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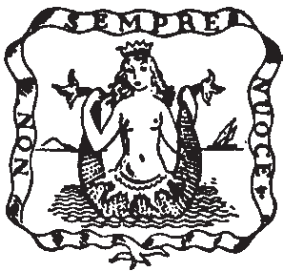

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STUDI E SAGGI

Mikolaj Domaradzki

THEAGENES OF RHEGIUM AND THE RISE OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION

Abstract

The present paper investigates the pivotal role that Theagenes of Rhegium came to play in the development of ancient allegoresis. The main thesis of the article has it that the thinker's resorting to allegorical interpretation was, at least to some extent, prompted by the emergence and flourishing of the Ionian philosophy. Consequently, it is argued here that Theagenes' hermeneutical activity aimed not only to exonerate Homer from the charges of impiety but also to make use of his authority so as to promote the novel doctrines of the Milesian philosophers. While Theagenes himself did not present a rational account of the world that could be compared to the work of Thales and his successors, Theagenes' allegoresis seems to have been an important transitional stage in the complex process of the philosophical transformation of *mythos* into *logos*. Thus, although Theagenes' practice of reading scientific ideas into Homer may at times seem strained, arbitrary, far-fetched and even preposterous, the naïveté of the first exegetical efforts should not cloud their cultural import, for it is owing to such daring attempts as those of Theagenes that Hellenic thought eventually paved the way for modern hermeneutics.

Keywords

Theagenes of Rhegium, allegorical interpretation, Homer, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Milesian philosophy

1. *Introduction*

The aim of the present paper is twofold: firstly, to discuss the key role that Theagenes of Rhegium played in the development of allegorical interpretation; and, secondly, to suggest the possibility that his use of allegoresis was not entirely independent of the emergence of philosophy, but, at least partially, actuated by it. Naturally, it is impossible to present anything like a definitive study of the first exponent of hidden meanings in Homer due to the scarcity of the testimonies. Our information about Theagenes is very fragmentary and the indirectness of the extant sources forbids any bold hypotheses. However, if we assume that at least one of the reasons for the emergence of philosophy was a growing dissatisfaction with the then naïve mythology and, thus, a desire to *rationally* account for the whole of the universe, then it is worth considering why the appearance of the first allegorical interpretation of Homer coincides so remarkably with the appearance of the first philosophical accounts of the world.

While allegorical interpretation consists in reading new meanings into old narratives, the reason behind the practice is generally the desire either to exonerate the author from the charges of impiety or to make use of their authority so as to lend credence to a novel doctrine. The present article aims to show that the two functions of allegoresis often coexist and that, therefore, allegorical interpretation can be perceived as a crucial *transitional* stage that may have contributed to (or even paved the way for) the philosophical transformation of *mythos* into *logos*. Consequently, I would like to argue that Theagenes may have been motivated by the objective not only to exculpate Homer but also to find in his mythical language cosmological conceptions of the Ionian philosophers. I will assume that being contemporary with the first philosophers made it natural for Theagenes to search in Homer for various nascent philosophical views.

2. *The apologetic dimension of Theagenes' allegoresis*

As our information about Theagenes is unfortunately meager and mediated, scholars have formulated mutually exclusive and frequently

rather extreme assessments of his work [1]. However, I can see no principal reason why we should impugn the testimonies we have. In connection with the rise of allegorical interpretation, Porphyry clearly relates that «this ancient mode of defending (οὗτος [...] τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος)» originates from Theagenes of Rhegium, «who first wrote about Homer (ὅς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὁμήρου)» [2] (8, 2 D.-K.). On balance, I am inclined to regard Porphyry's testimony that Theagenes interpreted Homer allegorically as reliable [3]. Moreover, we can

[1] Thus, Tate in his classical paper argued that the idea of allegorical interpretation should rather be ascribed to Pherecydes of Syros, claiming the contribution of Theagenes to be widely exaggerated, cfr. J. Tate, *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, «Classical Review», xli (1927) pp. 214-5. More recently, Brisson has also expressed his doubts whether we can attribute the invention of allegory to Theagenes, cfr. L. Brisson, *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe*, i: *Sauver les mythes*, Paris 1996, p. 55. For a critical assessment of Brisson's view see G. Naddaf, *Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy*, in W. Wians (ed.), *Logos and Mythos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature*, New York 2009, p. 120. The majority of scholars justly, in my opinion, consider Theagenes to be the father of allegorical interpretation. See especially the following works: F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensèe grecque*, Paris 1956, p. 105; A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*, Princeton 2002, p. 72; M. Gatzemeier, *Philosophie als Theorie der Rationalität*, Bd. 1: *Zur Philosophie der wissenschaftlichen Welt*, Würzburg 2005, p. 340; N.J. Richardson, *Homeric Professors in the Age of the Sophists*, in A. Laird (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Ancient Literary Criticism*, Oxford 2006, p. 64. The view that Theagenes was the first allegorist was most forcefully put forward by Buffière in his monumental study. The scholar assumed it to be a plain truth that allegorical exegesis commenced with Theagenes of Rhegium, who «jetait les bases de cette exégèse allégorique qui devait se prolonger jusqu'à la mort de l'hellénisme» (F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 105).

[2] While the translations of Theagenes are mine, the translations of the Presocratic philosophers have been taken from G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Cambridge 1983 (sometimes, though, with small modifications).

[3] Porphyry's testimony that Theagenes «wrote (ἔγραψε)» about Homer is also confirmed by the *Suda* (8, 4 D.-K.: γράψας) and Tatian, who reports Theagenes to have studied «Homer's poetry, descent and floruit» (8, 1 D.-K.). However, Porphyry was a Neoplatonist Homeric commentator and for that reason it is possible that he read into Theagenes certain Pythagorean and/or Stoic ideas, cfr. F. Wehrli, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum*, Borna-Leip-

be also fairly certain that Theagenes defended Homer [4]. As the thinker is reported by Tatian to have lived in the times of Cambyses (8, 1 D.-K.),

zig 1928, pp. 89-90; J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, Paris 1976, pp. 98-9 and R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Berkeley 1986, pp. 31-43. Wehrli, who acknowledges the difficulties in determining the scope of contamination of the source, is nevertheless willing to perceive the testimony as «vielleicht gute Überlieferung von Theagenes» (F. Wehrli, *op. cit.*, p. 89). Thus, although the scholar considers the possibility of other influences, he does not completely rule out the eventuality that Theagenes was an «Erfinder der Allegorie» (*ibid.*, p. 91). Pépin takes issue with Wehrli as to the source of the influence and cautiously observes that «le scholiaste prêtait peut-être à Théagène plus qu'il n'a dit en réalité» (J. Pépin, *op. cit.*, p. 98). R. Lamberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-43, offers not only a thorough discussion of the possibility of the first Pythagoreans' influence but also a survey of the literature on the topic. Interestingly though, the scholar reaches the following conclusion: «The evidence for early Pythagorean concern with Homer, then, is considerable, but evidence that demonstrates the early Pythagorean sources of the reading of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as mystical allegories is slim at best» (*ibid.*, p. 43). Against these scholars, I am therefore inclined to side with Buffière who refuses to believe that «les Pythagoriciens aient eu grande part à la première exégèse allégorique d'Homère, l'exégèse physique» (F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 105). In what follows, I will argue that the Milesian thinkers (especially Anaximander and Anaximenes), rather than the Pythagoreans, provided the philosophical background for Theagenes' allegorical interpretation. For scholars who share my view see F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 82; M. Gatzemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 340 and G. Naddaf, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[4] J. Tate, *On the History of Allegorism*, «Classical Quarterly», xxviii (1934) p. 108, considers the significance of Theagenes to be greatly overrated, since he recognizes him as nothing more than a «defensive allegorist». In a series of articles, the scholar distinguishes between two forms of ancient allegorism: "defensive" and "positive". While the former aims to exculpate the poets from the charges of impiety, the latter serves the purpose of expressing views which initially were only partly philosophical, cfr. Id., *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, cit., pp. 214-5; *Plato and Allegorical Interpretation*, «Classical Quarterly», xxiii (1929) pp. 142-54; *On the History of Allegorism*, cit., pp. 105-7. As Tate argues that the rise of allegorical interpretation was not primarily motivated by the desire to exonerate Homer and Hesiod from charges of immorality, he plays down the importance of Theagenes' apologetic allegoresis, emphasizing that the ultimate reason behind the practice of allegorical interpretation was the desire to bring out various intuitively formulated philosophical truths that the given myths hid. I would like to argue that Tate's distinction is untenable, since the two forms of allegory are not mutually

which was from 529 to 522 B.C, he must have lived roughly at the same time as when the first philosophers began to launch their all-out attacks against Homer and Hesiod. We learn from Diogenes Laertios that Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Xenophanes totally repudiated the gods of the poets [5]. The criticism has been most pithily expressed by Xenophanes, who was Theagenes' contemporary [6] and who observed that «Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure (ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος) among men» (21 B 11 D.-K) [7].

Evidently, then, Theagenes must have responded to charges such as these. Porphyry relates that the then current stories about the gods were generally held to be «infelicitous (τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου)» and «improper (τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς)», consequently upon which they all too often

exclusive, as has been shown by P.T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*, Princeton 2004, pp. 14-5. Thus, I will argue that the case of Theagenes perfectly illustrates that the apologetic and philosophical functions of allegory are interrelated and, therefore, complementary.

[5] For Pythagoras, see VIII 21, for Heraclitus, see IX 1 and for Xenophanes, see IX 18.

[6] As A. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 68, points out Rhegium was also «near the center of Xenophanes' activity».

[7] Translation by J.H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon*. Fragments, a Text and a Translation with a Commentary, Toronto 1992, p. 23. Xenophanes' rational criticism of human projections onto deity had far-reaching repercussions, cfr. G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 167; J.H. Lesher, *Xenophanes' Scepticism*, in J.P. Anton-A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Albany 1983, p. 26; R. Olson, *Science Deified and Science Defied: The Historical Significance of Science in Western Culture*, California 1982, p. 83. Dodds hailed Xenophanes as one of the fathers of the Greek Enlightenment, cfr. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, California 1951, p. 180. The revolutionary views of Xenophanes cannot be questioned. His rationalism manifests itself clearly in such observations as his explanation of a rainbow as a cloud (i.e., natural phenomenon) rather than a deity, cfr. 21 B 32 D.-K. Barnes rightly points out that «Xenophanes implies that there is, in reality, nothing divine about those phenomena: rainbows have a purely natural explanation» (J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London-New York 1982, p. 74. Cfr. also A. Finkelberg, *Studies in Xenophanes*, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology», XCIII (1990) pp. 146-7. However, Xenophanes' desire to present a thoroughly scientific account of the world did not prevent him from making use of certain mythical formulations, cfr. *infra*, note 28.

aroused a hostile criticism that «myths about Gods are not appropriate (οὐ γὰρ πρέποντας τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους)» (8, 2 D.-K). Furthermore, Porphyry makes it also clear that it was precisely «in the light of this accusation (πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην κατηγορίαν)» that certain thinkers «rid themselves of the literal interpretation and consider everything to have been spoken as allegories of the nature of the elements, such as in the case of the conflict between the gods (ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐπιλύουσιν, ἀλληγορίαι πάντα εἰρῆσθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως, οἷον <ἐν> ἐναντιώσεσι τῶν θεῶν)» (*ibid.*).

This testimony puts it in no uncertain terms that allegorical interpretation arose from attempts to explain the great myths of the *Iliad*. The myth that is referred to here is the battle of the gods which is presented in the XX book of the *Iliad*, where we are told how Zeus made it so that «the gods turned against the gods (οἳ μὲν θεοὶ ἄντα θεῶν ἴσαν)» (*Il.* Y 75). While the poems of Homer were often regarded as the supreme authority on all, especially moral, issues, the description of the theomachy is evidently outrageous: the gods get into a last-ditch fight and, thus, prove incapable of curbing their frenzied passions. Such an image of the gods is not only naïvely anthropomorphic, but also socially pernicious, since it propagates immoral conduct. Small wonder that the philosophers rejected the idea that the immortal gods descended to the mortal humans to battle against one another [8]. Now,

[8] See Plat. *resp.* 378 c-d. Plato accuses the poets of instigating bloodshed rather than harmony among the citizens. When repudiating tales such as that «Hera was enchained by her son (Ἥρας δὲ δεσμοὺς ὑπὸ ὑέος)» and «Hephaestus was flung by his father when trying to defend his mother from being beaten (Ἡφαίστου ῥίψεις ὑπὸ πατρός, μέλλοντος τῇ μητρὶ τυπτομένῃ ἀμυνεῖν)» and all «such battles of the gods (θεομαχίας ὅσας)», Plato makes it clear that such narratives «should not be admitted into the State (οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν)», irrespective of «whether they have an hidden meaning or not (οὔτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν)», because «a young person is incapable of judging what is allegorical and what is literal (ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὅ μή)» (*ibid.* 378 d). Plato's objection is clear: the existing mythology instills immoral convictions into ordinary men. Especially, the idea of a theomachy may encourage riots and anarchy. Thus, the philosopher is concerned that «various and countless hostilities of gods and heroes with their relatives and kinsmen (ἔχθρας πολλὰς καὶ παντοδαπὰς θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων πρὸς συγγενεῖς τε καὶ οἰκείους αὐτῶν)»

while the myth of a pitched battle among immortal deities called for an explanation, the explanation provided by Theagenes was *not* merely apologetic. Theagenes lived in the age when the Milesians began to investigate such physical issues as the genesis, structure and composition of the universe and, consequently, he read into Homer the cosmological problems posed by the first philosophers.

On Theagenes' physical exegesis the battle of the gods becomes the battle of the elements, where «the dry battles with the moist, the hot – with the cold, and the light – with the heavy (τὸ ξηρὸν τῶι ὑγρῶι καὶ τὸ θερμὸν τῶι ψυχρῶι μάχεσθαι καὶ τὸ κοῦφον τῶι βαρεῖ)» (8, 2 D.-K). While the nature of the battle is further illustrated by the fact that «water can extinguish fire and fire can dry out water (τὸ μὲν ὕδωρ σβεστικὸν εἶναι τοῦ πυρός, τὸ δὲ πῦρ ξηραντικὸν τοῦ ὕδατος)», this applies «as well to all the elements, from which everything is composed: opposition arises and although once in a while a partial destruction is admitted, the whole lasts eternally (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)» (*ibid.*)[9].

Instead of the immortal gods, Theagenes has the eternal cosmic

will render it impossible to promote the idea that «no citizen has ever been hated by another (οὐδεὶς πώποτε πολίτης ἕτερος ἑτέρῳ ἀπήχθετο)» (*ibid.* 378 c). Plato's comments demonstrate that the allegorical movement must already have been developed *before* his times. Cfr. F. Wehrli, *op. cit.*, p. 89; J. Tate, *Plato and Allegorical Interpretation*, cit., pp. 146-8; F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 124 and R. Lamberton, *op. cit.*, p. ix. Plato is perfectly aware of the fact that the myths he mentions were given allegorical interpretation, but he totally rejects the idea of discovering any hidden meaning in them. On the relation between the earlier term ὑπόνοια and its later equivalent ἀλληγορία, see e.g. F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-8; J. Pépin, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-92; J. Whitman, *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 263-8 and C. Blönnigen, *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrischen Patristik*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 11-9.

[9] While the rest of the Porphyrian scholion on the battle of the gods attributes to Theagenes the so called "moral allegory", the present paper will deal only with the "physical allegory" in the thinker. I realize that the distinction is somewhat arbitrary and that early Pythagoreanism *is* a very likely source of inspiration

opposites fight one another. If we ask what made Theagenes interpret the battle of the gods cosmologically, then the most plausible explanation will be that the inspiration came from philosophy. After all, it was in the times of Theagenes that the first philosophers began not only to attack Homer, but also to offer their cosmological alternatives. In this context it has to be stressed that while only some philosophers attacked Homer and Hesiod *explicitly* [10], they all rejected the poets *implicitly*, precisely by presenting their alternative cosmologies [11]. Thus, when the Milesians presented their scientific accounts of the universe, in which the genesis, structure and composition of the world were explained in terms of various elements' interacting with one another, it was natural for Theagenes to search for their cosmological theories in the works of Homer. Although the nature of our testimonies precludes any certainty, it seems nevertheless quite conceivable that the Milesian thinkers, especially Anaximander and Anaximenes, provided the philosophical background for Theagenes' allegorical interpretation. Let us investigate this possibility.

3. *The philosophical dimension of Theagenes' allegoresis*

When seeking to rationally account for the universe as a whole, Anaximander presented a cosmology that is of great relevance for understanding not only numerous subsequent philosophical conceptions [12] but also Theagenes' allegoresis, since it presupposes «the changing of the four elements into each other (τὴν εἰς ἄλληλα μεταβολὴν

for Theagenes' moral allegory (cfr. *supra*, note 3). Still, the complexity of the issue prompts me to leave it for another paper.

[10] For Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Xenophanes see *supra*, note 5, for Plato see *supra*, note 8.

[11] Even though many of them retained some mythical legacy see *infra*, notes 27, 28 and 29.

[12] Kahn argues that Anaximander's view of science dominated the entire Presocratic tradition, cfr. C.H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, Indianapolis 1994, p. 199: «Anaximander's conception of the world is [...] the prototype of the Greek view of nature as cosmos».

τῶν τεττάρων στοιχείων)» (12 A 9 D.-K.). Anaximander developed a theory of opposites that explained all natural phenomena in terms of an interaction of those opposites. Thus, according to Anaximander's cosmology, at first the whole area round the earth was moist, but gradually dried by the sun. The part that vaporized made the winds and the turnings of the sun and the moon, while that which was left became sea (12 A 27 D.-K.). With regard to the origin of the world, Anaximander is reported to have held that:

12 A 10 D.-K.: τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἀιδίου γόνιμον θερμοῦ τε καὶ ψυχροῦ κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου ἀποκριθῆναι καί τινα ἐκ τούτου φλογὸς σφαῖραν περιφυῆναι τῶι περὶ τὴν γῆν ἀέρι ὡς τῶι δένδρωι φλοιόν· ἧστινος ἀπορραγείσης καὶ εἴς τινας ἀποκλεισθείσης κύκλους ὑποστῆναι τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὴν σελήνην καὶ τοὺς ἀστέρας.
(«that which is productive from the eternal of hot and cold was separated off at the coming-to-be of this world, and a kind of sphere of flame from this was formed round the air surrounding the earth, like bark around a tree. When this was broken off and shut off in certain circles, the sun and the moon and the stars were formed») [13].

Anaximander presented a picture of the genesis and structure of the universe that was typical of the first Greek cosmologies: the universe was assumed to have emerged from various elements' interacting with one another under the influence of a force. In this case the force was the Indefinite ("the eternal") which brought about the generation of the opposites: flame (the hot) and air (the cold). While the cosmogonical process involved a condensation of air into earth and the disintegration of the fiery ball into the heavenly bodies, the hot and the cold were «the basic materials of

[13] F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 88, has convincingly argued that in Anaximander we can already find: «les quatre éléments, qu'Empédocle n'aura qu'à codifier». Kirk cautioned that the opposites in Anaximander could actually be a Peripatetic formulation G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 120. However, the scholar did not succeed in making a good case for his thesis. For a more recent support of Buffière's opinion see G. Naddaf, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Cfr. also D.W. Graham, *Explaining the Cosmos: The Ionian Tradition of Scientific Philosophy*, Princeton 2006, p. 40 and C.H. Kahn, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

the cosmos»[14]. The hot produced a ball of fire around the earth, which generated the sun, the moon and the stars. The cold became air.

In the context of possible sources of inspirations for Theagenes' allegorical interpretation it has to be stressed that Anaximander himself described the conflict of the aforementioned opposites allegorically. The philosopher metaphorically asserted that the existing things «pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time (διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν)» (12 B 1 D.-K.). When Anaximander equated coming-to-be and destruction with some "injustice" that calls for penance, he allegorically presented the conflict of the opposites that continually overcome one another: the moist is dried into wind, the hot is cooled into cloud and so on[15]. This metaphorical description of the transformations of the opposites into one another seems to be reflected in Theagenes' allegorical identification of the battle of the gods with an eternal struggle of the elements. If Anaximander presented a war of hostile cosmic forces as the very core of his cosmogony, then it may have inspired Theagenes to read this idea into Homer.

While Anaximander's cosmogony presupposed such opposites as hot and cold, Anaximenes followed his master in recognizing the significance of the opposites for the emergence of the world[16]. Having made air the principle underlying everything, Anaximenes assumed it «to differ in its substantial nature by rarity and density (διαφέρειν δὲ μανότητι καὶ πυκνότητι κατὰ τὰς οὐσίας)» (13 A 5 D.-K.). Thus, when «made finer, it becomes fire (ἀραιούμενον μὲν πῦρ γίνεσθαι)», and when «made thicker, it becomes wind, then cloud; when even more

[14] J. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[15] Cfr. D.W. Graham, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-7; G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-20 and W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, I: *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*, Cambridge 1980, pp. 80-1.

[16] C.H. Kahn, *op. cit.*, p. 205, rightly observes 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».

thickened, it becomes water, then earth, then stones and the rest thereof (πυκνούμενον δὲ ἄνεμον, εἶτα νέφος, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ὕδωρ, εἶτα γῆν, εἶτα λίθους, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα ἐκ τούτων)» (*ibid.*).

Anaximenes explained all changes as resulting from an interaction of one pair of opposites, the rare and the dense. The originative substance is air which changes by condensation and rarefaction: as it rarifies, air becomes fire and as it condenses, it undergoes a complex transformation from a gaseous body through fluid, then solid: wind, cloud, rain, water, ice, earth, stones [17]. Anaximenes adopted also Anaximander's hot-and-cold opposition. The philosopher regarded the cold and the hot as «common dispositions of matter that supervene on changes (πάθη κοινὰ τῆς ὕλης ἐπιγιγνόμενα ταῖς μεταβολαῖς)», for he believed «compressed and condensed» matter to be cold, while that which is «fine and relaxed» to be hot (13 B 1 D.-K.). Thus, Anaximenes established a correlation between the rarefaction and condensation of air, and its changes in temperature: thin air is hot, whereas thick air is cold. We may therefore observe that Anaximenes developed further Anaximander's theory of oppositions which appears to have exerted a great impact on not only the later philosophers, but also on the first allegorist.

When we contrast the above excerpts from Anaximander and Anaximenes with Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the battle of the gods, the similarities prove far too striking to be accidental: we have the moist that is dried (or "battles" with the dry), the hot that is confronted by the cold and the whole that is characterized as eternal. While Anaximander's and Anaximenes' cosmogonies are based on the generation of such opposites as hot – cold, moist – dry and their transformations into flame, air, winds, earth and sea, they seem to be echoed in Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the battle of the gods as the battle of the cosmic elements. If this suggestion is right, then the rise of allegory in ancient Greece may have been brought about by the Milesian philosophy: the quest for scientific truths in Homer may have been actuated (although probably inadvertently) by

[17] Cfr. D.W. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 46 and J. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

thinkers, such as Anaximander and Anaximenes, whose physical and cosmological ideas may have inspired the first allegorist to look for the same conceptions in the works of the poet [18].

Obviously, we cannot be absolutely sure that Theagenes was actually *directly* familiar with the treaties of the Milesians. However, his allegorical transformation of the Homeric gods into the cosmic elements seems to justify the following conjecture: the first allegorical interpretation may have been triggered by the philosophical teachings of Anaximander and Anaximenes, whom Theagenes was contemporary with and whose ideas were probably known to him more or less *indirectly* [19]. Clearly, the physical allegoresis could not have appeared out of

[18] We know that in the 5th century B.C. Metrodorus of Lampsacus treated the poems of Homer as an allegorical exposition of certain philosophical ideas. When the thinker «transferred everything to the allegorical level (πάντα εἰς ἀλληγορίαν μετάγων)» so that gods such as Hera, Athena and Zeus became nothing but «hypostases of nature and arrangements of the elements (φύσεως δὲ ὑποστάσεις καὶ στοιχείων διακοσμήσεις)» (61, 3 D.-K.), he clearly was not concerned with defending Homer. There is a general consent among scholars that Metrodorus read the scientific conceptions of the Anaxagorean school into Homer, cfr. W. Nestle, *Metrodors Mythendeutung*, «Philologus», lxvi (1907) pp. 503-10; H. Fränkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens. Literarische und philosophiegeschichtliche Studien*, München 1960, pp. 390-7 and F. Krafft, *Geschichte der Naturwissenschaft*, Bd. 1: *Die Begründung einer Wissenschaft von Natur durch die Griechen*, Freiburg 1971, pp. 141-8. In particular F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-32, has proven beyond any doubt that Metrodorus' allegorical system needs to be interpreted in the context of Anaxagoras' physics. See also N.J. Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-70; J. Tate, *Plato and Allegorical Interpretation*, cit., pp. 142-4 and Id., *On the History of Allegorism*, cit., pp. 105-8; J. Pépin, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101; M. Gatzemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 378; G. Naddaf, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-9; P.T. Struck, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9 and D. Obbink, *Allegory and Exegesis in the Derveni Papyrus: The Origin of Greek Scholarship*, in G.R. Boys-Stones (ed.), *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, Oxford 2003, p. 180. I discuss Metrodorus' allegoresis in M. Domaradzki, *Allegoresis in the Fifth Century BC*, «Eos», xcvii (2010) pp. 236-42. If allegory and philosophy were intimately connected in the 5th century, then it is plausible that they were not poles apart in the 6th century.

[19] We can assume that allegorical interpretations, just as philosophical teachings, circulated freely in the then communities: they were frequently exchanged and debated upon in a lively manner. This is reflected in the testimonies we have. Cfr. Plat. *Ion* 530 c-d and Xenoph. *symp.* iii 6.

nowhere and the fact that its development runs parallel with the development of Presocratic philosophy can hardly be labeled as a matter of pure chance. Living in the times of the first philosophers, Theagenes might have believed that a proper (i.e. allegorical) reading of Homer would contribute to a better understanding of such philosophical questions as the origin, structure and composition of the universe.

Apart from Theagenes' reading of theomachy as a figurative description of a clash of the elemental forces, there are more parallelisms between the first allegorist and the first philosophers. We know that Theaegenes' strategy consisted in identifying fire with Apollo, Helios or Hephaestus, water – with Poseidon or Scamander, the moon – with Artemis, air – with Hera, and so on (8, 2 D.-K.). Now, while Theagenes equated the elements with the deities, both Anaximander and Anaximenes, typically of the Presocratic thinkers, perceived their principles or the originative substances of the universe as divine. Accordingly, Anaximander's ἄπειρον is said to «surround all things and steer all (περιέχειν ἅπαντα καὶ πάντα κυβερνᾶν)», for which reason it is regarded as «the divine (τὸ θεῖον)», since it is «immortal (ἀθάνατον)» and «indestructible (ἀνώλεθρον)» (12 A 15 D.-K.). Evidently, then, Anaximander' indefinite has all the necessary characteristics of a Homeric deity: it is all-embracing and all-governing, it is unlimited in power and immortal. It is not otherwise for Anaximenes. The philosopher assumed his air to be the principle «from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and that shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being (ἐξ οὗ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ γεγονότα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ θεοὺς καὶ θεῖα γίνεσθαι)» (13 A 7 D.-K.). He overtly considered air to be god (13 A 10 D.-K.), and – as Augustine relates – made it clear that the gods «did not create air, but rather originated from it (*non tamen ab ipsis* [scil. *deis*] *aerem factum, sed ipsos ex aere ortos*)» (*ibid.*). If the gods arose from the all-encompassing air, then it is all the more natural to hail air as deity. Given the divine characteristics of Anaximander's indefinite and Anaximenes' air, it is not surprising at all that Theagenes interpreted the Homeric gods as the divine cosmic forces. If the philosophers characterized their "deities" in terms of omnipresence and sovereignty, then it must have been

quite natural for Theagenes to substitute the divine cosmic elements for the Homeric gods[20]. Thus, the gods of Homer became personified elements of the universe and the poet was assumed to have described the eternal laws of the universe under the guise of primitive mythology.

It is noteworthy that Anaximander did not identify his ἄπειρον with water, air, earth or fire, for if one of the elements were infinite it would destroy all the others[21]. While Anaximander considered *the whole* of the elements generated by the indefinite to be divine, the idea is also reflected in Theagenes' identifying the particular gods with the particular elements and his claiming «the whole to last eternally (τὰ πάντα δὲ μένειν αἰωνίως)» (8, 2 D.-K.). In other words, for Anaximander and for Theagenes the divine is not different from the world but identical with it. In regarding the whole of the universe with its battling forces as divine, Theagenes followed the Presocratic thinkers for whom «all things are full of gods (πάντα πλήρη θεῶν εἶναι)» (11 A 22 D.-K.) and, consequently, the whole of reality is divine.

Finally, Theagenes' allegorical interpretation might also have been inspired by the tendency to speak in allegories, which was very common among the first philosophers. Let us return to Anaximander's metaphorical remark that the existing things «pay penalty and retribu-

[20] In a similar vein, Diogenes of Apollonia identified Anaximenes' air with Homer's Zeus. When trying to reconcile the views of Anaximenes with those of Anaxagoras, the philosopher assumed the «infinite and eternal» air to be the substance of the universe (64 A 5 D.-K.) and attributed to air all the characteristics of a deity: intelligence (64 B 5 D.-K.: τὴν νόησιν ἔχον), control over all men and all things (*ibid.*: πάντας καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν) and omnipresence (*ibid.*: ἐν παντὶ ἐνεῖναι). This divinity of air made it natural for Diogenes to identify air with Zeus. The philosopher is reported to have «praised (ἐπαινεῖ)» Homer for speaking «truly (ἀληθῶς)» about the deity rather than «mythically (μυθικῶς)», as he considered Zeus to stand for air in the poet (64 A 8 D.-K.). The equation of Zeus with air was probably due to the parallel between omniscience and omnipresence that the philosopher drew, cfr. his remark that «Zeus knows everything (πᾶν εἰδέναι τὸν Δία)» (*ibid.*). Cfr. also F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90 and J. Pépin, *op. cit.*, p. 101. For my discussion of Diogenes' allegoresis see M. Domaradzki, *Allegoresis in the Fifth Century BC*, cit., pp. 242-5.

[21] Cfr. Aristot. *phys.* Γ 5. 204 b 22.

tion to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time (διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν)» (12 B 1 D.-K.). In this cryptic fragment, we have a personification of Time, highlighting the impartiality and/or inescapability of the "judge", and a metaphor according to which the superiority of one substance over its opposite is "injustice", whereas the restoration of equality is "punishment"[22]. As already mentioned, Anaximander *allegorically* identifies coming-to-be and destruction with some "injustice" so as to (metaphorically) describe the conflict of the opposites that battle with one another. Hence, each victory is an "injustice" and the "judge" (i.e., Time) settles the score and brings every advantage to an end. Naturally, the anthropomorphism of Anaximander's account should not make us forget that there is more *logos* than *mythos* in the thinker, but the fact that the philosopher himself makes use of an allegory substantiates the hypothesis that Theagenes had yet another reason to allegorically interpret Homer's poem as a *prefiguration* of the Ionian philosophy. In the light of this, one may even conclude that it did not require that much effort on Theagenes' part to assume that beneath the superficial and contingent stories of the *Iliad* one can find profound scientific truths hidden by the poet: if a philosopher could make use of allegory, then why should not a poet be allowed to do the same[23]?

[22] See *supra*, note 15.

[23] Numerous scholars have pointed out that the germs of allegorical interpretation were already contained in the works of Homer, cfr. S.G.P. Small, *On Allegory in Homer*, «Classical Journal», xliv (1949) pp. 423-30; F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 104 and A. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 69. For instance, S.G.P. Small, *On Allegory in Homer*, cit., p. 423, hypothesized that the idea of allegorical interpretation was suggested to Theagenes «by the fact that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* [...] undoubtedly contain not a few genuine allegories, not imposed, not merely excogitated by the poet's over-zealous defenders, but intended by him and actually implicit in his own words».

4. *An assessment of Theagenes' allegoresis*

Where does that leave us with Tate's unfavorable assessment of Theagenes' importance and his disdain for the «merely defensive allegorist»[24]? Evidently, Theagenes did want to exculpate Homer, but his apology of the poet was much more than that, since in the final analysis Theagenes *rationalized* Homer. Thus, the thinker demythologized the then world picture: on the assumption that the naïve mythology of Homer concealed profound scientific knowledge that had to be elicited, Theagenes participated in the philosophical transformation of religion into physics. While the father of allegoresis tried to reconcile Homer with the more scientific vision of the universe put forward by the first philosophers, he suggested a reinterpretation of the poet that accorded with the Milesian theory of the battle of the opposites. The upshot of it all was that he somewhat disenchanted the picture of the cosmos that was authored by Homer.

Hence, one might hypothesize that the *logos* introduced by the first philosophers received invaluable assistance from thinkers such as Theagenes: Homer was adjusted to the recent cosmological theories and, thereby, the philosophical account of the universe was supported by the authority of the poet. Naturally, Theagenes' rationalism must not be overrated. The thinker himself did not present a rational account of the world that could be compared to the work of Thales and his successors. Moreover, he could be characterized as rather unphilosophically attached to the authority of Homer. Perhaps, he could be compared to Pherecydes, who also was half mythical and half philosophical in his thinking[25]. Still, all this should not cloud the overall cultural significance of Theagenes' hermeneutical activity.

[24] Cfr. *supra*, notes 1 and 4.

[25] What Aristotle says about Pherecydes could arguably be used as a characterization of Theagenes: he was one of those thinkers who «combined (μεμιγμένοι)» philosophy with poetry and «did not use mythical language throughout (μὴ μυθικῶς πάντα λέγειν)» (*metaph.* N 4. 1091 b 8 = 7 A 7 D.-K.). There are interesting parallelisms between Theagenes and Pherecydes. First of all, in Pherecydes one can also find the germs of allegorical interpretation. According to an important testimony, Pherecydes «spoke about the gods in allegory (ἀλληγορήσας ἐθεολό-

In the light of what has been said so far, I am inclined to think that Theagenes does deserve a better appraisal than that of Tate. If we try to exercise caution, we may safely say that Theagenes' allegoresis was not an independent philosophical theory, but it may have *promoted* the idea of one, precisely because of the fact that it demystified the Homeric vision of the world. Consequently, it seems to me to that one should not, as Matthias Gatzemeier clearly does, overemphasize the irrationality of Theagenes' work. Obviously the scholar is right when he observes that Theagenes is «stark der mythisch-religiösen Tradition verhaftet» and that his «Interpretationsmethode hat ihren *Ursprung* vermutlich in der *magischen Naturdeutung* der mythischen Zeit»[26]. Yet, some animism and certain magic beliefs can also be found in many other Presocratic thinkers. Thus, although one must resist the temptation to overrate the mythological component of the Presocratic philosophy so as not to blur all the important differences between a

γησεν)» (7 B 2 D.-K.). While Porphyry also places Pherecydes in the tradition of interpreters of Homer (7 B 6 D.-K.), Origen discusses certain exegetical suggestions put forward by Pherecydes and Celsus and reports the former to have understood the words of Homer in a particular way (*contr. Cels.* VI 42 = 7 B 5 D.-K.). Furthermore, Pherecydes and Theagenes seem to have made use of similar myths. Origen informs us that Pherecydes «related the myth that one army was drawn up against another, and he gave Kronos as the leader of the one, and Ophioneus of the other» (*ibid.* = 7 B 4 D.-K.). The clash between Kronos (who in all probability is a later version of Chronos) and Ophioneus appears to be an episode from the battle of the gods, cfr. G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 67. Unfortunately, there is very little consensus among the scholars on Pherecydes' allegorism. Schibli is cautious about identifying Pherecydes as an allegorist (H.S. Schibli, *Pherekydes of Syros*, Oxford 1990, pp. 99-100). Struck believes Schibli to be «overly cautious» with this respect (P.T. Struck, *op. cit.*, p. 26). Cfr. also N.J. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 77; A. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 69 and M. Gatzemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 372. Tate has argued that one should look for the real beginnings of allegorical interpretation in Pherecydes rather than in Theagenes, cfr. J. Tate, *The Beginnings of Greek Allegory*, cit., pp. 214-5 and Id., *On the History of Allegorism*, cit., p. 108. G. Naddaf, *op. cit.*, p. 127, is inclined to think that Pherecydes could allegorize Anaximander. F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 98 and 178, offered very little attention to Pherecydes, naming him only three times in his authoritative study. See also J. Pépin, *op. cit.*, pp. 449-51.

[26] M. Gatzemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

poet and a philosopher (both explain the whole of reality, but only the latter aims to explain it *rationally*), one must also keep it in mind that the transition from mythology to philosophy was a very complex process and that it took time for the Presocratic thinkers to liberate themselves from their mythical legacy.

Suffice it to mention the remarkable conceptual affinities between Homer on the one hand and Thales[27] and Xenophanes[28] on

[27] The question of the possible affinity between Homer's Oceanus and Thales' water aroused lively controversies already in antiquity, on which see, F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 87. If Homer characterized Oceanus as «the origin of the gods (θεῶν γένεσις)» (*Il.* Ξ 201) and «the origin of everything that is (γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται)» (*ibid.* 246), then was that the real aspiration for Thales to make water the principle of everything? Cfr. Aristot. *metaph.* A 3. 983 b 20 (= 11 A 12 D.-K.). Aristotle's account of the issue is interesting because it is the oldest one we have. On the one hand, Aristotle acknowledges Thales as the «founder (ἀρχηγός)» of philosophy and stresses the rational foundations of his explication, when he points out that Thales got his idea through «observation (ὁρᾶν)» (*ibid.* 983 b 23). On the other hand, the Stagirite recognizes the problem of the originality of Thales' idea when he mentions «the very ancient ones who lived long before the present generation, who first speculated about the gods (τοὺς παμπαλαίους καὶ πολὺ πρὸ τῆς νῦν γενέσεως καὶ πρώτους θεολογήσαντας)» and who made Oceanus and Tethys «the parents of all creation (τῆς γενέσεως πατέρας)» (*ibid.* 983 b 28). Thus, although Thales' account of the world is far more rational than mythical, Buffière suggests that whether consciously or unconsciously Thales may have been inspired by certain ancient beliefs: «Il se peut que Thalès ait subi, plus ou moins consciemment, l'influence de vieilles croyances obscurément transmises par les fictions des poètes: il n'est pas impossible qu'il ait lui-même fait le rapprochement entre son hypothèse et tel vers homérique. Ce qui, du moins, ressort nettement de la phrase d'Aristote, c'est qu'aux yeux des anciens il n'y a pour ainsi dire de coupure entre l'explication mythique des phénomènes et leur explication scientifique» (F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-8). Kirk also stresses that Thales shared the popular conception of the earth with Homer and later with Xenophanes, cfr. G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[28] Xenophanes' theology and physical theory seem also to be indebted to Homer. According to one testimony Xenophanes chose earth as the underlying principle and stated that «all things originate from earth and all things turn into earth (ἐκ γαίης γὰρ πάντα καὶ εἰς γῆν πάντα τελευτᾶι)» (21 B 27 D.-K.). According to other testimonies it was rather earth *and* water, as the thinker asserted also that «all things that come-to-be and grow are earth and water (γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ πάντ' ἐσθ' ὅσα γίνοντ(αι) ἠδὲ φύονται)» (21 B 29 D.-K.) and «we all came forth from earth and

the other, or the important stylistic similarities between the poet and the philosophers [29]. It was precisely these affinities and similarities that

water (πάντες γὰρ γαίης τε καὶ ὕδατος ἐκγενόμεσθα)» (21 B 33 D.-K.). It has often been noted that Xenophanes' views could possibly be traced back to the memorable words of Menelaus, who angrily expresses his wish to Danaans: «may you all become water and earth (πάντες ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα γένοισθε)» (*Il.* H 99), cfr. F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 93 and G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 176. With regard to Homer as a possible source of inspirations for Xenophanes' two elements, Buffière wittingly observes: «Piquante revanche: ce philosophe qui fut un des premiers à lancer l'anathème sur Homère et ses conceptions anthropomorphiques de la divinité, le voici convaincu d'avoir puisé chez son ennemi les bases de sa physique!» (F. Buffière, *ibid.*). Additionally, Kirk points out that Xenophanes' assumption that sea is the source of rivers (21 B 30 D.-K.) echoes Homer's idea that all rivers flow from Okeanos (*Il.* Φ 195-196), cfr. G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 176. Finally, Xenophanes' specification that God «shakes all things by the thought of his mind (νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει)» (21 B 25 D.-K.) seems also to be significantly influenced by Homer, for, as the scholar observes, the expression νόου φρενί seems to be based on Homer's νόει φρεσί (*Il.* I 600) and νοέω φρεσὶ (*ibid.* X 235), whereas the verb κραδαίνει refers to the poet's description of Zeus' shaking Olympus with a nod of his head (*ibid.* A 530), cfr. G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-1. The same points have been made by C.J. Emlyn-Jones, *The Ionians and Hellenism: A Study of the Cultural Achievement of Early Greek Inhabitants of Asia Minor*, London 1980, p. 139: «anthropomorphic Zeus provides the model for at least some aspects of Xenophanes' god», and L. Versényi, *Man's Measure: A Study of the Greek Image of Man from Homer to Sophocles*, Albany 1974, p. 134, who points to «the hidden anthropomorphism of Xenophanes' conception». Kirk aptly concludes that «Xenophanes' god is more Homeric (in a negative direction) than it seems» (G.S. Kirk-J.E. Raven-M. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 171). Thus, although Xenophanes castigated Homer's anthropomorphism, his views were greatly influenced by the poet and his account of God is only a partial overcoming of the Homeric one.

[29] Many Presocratic thinkers made use of the mythical and allegorical language that was characteristic of Homer. Apart from Anaximander (cfr. *supra*, notes 15 and 22), several other philosophers presented their ideas in mythological and allegorical guise. Heraclitus, for instance, had a strong inclination to present his cosmology in a mythological language. Consider his statement that «the sun will not overstep his measures; otherwise the Erinyes, ministers of Justice, will find him out (Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν)» (22 B 94 D.-K.). The picture is entirely mythological and allegorical: Dike is a personification of Justice and Order that governs the sun lest it should exceed its measures and the Erinyes are allegories of the laws of nature. As J. Tate,

prompted thinkers such as Heraclitus the Allegorist to accuse the philosophers of having grossly plagiarized Homer[30]. Naturally, the Allegorist's sweeping generalizations are hardly fair. Yet, although nobody can question the revolutionary character of the first philosophers' essentially *rational* accounts of the universe, their so called "hylozoism" and their oracular style clearly show that they were considerably influenced by certain pre-philosophical formulations: even those thinkers who flatly repudiated Homer and Hesiod remained deeply indebted to their mythology, which shaped both *what* they said about the world and *how* they said it. Accordingly, the cosmology of many Presocratic thinkers remains a sort of curious hybrid, where the mythical and the philosophical often presuppose each other and, as a matter of fact, remain inextricably intertwined. True, the first philosophers sought to rationalize the naïve and anthropomorphic cosmol-

On the History of Allegorism, cit., p. 106, observes Heraclitus transforms «those spirits of vengeance into personifications of the laws of equipoise on which, he thinks, the universe depends». In this context one must also mention Empedocles, who continued the Milesian tradition and whose cosmology built on a curious mixture of scientific and mythological views. The philosopher drew heavily on certain pre-scientific conceptions and made frequent references to the gods. Thus, Empedocles named the «four roots of all things (τέσσαρα [...] πάντων ῥιζώματα)» after the gods: shining Zeus, life-bringing Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis (31 B 6 D.-K.) so as to highlight their eternal and divine nature. Moreover, behind the transformations and reconfigurations of the elements, the philosopher placed two major divine forces that were metaphorically named Love (Φιλία, Φιλότης) and Strife (Νεῖκος) (31 B 17 and B 22 D.-K., see also 31 A 28 D.-K.). Empedocles' terminology made conscious references to Homer's and Hesiod's account of the universe. Accordingly, Diogenes Laertios states that Empedocles, alongside Hesiod, Xenophanes and Parmenides, «philosophizes through his poems (διὰ ποιημάτων φιλοσοφεῖ)» (Diog. Laert. IX 22). This constant use of mythology for conveying philosophical ideas was definitely conducive to the development of allegory: just as certain philosophers imitated the style of Homer and Hesiod, philosophizing through their poems, so thinkers such as Theagenes began to philosophize the already existing poems.

[30] The latest critical edition of the text is: D.A. Russell-D. Konstan, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems*, Atlanta 2005. Heraclitus finds plagiarism in Thales (22.3-7), Anaxagoras (mistaken for Xenophanes though) (22.8-9), Empedocles (24.6-7), Plato (17.4-18.1) and Epicurus (79.2-4).

ogy of Homer and Hesiod, but many of them had already become so influenced and shaped by their works that they came to preserve far more from this mythical heritage than they often could and would acknowledge.

The process of replacing the mythical description of the world with the philosophical one was naturally very complex and, therefore, it required a transitional stage. The invention of allegoresis seems to have contributed significantly to this transition, for interpreting the old myths of Homer in accord with the philosophers' new conceptions must have stimulated the gradual transformation of conventional mythology into a more scientific cosmology. The first cosmologies were frequently as philosophical as they were mythical: from Pherecydes to Empedocles, we observe the tendency to present cosmologies in which the philosophical explanation of the world draws heavily on mythology and, at times, no clear demarcation between science and religion on the one hand, or philosophy and poetry on the other, can be drawn [31].

This is clearly testified by Aristotle's observation that there is some sort of unity of souls between a «lover of myth (φιλόμυθος)» and a «lover of wisdom (φιλόσοφος)» (Aristot. *metaph.* A 2. 982 b 18). Philosophy differs from mythology in the former's emphasis on the rationality of its account, but this does not mean that the two can never coexist in a thinker. This coexistence, or even better: coalescence, of mythology, cosmology, religion and science can be observed in the works of not only the first philosophers, but also the first allegorists. That is why Theagenes' hermeneutical activity is best understood as a transitional stage between the magic, anthropomorphic and animistic view of the world on the one hand, and the more philosophically oriented interpretation of it on the other. Although Theagenes did not himself attempt to rationally explain the whole of the universe, he appears to have promoted the ideas of those who did. If Theagenes was a pioneer of allegorical interpretation who brought new senses into the traditional narratives, then he not only found a justi-

[31] It is important to remember that the differentiation between science and philosophy is a modern distinction.

fication for various problematic passages in Homer, but also stimulated a transformation of the world picture proposed by the poet. If this is all true, then the emergence of allegorical interpretation seems to be one of the most important developments in the history of Greek thought: by promoting the scientific view of the world worked out by the first philosophers, thinkers such as Theagenes participated in the revolutionary transition from *mythos* to *logos*.

5. *Conclusions*

Let us recapitulate. Theagenes' allegoresis aimed to decipher the fundamental cosmic processes symbolically expressed in Homer. The first allegorist must have realized that after the devastating criticism put forward by the first philosophers, Homer, if read literally, would no longer be palatable for any educated mind. That is why he developed a strategy that, as Porphyry relates, only began «with the literal meaning (ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως)» (8, 2 D.-K.). Theagenes' allegorical interpretation of the Homeric *theomachy* in terms of various cosmic forces battling with one another shows that the thinker propagated the idea that every text is more than its literal meaning. The thinker recommended that a reader of Homer should rise above the often outrageous and/or naïve meanings of the poem and reach for the hidden layer of the text, where all inconsistencies and absurdities would vanish and a truly profound philosophical sense would be discovered. While it is certain that Theagenes interpreted the poems of Homer allegorically so as to defend the poet, he also interpreted him as expressing various scientific truths.

Theagenes' physical reading of the Homeric theomachy, where the battle of the gods became a battle of the elements, is the first extant example of ancient hermeneutics. It shows that the rise of allegorical interpretation occurred at the end of the 6th century B.C. The fact that the appearance of the first allegorical interpretation concurs with the first philosophical accounts of the world can hardly be an accident. Given the flowering of the Milesian philosophy at the times of Theagenes, we may safely assume that it was natural for the

thinker to seek to discover the findings of the new science allegorically expressed in the old poems. Thus, Theagenes' physical exegesis of the battle of the gods is an example of how the philosophical explanation of the world and the allegorical interpretation of the poet could support each other. Although the practice of reading scientific concepts into "the Greek Bible" may at times seem strained, arbitrary, far-fetched and even preposterous, the naïveté of the first exegetical efforts should not cloud their cultural import, for it is owing to such daring attempts as those of Theagenes that Hellenic thought eventually paved the way for modern hermeneutics.

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