above, n.72) 144–45.

[76] As stressed by, for example, M. Dixsaut, *Platon et la question de la pensée* (Paris 2000) 162; R. Goulet, "La méthode allégorique chez les Stoïciens," in G. Romeyer Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat, eds., *Les Stoïciens* (Paris 2005) 113–14; M. Domaradzki, "Theological Etymologizing in the Early Stoa," *Kernos* 25 (2012) 139–41. Buffière (above, n.3) 60–65 offers a very good discussion of etymology understood as a "means of exegesis" (*moyen d'exégèse*). So does H. Peraki-Kyriakidou, "Aspects of Ancient Etymologizing," *CQ* 52 (2002) 478–93. One can therefore hardly agree with Dawson (above, n.5) 6–7, who suggests that etymology "be distinguished from allegory" on the grounds that the former "lacks a narrative dimension." Such a characterization fails to do justice to the specificity of ancient ἐτυμολογία, which can have such a dimension, as it is frequently intertwined with allegoresis. This has been brilliantly recognized by Ford (above, n.9) 88: "There was little difference between allegorizing a divine figure in the tradition of Theagenes or etymologizing an apparently opaque word in the tradition of the sophists and grammarians."

[77] LSJ: ἔτυμος and ἔτυμον, τό. On the complex relation between ἔτυμος and ἀληθής, see T. Krischer, "ΕΤΥΜΟΣ und ΑΛΗΘΗΣ," *Philologus* 109 (1965) 161–74.

more often than not, this ἐτυμολογία transmogrifies into a certain type of allegoresis. This can be spectacularly observed when, for example, Plato investigates what he rather tellingly refers to as the ὀρθότης τῶν ὀνομάτων.[78] Consider his explanation of Κρόνος. Socrates deciphers the name as signifying "purity of mind" (τὸ καθαρὸν . . . τοῦ νοῦ) and derives it from the adjective "pure" (κορός).[79] A somewhat similar interpretation appears in the Derveni papyrus, where Κρόνος is identified with the "Mind" (Νοῦς) that is "striking" (κρούων) individual things against one another.[80] These interpretations show that both Socrates and the Derveni author allegorically equate Kronos with mind, while at the same time buttressing this allegoresis with an ἐτυμολογία: the former derives Κρόνος from κορὸς νοῦς and the latter from κρούων νοῦς. As such a coalescence of etymology and allegoresis is very typical of antiquity, it is scarcely surprising that Pherecydes' interpretation of Κρόνος as χρόνος also illustrates this.

Still, everything that has been said so far does not change the aforementioned fact that we do not have a single unquestionable testimony on Pherecydes' allegoresis that would be as unequivocal as Porphyry's testimony on Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the Homeric theomachy. All that we have are numerous examples of appropriating mythology for the purpose of expounding a theology, which also include an innovative use of ἐτυμολογία that verges on allegoresis.

Whilst Pherecydes' approach cannot be immediately classified as allegoresis, it should nonetheless be noted here that allegorical interpretation does presuppose that abstract concepts (e.g., χρόνος) can be personified and then woven into a narrative. That is precisely why allegorical personification (mode of composing) is often characterized as the inverse of allegorical interpretation (mode of reading). As Jon Whitman explains: "In procedure, personification is virtually the inverse of allegorical interpretation. While interpretive allegory moves, for instance, from the fictional Athena to the underlying meaning of 'wisdom,' compositional allegory begins with 'wisdom' itself, and constructs a fiction around it."[81] Clearly, just as a concept can be (allegorically) portrayed

[78] *Cra*. 422D1–2, 427D1–2; see also *Euthyd*. 277E4.

[79] Pl. *Cra*. 396B3–7. See D. Sedley, *Plato's* Cratylus (Cambridge 2003) 91.

[80] PD XIV.7; see also XV.6–8.

[81] Whitman (above, n.5) 4–5. B. Snell (*Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen* [Göttingen 1975] 208) observes that

as a person or deity, so can a person or deity be (allegorically) reduced to a mere concept. Hence, if one agrees that the narrative technique of personification naturally paves the way for the interpretative technique of bringing to light the hidden meaning(s) of a narrative, then one may surmise that Pherecydes' θεολογία is likely to have contributed to the rise of allegoresis.[82]

In connection with this, it should be stressed that Pherecydes' θεολογία spectacularly illustrates how challenging it may be to classify an ancient text as a straightforward example of "allegory," "allegoresis," or "etymology." Obviously, when such modern categories are applied to analyzing ancient thinkers, there is always the danger that the latter will be crammed into the self-imposed confines of the former. Given that many a contemporary scholar finds it at times difficult to clearly differentiate between the technique of *composition* ("allegory") and the technique of *interpretation* ("allegoresis" and/or "etymology"), one should not be flabbergasted that these are not neatly separated in a sixth-century B.C. thinker. As things stand, one might argue that it was the coalescence of what is nowadays designated as "allegory" and "etymology" that made Pherecydes an important figure in the gradual growth of allegoresis.

Also, bearing in mind that Aristotle counts Pherecydes among the "mixed" (μεμιγμένοι) theologians who "do not say everything mythically" (μὴ μυθικῶς πάντα λέγειν),[83] one may likewise view him as a sort of transitional figure between allegory and allegoresis. In support of this, one may cite what has been brilliantly highlighted by Robert Lamberton: "The distinction between 'theologizing' by *writing* poetry in which information about the gods was presented in a more-or-less veiled form and 'theologizing' by *interpreting* the poetry of the ancients in such a way as to bring out these meanings is, in fact, one that seems often to have been blurred in antiquity."[84] Given that both poetry and its interpretation could pass as θεολογία, one has all the more reasons to consider Pherecydes a transitional figure between allegory (theological *composition*) and allegoresis (theological *interpretation*).

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mythical names are "*Vorformen des Abstraktums*," whereas Buffière (above, n.3) 82 similarly notes that the gods of the *Iliad* and the *Theogony* are "*forces naturelles personnifiées*."

[82] The same can be said of the sophists (see Domaradzki [above, n.6] 255–56) and also of the early Pythagoreans (see M. Domaradzki, "Sull'allegoresi simbolica del primo pitagorismo," *Peitho. Examina antiqua* 4 [2013] 96–97).

[83] Arist. *Metaph.* 1091b8–9 = DK 7 A 7 = Schibli F 81.

[84] Lamberton (above, n.4) 24.

VI. Conclusion

Although the evidence in favor of Pherecydes' allegoresis is indirect at best, one should nevertheless refrain from denying him a place in the emergence of this practice. Porphyry's testimony does suggest that Theagenes was the first to have allegorically interpreted Homer, but it could be providing us with a somewhat distorted or at least exaggerated picture of Theagenes' allegoresis. On the other hand, Pherecydes' appropriation of mythology is likely to have created premises for allegorical interpretation of poetry (even though the testimonies we have do not warrant classifying his approach as allegoresis *sensu stricto*). As Pherecydes' θεολογία comprises abundant use of myths and allegories, one can conjecture that he might have allegorically interpreted Homer so as to demonstrate that this poetry in one way or another anticipated his teachings (as has been noted, his ἐτυμολογία sits very well with the tradition of revealing the hidden meaning of a narrative). In conclusion, it should be emphasized that, given the terribly meagre, fragmentary, indirect, and late nature of the extant testimonies on the beginnings of ancient allegoresis, it seems much safer to consider both Pherecydes and Theagenes as important figures in the emergence of this practice. That way we can be fairly certain that the rise of allegoresis had already taken place in the sixth century B.C.

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