

Saggi

From Hades to Heaven

Plato and his Pupils on the Soul

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Plato was not only a great philosopher, but also a creative literary writer who fused literary composition with philosophical concepts in his dialogues. As Dietram Müller, Kathryn Morgan and others have shown¹, for a coherent interpretation of Plato's dialogues we must also consider the symbolism of spaces and settings and their literary, religious, mythical or philosophical associations and implications. Against this background, the afterlife is an important area which, as the space of the immortal soul freed from the body, plays a very decisive role for Platonic ethics and metaphysics². The present contribution focuses on the close conceptual connection between psychology and astronomy in the context of mythical or even discursive speculations about the hereafter based on Plato's *Phaedo* (in the context of the great myth of the hereafter), *Timaeus* (in the context of the mythical speech of the Pythagorean Timaeus) and the *Nomoi* (in the context of the dialogical conception of an ideal state); individual examples in the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* and in Heraclides Ponticus are to be investigated and interpreted as well.

What we can state with regard to the texts of Plato and the other Academics selected here as examples – all texts date from about 385-350 B.C. – is that Plato's literary conceptions of the Beyond of the human soul on the one hand integrate the entire space of the

I would like to thank Matthew Chaldeckas, Tübingen, for his careful corrections of my English.

¹ D. Müller, *Raum und Gespräch: Ortssymbolik in den Dialogen Platons*, in «Hermes», 116, 1988, pp. 387-409; K. Morgan, *Plato*, in *Space in Ancient and Greek Literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, edited by I.J.F. De Jong, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2012, pp. 415-437; C. Poetsch, *Platons Philosophie des Bildes*, Frankfurt a.M., Vittorio Klostermann, 2019, pp. 161-176.

² On *short-term* soul journeys during a person's lifetime, such as ecstasy, see I. Männlein-Robert, *Götter, Hades und Ekstase: Zur kulturellen Semantik von Höhlen in der griechischen Literatur*, in «Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte», 21, 2012, pp. 105-120, and Ead, *Vom Mythos zum Logos? Hadesfahrten und Jenseitsreisen bei den Griechen*, in *Unterwelten. Modelle und Transformationen*, edited by J. Hamm and J. Robert, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2014, pp. 31-58, here pp. 50-58.

cosmos³ and on the other hand that the eschatological space of traditional Hades has obviously been moved to heaven. Astronomy and, closely connected with it, a new astral religion are thereby combined in an idiosyncratic way with Platonic psychology, ethics, theology and religion, and beyond that also with the belief in the transmigration of souls resp. the continued existence of the soul in the hereafter. It is precisely this idiosyncratic amalgam and the special conditions and favourable prospects for the philosopher, i.e. the one who implements and fulfils Plato's philosophical guidelines in an exemplary manner, that seem to be central to this. My main thesis is that in the context of Plato's philosophical journeys of the soul, we are dealing with two closely related strategies: on the one hand, the philosophical *rationalization* and revision of ancient mythotopoi⁴, and on the other hand, a new kind of *religious* conception not only of astronomy, but of the concept of philosophy in Plato's time and in the old Academy in general, which will be the main topic of this article. In any case, we are confronted with a literary, but Platonically defined new conception of the Beyond and Hades, which now includes the cosmos.

1. Traditional Conceptions of Hades and Beyond before Plato

In order to be able to better classify Plato's new conception of the afterlife in the following, the most important of the up to then established, literarily tangible conceptions of the afterlife in Greek literature are briefly outlined⁵.

Since Homer, and especially since the 11th book of the *Odyssey*, the idea predominated that the human soul (ψυχή) of a deceased person rests forever as an image or shadow image of the human being (εἶδωλον, σκιά) without consciousness in a distant space called Hades⁶. This Hades is located beyond the Okeanos ring current, which flows in a circle around the world that was imagined in archaic times in

³ Cosmos and stars naturally belong to the world of the senses and not to the transcendental world of ideas, which Plato called «supra- or extra-heavenly» (e.g. *Phdr.* 247b7-c1 ἐξω [...] ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ νότῳ [...] τὰ ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ; *Phdr.* 247c3 τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον). See also H.-J. Waschkiel, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, in *Antike Naturwissenschaft und ihre Rezeption*, edited by K. Döring and G. Wöhrle, Bamberg, Collibri, 1993, vol. III, pp. 31-59, here p. 47.

⁴ As for example in Plato's Allegory of the Cave from the *Politeia* (*Rep.* VII 514a-517a), see I. Männlein-Robert, *Von Höhlen und Helden. Zur Semantik von Katabasis und Raum in Platons Politeia*, in «Gymnasium», 119, 2012, pp. 1-21, here pp. 9-15.

⁵ See K. Matijević, *Ursprung und Charakter der homerischen Jenseitsvorstellungen*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015, pp. 101-159; A. Chaniotis, *Das Jenseits: Eine Gegenwelt?*, in *Gegenwelten zu den Kulturen der Griechen und Römer in der Antike*, edited by T. Hölscher, München/Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek der Universität Heidelberg, 2000, pp. 159-181.

⁶ E. Rohde, *Psyche*, Freiburg/Berlin, Mohr, 1898² and J.N. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of Soul*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 70-124 are more detailed.

the form of a disc. At the same time, however, Hades is not only the sphere beyond Okeanos, but also seems to be conceived as an underground space, as the semantics of the voyages to the afterlife of extraordinary, mythical heroes like Odysseus, Heracles or Theseus show⁷. Homeric Hades has a landscape-like structure: there are various rivers, an asphodel meadow, and a somehow inner «house of Hades» with doors⁸, but this Hades has no differentiated rooms or spheres for good and bad people. Only if the relevant section of the text is indeed Homeric can we identify a few characters, such as Tityus, Sisyphus and Tantalus, all mythical heroes who have sinned against gods and goddesses⁹, as penitents. The mythical Cretan king Minos acts there as an underworld judge, not yet in the context of an installed underworld tribunal, but rather as an eternal continuation of his earthly rule and judging function. With the presence of the mythical transgressors and Minos as judge, the idea of a court for the dead and punishments in the hereafter is hinted at for the first time. Also the deep, dark and terrible Tartaros known since Homer and Hesiod¹⁰ seems to presage corresponding ideas of a dark, otherworldly space as a place of punishment and exile for criminals, a place «as deep under the earth as the sky above the earth»¹¹. Furthermore, the «Elysian Plain»¹² or the «Islands of the Blessed» represent¹³ positive otherworldly spaces at the farthest ends of the world (ἐς πείρατα γαίης), which are only intended for singular mythical figures such as Menelaus or other heroes, but are not eschatological places for all praiseworthy (ordinary) people in the hereafter¹⁴. The judgment of the dead as well as the differentiation into special, different realms for good and for bad people only developed with the later Orphic-Pythagorean ideas of the hereafter, which propagate a real afterlife of the soul after the death of the body.

The first positive hope for an afterlife for a wider range of people is found in the archaic Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* in a passage closely connected with the rituals of the Eleusinian mysteries¹⁵: this text signals to those initiated into this very cult vague positive expectations about the survival of the soul after physical death, which

⁷ See Hom. *Od.* 23.252 ὅτε δὴ κατέβην δόμον Ἄϊδος εἶσω; on the literary motif of *κατάβασις* see A. Bernabé, *What is a Katábasis? The Descent to the Netherworld in Greece and the Ancient Near East*, in «Les Études classiques», 83, 2015, pp. 15-34, here pp. 21 f.

⁸ Hom. *Od.* 11.150 and 164.

⁹ Hom. *Od.* 11.576-600.

¹⁰ Hom. *Il.* 8.10-17; 477-483 and Hes. *Tb.* 713-819.

¹¹ Hom. *Il.* 8.16 and Hes. *Tb.* 720, see D.M. Johnson, *Hesiod's Description of Tartarus* («Theogony» 721-819), in «Phoenix», 53, 1999, pp. 8-28.

¹² Hom. *Od.* 4.561-569.

¹³ Hes. *Op.* 171.

¹⁴ D. Burton, *Utopian Motifs in Early Greek Concepts of the Afterlife*, in «Antichthon», 50, 2016, pp. 1-16.

¹⁵ Hom. *Hymn. Dem.* 473-482.

are subsequently reinforced by the Orphic-Pythagorean belief in the transmigration of souls. However, this is accompanied by an increasing spatial and ethical differentiation of reward and punishment (purification, evaluation, punishment). A designated «place of the pious» (χῶρος εὐσεβῶν) in the afterlife with a pleasant, paradise-like life, which is presumably Orphic in its provenance¹⁶, has clearly gained contours and thus risen in attractiveness, especially since Pindar¹⁷. Presumably, however, these hopes for a better life of the soul in the hereafter do not correspond to the common ideas of ordinary contemporary people, but can be traced back to esoteric religious circles or philosophical groups from the late 7th to the 5th century B.C. as witnessed by the Orphic Derveni papyrus or by the Bacchic or Orphic gold plates. Ultimately, the Homeric description of the subterranean Hades seems to have dominated popular ideas of the afterlife or, respectively, to have configured them significantly. Since Homer and Hesiod, for example, the mythical personnel of the afterlife has been expanded and made ever more colourful by figures of popular belief beyond Hades and Persephone, such as Charon¹⁸.

Only with Plato's literary myths of the afterlife (e.g. in *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Politeia*) do differentiated spatial structures with regard to the transmigration of souls become visible: Above all, the myths of *Phaedo* and *Politeia* present a singular fusion of somewhat older philosophical conceptions of an afterlife in the sky, as they can be seen for example in Pythagoras and Empedocles, with contemporary cosmological and astronomical discussions, which locate «Hades» in the sky and the provenance and final resting place of the soul in the (fixed) stars, thus combining differently differentiated wanderings and dwelling places of the soul in a cosmically located beyond. All in all, Plato's work results in a new, literarily-stylized, but philosophical spatial concept of «Hades», the afterlife into which the human soul moves after its physical, earthly death.

Let us now take a closer look at how Plato creates his space of the afterlife, whose literary design, differentiation and localization is closely linked to his psychological, ethical, metaphysical and astronomical ideas. Let us first try to take stock of the afterlife spaces and the transmigration of souls in the exemplary old Academic texts (chapters 2-7) and then attempt to contextually embed and interpret them (chapter 8).

¹⁶ Cf. Diod. I 96.4 f.

¹⁷ E.g. Pi. *Ol.* 2:57-80; frg. 133 Bergk = 133 S.-M., see L. Edmunds, *A Hermeneutic Commentary on the Eschatological Passage in Pindar Olympian 2 (57-83)*, in *Antike Mythen. Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, edited by U. Dill and C. Walde, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 662-677.

¹⁸ E.g. Aristoph. *Ranae* 182-210; for Charon see the archaic epic *Minyas*, testified by Paus. 10.28.2.

2. Plato's *Phaedo*

In the dialogue *Phaedo*, immediately before his death Socrates sketches a great myth of the afterlife, in which psychological and cosmological aspects converge. Socrates' speech describes the fate of the soul of man postulated as immortal after his physical death.

Socrates, posing as a visionary of the hereafter, corrects the myths (based on Empedocles, see below) when he refutes the opinion that the soul of man ends in an underground Hades, and rather describes the sphere of life of mankind as actually situated underground. This correction of myths becomes possible due to a change of perspective, because the reported insights are gained from a quasi-heavenly perspective from above the earth. Of particular relevance is the sphere of the «actual earth», which is to be thought of as being above the cave world of man, i.e. on and above the surface of the earth, and which is described as the otherworldly abode of people with a good way of life in their last physical life, a kind of paradise:

(sc. Σωκράτης ἔφη) αὐτήν δὲ τὴν γῆν καθαρὰν ἐν καθαρῷ κείσθαι τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐν ᾧπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄστρα, ὃν δὴ αἰθέρα ὀνομάζειν τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰωθότων λέγειν.

(Socrates said) that the actual earth is pure in the pure sky where the stars are, which most of those who usually talk about such things call «aither» (*Phd.* 109b7-c1 Burnet)¹⁹.

Socrates describes the «actual earth» from a bird's-eye view that is, as it were, over-cosmic (*Phd.* 110b5-115a8): Truth and purity characterize this sphere, whose beauty proves to be a «spectacle for blessed observers» (*Phd.* 111a3f.: θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν)²⁰. The souls that have reached this point live there in the Aer, partly on islands; they breathe Aither. From there, the stars can be seen in their pure form, as can the rest of the bliss that accompanies them²¹:

(sc. Σωκράτης ἔφη) καὶ τὸν γε ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἄστρα ὁρᾶσθαι ὑπ' αὐτῶν οἷα τυγχάνει ὄντα, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην εὐδαιμονίαν τούτων ἀκόλουθον εἶναι.

(Socrates said), namely that the sun and moon and stars would be seen by them (sc. the people or souls settled there) as they were, and that the rest of the bliss would go along with them (*Phd.* 111c1-3 Burnet).

¹⁹ Unless otherwise stated, the English translations are on my own.

²⁰ Cf. *Phdr.* 250b6 f.; *Rep.* VII 517d4 f.; see E. Krummen, «Schön nämlich ist das Wagnis». *Rituelle Handlungen und mythische Erzählung in Platons Phaidon*, in *Literatur und Religion*, edited by A. Bierl, R. Lämmle and K. Wesselmann, Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter, 2007, vol. II, pp. 91-13, here p. 117; C. Rowe, *Plato. Phaedo*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 277.

²¹ F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, New York, Putnam's Sons, 1912, p. 167.

There now live deceased people who were «pious» in life (ἅσιοι) (see *Phd.* 114b6-c2), but they are not allowed to stay there forever. Only those who have «sufficiently purified» themselves through philosophy (especially virtues, *Phd.* 69c1-3) will live forever without a body and from there they will reach «even more beautiful dwellings» which are neither easy to explain nor at the moment is there enough time for them:

τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ φιλοσοφία ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι ἄνευ τε σωμάτων ζῶσι τὸ παράπαν εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον, καὶ εἰς οἰκήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους ἀφικνούσινται, ἃς οὔτε βραδίον δηλώσαι οὔτε ὁ χρόνος ἱκανὸς ἐν τῷ παρόντι.

Those of these same people who have sufficiently purified themselves through philosophy both live without a body entirely for the time to come, and come to even more beautiful dwellings, which is neither easy to explain, nor at the moment is there enough time to explain (*Phd.* 114c2-6 Burnet).

Here Socrates hints at the otherworldly fate of the «pure» and «pious» souls, first on the «real earth» and then above it, in the «pure sky». According to the narrative logic of the myth, it is the soul of an «ideal» philosopher, which, relieved of the body²², is to be considered further up in the sky, in the aether. In the specifically designed narrative of the myth of the afterlife in the *Phaedo*, despite all the literary and poetic reminiscences of old ideas about the afterlife, a new, as it were, cosmological perspective for the soul of the philosopher, without a body, becomes recognizable in the Beyond. What is serious here is not only the spherical shape of the earth (with its earthly subterranean cavities) that is assumed, but also the new localization of the hereafter that is connected with it, that is: the positively and pleasantly connoted hereafter, for example for philosophers, above the earth, in the aether, in the sky and near the stars that can be observed from there. Clearly, on the one hand, a counter-model to pre-Socratic cosmological speculations is emerging²³, on the other hand, a counter-model to the traditional Hades faith established since Homer, but also to more recent religious ideas such as those propagated by the Eleusinian Mysteries or Orphic Circles, since it is not membership of a particular cult group or physical purification that is central, but rather spiritual purification and probation. In our context it is above all important that only the soul of the philosopher, i.e. of a person who strives for the virtues, the mental catharsis, throughout his life and was successful in doing so, is promised a higher, namely aetheric localization in the cosmos in

²² M. Vorwerk, *Mythos und Kosmos. Zur Topographie des Jenseits im Er-Mythos des Platonischen «Staates»* (614b2-616b1), in «Philologus», 146, 2002, pp. 46-64, here p. 52 f.

²³ See H.-J. Waschkies, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 31-59.

the hereafter, i.e. in the sky, and that this soul alone thus (initially) seems to have been taken out of the cycle of reincarnations²⁴.

3. Plato's *Politeia*

Similar cosmological-astronomical ideas are found in Plato's *Politeia*, both in a discursive and mythical context. Already in the seventh book of the *Politeia* Socrates mentions astronomy (*Rep.* VII 528e-530c) among the mathemata necessary for the dialectician, which is initially described as the science of concrete (celestial) bodies. However, according to Socrates, the visible sky, the best and most perfect of visible things, lags behind what is actually the subject of astronomy²⁵:

προβλήμασιν ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, χρώμενοι ὥσπερ γεωμετρίαν οὕτω καὶ ἀστρονομίαν μέτιμεν, τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ εἰσόμενοι, εἰ μέλλομεν ὄντως ἀστρονομίας μεταλαμβάνοντες χρῆσιμον τὸ φύσει φρόνιμον ἐν τῇ τῇ ψυχῇ ἐξ ἀχρήστου ποιήσειν.

So we want to use them (sc. the heavenly stars) only as occasions for reflection and treat astronomy in the same way as geometry, I continued (sc. Socrates), but we want to leave aside the formations in the sky if we really want to occupy ourselves with astronomy, in order to make useful that which is reasonable by nature in the soul, which is useless at first (*Rep.* VII 530b6-c1 Slings).

Socrates alludes to the «astronomy of the invisible», i.e. he probably means astronomy as the geometric model for describing the planets and their orbital movements²⁶. Further astronomical ideas can be found in Book X in close association with the fate of the human soul, as Socrates refers to the katabasis narrative of the seemingly dead Pamphylian Er. This ordinary (every-) man who died in war was chosen as an eyewitness and messenger to tell of the Beyond in our world, the otherworldly reward for good and bad living, and the connection between individual fates and cosmic order. He describes the ways and stations of the twelve-day journey of his soul through

²⁴ I. Männlein-Robert, *Von der Höhle in den Himmel: Der Philosoph im Jenseitsmythos des Phaidon oder Sokrates im Glück*, in *Plato's Phaedo. Selected Papers from the 11. Symposium Platonicum*, edited by G. Cornelli, F. Bravo and T.M. Robinson, Baden-Baden, Academia Verlag, 2018, pp. 57-61.

²⁵ F.F. Repellini, *La «vera» astronomia e sapienza*, in *Epinomide. Studi sull'opera e la sua ricezione*, edited by F. Alesse, F. Ferrari and M.C. Dalfino, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2012, pp. 59-91.

²⁶ Here, geometry itself functions as a paradigmatic, dianoetic science in itself. See J. Mittelstrass, *Die Rettung der Phänomene. Ursprung und Geschichte eines antiken Forschungsprinzips*, Berlin, Walter, pp. 117-139 and J. Mittelstrass, *Die Dialektik und ihre wissenschaftlichen Vorübungen*, in *Platon. Politeia*, edited by O. Höffe, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2005, pp. 229-250, here pp. 234 f.; G. Vlastos, *The Role of Observation in Plato's Conception of Astronomy*, in *Science and the Sciences in Plato*, edited by J.P. Anton, New York, Caravan Books, 1980, pp. 1-31; T. Bénatouïl and D. El Murr, *L'Académie et les Géomètres: Usages et Limites de la Géométrie de Platon à Carnéade*, in «Philosophie Antique», 10, 2010, pp. 41-80, esp. pp. 56 f.

the hereafter²⁷. A particularly important station in the hereafter²⁸ which he describes is one called τόπος τις δαιμόνιος (*Rep.* X 614c1), where on a meadow (cf. *Rep.* X 614e2) judges judge each individual and his offences as well as benefactions. According to his report, the souls of the deceased, if they have to atone, must either enter a katabasis through a chasm down into the earth, or if they are rewarded, an anabasis through a chasm up into heaven. After usually 1000 years, the penitents return to the meadow from below through a second chasm lying next to it, those from heaven descend to the meadow beyond through another chasm (*Rep.* X 614d3-e1). After seven days on this meadow and a subsequent march, the souls arrive at a place from where they see a pillar of light stretched out from above over the whole of heaven and earth, the ribbon of heaven (σύνδεσμος τοῦ οὐράνου), which holds together the whole arch. At its end is the spindle of the Ananke, which sets all the spheres of the cosmos in motion:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῷ λειμῶνι ἐκάστοις ἑπτὰ ἡμέραι γένοιτο, ἀναστάντας ἐντεύθεν δεῖν τῇ ὀγδόῃ πορεύεσθαι, καὶ ἀφικνεῖσθαι τεταρταίους ὅθεν καθορᾶν ἄνωθεν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς τεταμένον φῶς εὐθύ, οἷον κίονα, μάλιστα τῇ ἰριδι προσφερές, λαμπρότερον δὲ καὶ καθαρώτερον· εἰς δ' ἀφικέσθαι προελθόντες ἡμερησίαν ὁδόν, καὶ ἰδεῖν αὐτόθι κατὰ μέσον τὸ φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὰ ἅκρα αὐτῶν τῶν δεσμῶν τεταμένα· εἶναι γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ φῶς σύνδεσμον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, οἷον τὰ ὑποζώματα τῶν τριήρων, οὕτω πάσαν συνέχον τὴν περιφορᾶν· ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἄκρων τεταμένον Ἀνάγκης ἄτρακτον, δι' οὗ πάσας ἐπιστρέφεσθαι τὰς περιφοράς.

But after they had spent all seven days in the meadow, they would have had to leave from there on the eighth day and set out on their journey. After another four days they had reached a place from where a straight light could be seen, which, like a column, came down from above through the river. The whole sky and the earth moved, very much like the rainbow, but shinier and purer. After a day's march, they would have entered it, and there, in the midst of the light, they would have seen how the ends of its bands were attached to the sky. This light is the band of heaven, which, like the straps of the Trier, holds the whole arch together. At the ends, however, the spindle of necessity is fastened, through which all the curvatures (spheres of heaven) are brought into rotation (*Rep.* X 616b1-c5 Slings).

The spindle of the Ananke, which is then (*Rep.* X 616c5-617d1) elaborately described in numerous details and surrounded by the three moirai Lachesis, Klotho and Atropos, ultimately symbolizes the cosmic order that runs according to fixed laws. After all souls have chosen their future lifeless ones, each individual's thread of destiny is attached to the spindle of Ananke, which in the mythical image illustrates the necessarily close attachment and connection of each human soul to the overall cosmic events²⁹. In depicting the choice of

²⁷ I. Männlein-Robert, *Vom Mythos zum Logos?*, cit., pp. 50-58.

²⁸ M. Vorwerk, *Mythos und Kosmos*, cit., pp. 51-54.

²⁹ See M. Vorwerk, *Mythos und Kosmos*, cit., p. 64; A. Macé, *La circulation cosmique des âmes. Platon, le Mythe d'Er*, in *La transmigration des âmes en Grèce et en Inde anciennes*, edi-

the fates, the example of one of the group of those who came from heaven is explicitly highlighted as one who chooses poorly. For he had indeed lived his first life in an orderly fashion and had only by habit without philosophy (!) had a share in virtue (*Rep.* X 619c6-d2). This was the case with many who came back from heaven to the meadow, since they were inexperienced in toil (*Rep.* X 619d3 f.). Later in the evening all souls lay down on the «field of Forgetting» (πεδῖον Λήθης) and drank from the river Ameles³⁰:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ κοιμηθῆναι καὶ μέσας εἰς νύκτας γενέσθαι, βροντὴν τε καὶ σεισμὸν γενέσθαι, καὶ ἐντεύθεν ἐξαπίνης ἄλλον ἄλλη φέρεσθαι ἄνω εἰς τὴν γένεσιν, ἄττοντας ὥσπερ ἀστέρας.

When they had now laid down to rest and it had become midnight, a thundering and an earthquake had arisen, and suddenly they were from there, swift as shooting stars, one carried away this way, the other that way, up into the becoming (*Rep.* X 621b1-4 Slings).

Without going into narrative or astronomical details here, the following should be noted with regard to these passages, since they are relevant in our context: in the Er myth (as in the *Phaedo*) not only the spherical earth is recognizable, but also the spatial differentiation of a bad from a good area in the Beyond. Here, too, the good area for the «pure» ones is located in the sky above, which is described extremely vaguely. Only virtuous people get there, but also those without philosophical ambitions; these are later distinguished by the prudence of their choice of the next life.

Whether the axis of light mentioned in advance of the spindle of the Ananke means the world axis or the Milky Way cannot be discussed here. In any case, it runs through the fixed earth, around whose axis the fixed-star sky and the planets move. With this spindle, which in the mythical picture represents the macrocosm³¹, Socrates seems to have in mind a model of actual astronomy, as indicated in Book VII³². The placement of the Spindle of Ananke in the middle of the cosmos, where the lives together with the daemons are now drawn from the souls for the next life in the body, is certainly chosen for reasons of narrative dramaturgy, but apparently also with a view to astronomical associations. The hereafter in all its different mythical-spatial differentiations has its centre in the middle between heaven and earth; it remains unclear whether we should imagine it as the area of the stars or that of the aether. The souls are com-

ted by G. Ducoeur and C. Muckensturm-Pouille, Besançon, Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2016, pp. 63-80.

³⁰ P. Capelle, *De luna stellis lacteo orbe animarum sedibus*, Diss. Halle, Karras, 1917, pp. 27 f.

³¹ H.-J. Waschkiel, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., p. 43.

³² See *Rep.* X 615d-617c.

pared with stars or shooting stars at the moment of transition into becoming, which in the mythical representation still accentuates on the one hand the light character of the soul, on the other hand its basically close affinity to and comparability with the stars (*ἀστέρεις*). I will come back to both aspects, the light character of the soul as well as the quasi sidereal quality of the soul (see Chapter 6 below).

4. Plato's *Timaeus*

The Pythagorean and astrologer Timaeus describes the creation of the cosmos in Plato's dialogue of the same name. By means of the concentrically arranged rings, which represent the main celestial circles with horizon, ecliptic and equator (*Ti.* 34a-36d), a band model of the cosmos becomes recognizable³³, which is superior to the spindle model of the *Politeia*, since here now the inclination of the ecliptic can be represented. We see that apparently newer astronomical findings are (again) presented in mythological garb. Timaeus calls the cosmos here a living being with soul and intellect, whose inner movement, which causes the circular motion, comes from the divine world soul³⁴:

οὕτως οὖν δὴ κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα δεῖ λέγειν τόνδε τὸν κόσμον ζῶον ἔμψυχον ἔννου τε τῆ ἀληθείᾳ διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ γενέσθαι πρόνοιαν.

So, then, in all probability we must say that this cosmos has in reality come into being as a living being with a soul and a talent for reason, because of the care of God (*Ti.* 30b6-9 Burnet).

The passage from *Ti.* 40a is particularly relevant: here, according to Timaeus, the demiurge, following the model of the cosmos of ideas, designs the gods in the sky (mostly of fire), i.e. the fixed stars, the planets and the earth as the most venerable of the stars (*Ti.* 40a-c). Since here (*Ti.* 40b4-6) the fixed stars are referred to as ζῶα θεῖα ὄντα καὶ ἀίδια, we may take this as proof that the stars are seen as divine, even as (always visible) astral gods³⁵.

Each human soul, which the demiurge has then produced by mixing in its crater, is assigned a star on which it travels as if on a wagon:

³³ J. Mittelstrass, *Die Dialektik und ihre wissenschaftlichen Vorübungen*, cit., p. 235.

³⁴ See e.g. *Ti.* 34a8-b1, b8; 47c3; 68e3 f.; see Plat. *Sph.* 265c-e.

³⁵ Unlike traditional gods, astral gods are always visible. This passage from the *Timaeus* suggests that Plato here postulates a stepwise structured reality of the divine; see *Lg.* X 899b3-9, where the souls of the celestial bodies are gods; F. Karfik, *Die Beseelung des Kosmos*, München-Leipzig, K.G. Saur, 2004, pp. 98-100 and p. 239.

συστήσας δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐς διείλεν ψυχὰς ἰσαριθμούς τοῖς ἀστροῖς, ἔνειμέν θ' ἑκάστην πρὸς ἕκαστον, καὶ ἐμβιβάσας ὡς ἐς ὄχημα τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν ἔδειξεν, νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους εἶπεν αὐταῖς, ὅτι γένεσις πρώτη μὲν ἔσοιτο τεταγμένη μία πᾶσιν, ἵνα μή τις ἐλαττοῖτο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, δέοι δὲ σπαρείσας αὐτὰς εἰς τὰ προσήκοντα ἑκάσταις ἕκαστα ὄργανα χρόνων φύναι ζῶν τὸ θεοσεβέστατον, διπλῆς δὲ οὔσης τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, τὸ κρείττον τοιοῦτον εἶη γένος ὃ καὶ ἔπειτα κεκλήσοιτο ἀνήρ.

But after he had united the universe, he separated a number of souls equal to the number of stars, and assigned each one to a star, and while he made them climb into a chariot, he showed them the nature of the universe, and told them the preordained laws, namely, that the first coming into being should be fixed as one for all, so that none of them would be diminished by him; It is necessary, however, that the most God-fearing creature should emerge from the living creatures when they are distributed among the instruments of time which are to be given to each one; but since the nature of man is a double one, the stronger sex should be one which will later be called «man» (*Ti.* 41d8-42a3 Burnet).

In this way he shows them the nature of the cosmos, the universe, the laws of Heimarmene, until the necessary embodiment and life in the body is achieved:

καὶ ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούς, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἀστρου, βίον εὐδαιμόνα καὶ συνήθη ἔξει, σφαλεῖς δὲ τούτων εἰς γυναικὸς φύσιν ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ γενέσει μεταβαλοῖ.

And whoever has lived well in the time to come has, after he has returned to the dwelling place of the star related to him, a blissful and similar life (sc. to his former life), but if he fails to do so, he passes into the nature of a woman at the second birth (*Ti.* 42b3-c1 Burnet).

Subsequently, the demiurge distributes the souls to planets before they are then incarnated from there (*Ti.* 42d2-e4). Here in the myth of the astrologer Timaeus, the claim, which is still mythically-visionary and vaguely formulated in the *Phaedo*, that the philosopher's soul will be placed in the hereafter further up in the aether, in the sky, closer to the stars, is now re-contextualized, namely cosmologically, and in doing so the affinity of human soul and stars (here the fixed stars are meant)³⁶, as well as the provenance even of the soul from there is underlined. At the same time, it becomes clear from the above-mentioned passage of *Timaeus* that the return of the soul to «its» star – without further embodiments and orbits – is reserved solely for the group of those who have lived «well». On the star, of course, this soul then lives a «blissful life». Eudaimonia thus appears as τέλος of the soul, which is only possible in the cosmos, on the star, that is, the soul's own star. However, this no longer seems to be an exception only for the particularly pure and virtuous, the

³⁶ See A.E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928 (Reprint Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 255-259 and p. 263.

philosophers, but a basic principle of the return to the stars after death, which is possible for *all* souls, provided that they have – and this is the great hurdle – «lived well». The value and the role of the observation of the stars, the recognition of the orbits of the universe and the alignment of the soul to them apparently make immortality and happiness *a priori* possible for humans (*Ti.* 89d2-90d). The soul that the demiurge as the most perfect soul has assigned a daemon, a protective spirit, is thus of divine, even sidereal origin (*Ti.* 90a2-9). This divine, sidereal soul is related to heaven (*Ti.* 90a5 τὴν ἐν οὐρανῶ συγγένειαν), it has a direct and very personal (re-)relation to the stars, which is why the observation of the stars here is set in the closest relation to the ethics of the «alignment with the cosmic order» that aims at eudaimonia – which appears here to be a variant of the otherwise often virulent «alignment with God» (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ):

ταύταις δὴ συνεπόμενον ἕκαστον δεῖ, τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διεφθαρμένας ἡμῶν περιόδους ἐξορθοῦντα διὰ τὸ καταμανθάνειν τὰς τοῦ παντός ἁρμονίας τε καὶ περιφοράς, τῷ κατανοουμένῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιωῶσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν, ὁμοιωῶσαντα δὲ τέλος ἔχειν τοῦ προτεθέντος ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀρίστου βίου πρὸς τε τὸν παρόντα καὶ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον.

According to this, everyone must follow these (sc. the changes of the universe) by correcting the wrong turns in our heads when we enter life, because he learns to understand the harmony and the changes of the universe, and he must make the cognizant part similar to the cognizance according to his original nature, but through this adaptation he must possess the goal of that life which was promised to man by the gods as the best for both the present and the future time (*Ti.* 90d1-d7 Burnet).

The following is noteworthy with regard to the passages selected: we find in the *Timaeus* not only a transcendent framing of the connection of human souls with the stars, but explicitly the *provenance* of the human soul from the stars. This is the first time a remarkable *religious conception* of the stars as astral gods and as the origin and return of the soul before and after its life in the body is suggested. In addition to the new astral religion, Plato's cosmic ribbon model uses a newer astronomical speculation and astronomical modelling, as discussed within the Academy, in comparison to the (still mythically dressed) astronomy of the spindle from the *Politeia*, here in the *Timaeus*³⁷. Furthermore, in the context of this passage it is remarkable that the ethical telos of eudaimonia is to be achieved by observing the movements of the celestial bodies³⁸. For this purpose,

³⁷ Cf. also 40d2 f., where Timaeus speaks of the necessity of δψις τῶν μιμημάτων, i.e. of the view of model-like illustrations of the earth's movements.

³⁸ But the «cosmological turn» in ethical discourse as stated by G. Betegh, *Cosmological Ethics in the Timaeus and Early Stoicism*, in «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy», 24, 2003, pp. 273-302, here p. 279 is already alluded to in *Phaedo* 111c1-3, see above and G. Betegh,

a close structural and also functional correspondence and relationship between the rational part of the human soul and the world soul is postulated; both have the same substance and structure, but the human soul is impure and less structured. Astronomy, the observation of the stars, thus proves to be the «thinking» of this order and of the mathematical relations (*Ti.* 47c λογισμοί; 90d4 κατανοεῖν). If the future «true» astronomy conjured up by Socrates in the *Politeia* (with a focus on intelligible movements, *Rep.* VII 528e-529c) still had a propaedeutic character, it is now internalized³⁹, as it were, and receives an ethical and even religious function⁴⁰. In the context of the *Timaeus*, thus not least we identify an ethical value of astronomy. In principle, it is possible for anyone to observe the celestial order, for here in the *Timaeus* it is a telos or happiness model for everyone, not only for philosophers – as was the case in the *Phaedo*. Whoever observes the celestial bodies in a perfect way can thus return to his star of origin and thus (for a certain time) escape reincarnation; this is also possible here – unlike in the *Phaedo* – for non-philosophers (*Ti.* 42b).

The point here is not to sound out the role and the significance of Plato for astronomy, which may have been overestimated by the Neoplatonists⁴¹, but rather to find out what role and function Plato in his texts gives to astronomy with regard to the human soul, and how he, as nicely seen in the *Timaeus*, accentuates and differentiates this in different ways again and again. In the *Timaeus* he even makes the observation of the stars an occupation that is in principle possible for everyone and thus offers the possibility of escaping reincarnation and obtaining eternal bliss for all.

5. Plato's *Nomoi*

In Book VII of the *Nomoi*, the three interlocutors, Kleinias, Megillos and the Athenian, in close connection with the importance and necessity of the mathematical sciences, also address the role of astronomy and planetary theory, which, as the Athenian says, must

Eschatology and Cosmology: Models and Problems, in *La costruzione del discorso filosofico nell'età dei Presocratici*, edited by M.M. Sassi, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2006, pp. 27-50, here pp. 38-42.

³⁹ G. Betegh, *Cosmological Ethics in the Timaeus and Early Stoicism*, cit., p. 282.

⁴⁰ G.R. Carone, *The Ethical Function of Astronomy in Plato's Timaeus*, in *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*, edited by T. Calvo and L. Brisson, Sankt Augustin, Academia Verlag, 1997, pp. 341-349, here p. 344.

⁴¹ See H.-J. Waschkies, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 42 f.; T. Kouremenos, *The Unity of Mathematics in Plato's Republic*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2015, pp. 103-108.

be an integral part of education for children and young people from the age of 13 in the projected ideal state of Magnesia:

ἔτι δὴ τοίνυν τοῖς ἐλευθέροις ἔστιν τρία μαθήματα, λογισμοὶ μὲν καὶ τὰ περὶ ἀριθμοῦ ἐν μάθημα, μετρητικὴ δὲ μήκους καὶ ἐπιπέδου καὶ βάρους ὡς ἐν αὐτῷ δευτέρῳ, τρίτον δὲ τῆς τῶν ἀστρῶν περιόδου πρὸς ἀλλήλα ὡς πέφυκεν πορεύεσθαι. ταῦτα δὲ σύμπαντα οὐχ ὡς ἀκριβείας ἐχόμενα δεῖ διαπονεῖν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἀλλὰ τινὰς ὀλίγους – οὗς δέ, προϊόντες ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει φράσσομεν· οὕτω γὰρ πρέπον ἂν εἴη – τῷ πλήθει δέ, ὅσα αὐτῶν ἀναγκαῖα καὶ πῶς ὁρθότατα λέγεται μὴ ἐπίστασθαι μὲν τοῖς πολλοῖς αἰσχρόν, δι’ ἀκριβείας δὲ ζητεῖν πάντα οὔτε ῥάδιον οὔτε τὸ παράπαν δυνατόν.

In that case there remain, for free people, three subjects of studies: one such is arithmetic, and everything to do with number; the second is measurement (of length, area, or volume), which can be treated as a single subject; the third deals with the wheeling of the stars, and the nature of their movements relative to one another. There is no need for the majority of the population to labour at these subjects in their entirety, in the minutest detail, but a small minority do need to. Who they are, we shall explain at the end of our discussion, that being the appropriate time to do so. For the population in general, though, to be ignorant of what can quite properly be termed the necessary elements of these subjects is, for the majority, a disgrace; but to study the whole thing in detail is neither easy nor even remotely possible (*Lg.* 817e5-818a7 Burnet; transl. Griffith/Schofield⁴²).

Even if astronomical studies are now mandatory for all citizens in the state, astronomy, which aims at exactness of investigation (ἀκριβεία), should only exist for a few, and this is an interesting differentiation⁴³. This differentiation is reminiscent of Socrates’ formulation from the *Politeia* (*Rep.* VII 530b6-c1, see above), according to which there is a general and a «true» astronomy, which is rather intellectually concerned with the stars and not only concentrated on their visual observation.

Closely connected with the establishment of astronomy in the classroom for all is the correction of common notions of gods (*Lg.* 820e-822d). The Athenian even postulates here the knowledge of (more general) astronomy for all citizens in the state, because by such knowledge about the «gods in the sky», i.e. the stars, they could avoid blasphemy and instead worship these gods appropriately and thus prove their piety:

ταῦτ’ ἔστι τοίνυν, ὦ Μέγιλλέ τε καὶ Κλεινία, νῦν ἃ δὴ φημι δεῖν περὶ θεῶν τῶν κατ’ οὐρανὸν τοὺς γε ἡμετέρους πολίτας τε καὶ τοὺς νέους τὸ μέχρι τοσοῦτου μαθεῖν περὶ ἀπάντων τούτων, μέχρι τοῦ μὴ βλασφημεῖν περὶ αὐτά, εὐφημεῖν δὲ αἰεὶ θύοντάς τε καὶ ἐν εὐχαίς εὐχομένους εὐσεβῶς.

⁴² Plato, *Laws*, edited by M. Schofield, translated by T. Griffith, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 282.

⁴³ G.R. Carone, *The Ethical Function of Astronomy in Plato’s Timaeus*, cit., p. 347 and G.R. Carone, *Plato’s Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

So that, my dear Megillos and Kleinias, is what now has to be said about the gods in the sky, as I maintain, at least our citizens, and that is to say the young ones, have to learn about all these things until such a time as they do not speak evil of them, but always remain devoutly silent at the sacrifice and pray godly even when praying (*Lg.* 821c6-d4 Burnet).

The celestial bodies are thus worshipped, as it were, as new gods replacing the old gods, in the form of established ritual practices such as sacrifice and prayer. This idea is further illuminated by some important passages in Book X, where common atheism is refuted. The old custom of believing in gods is substantiated by rational considerations, since the cosmos is organized according to reasonable laws⁴⁴. The rational circular movements of the celestial bodies are attributed to the fact that rational souls drive and move them. Thus, also in the cosmos, the self-moving soul (*Lg.* 895c-896a), an intelligent being, is the cause of everything and sensibly directs and guides the cosmos, which itself is νοητὸν ζῶον (*Lg.* 888e-890a), with the help of reason (*Lg.* 896d-898d). Each heavenly body has its own soul (*Lg.* 898d3-5), from which the Athenian now derives the divinity not only of the world soul but also of the celestial souls:

ἀστρων δὴ περί πάντων καὶ σελήνης, ἐνιαυτῶν τε καὶ μηνῶν καὶ πασῶν ὥρων περί, τίνα ἄλλον λόγον ἐροῦμεν ἢ τὸν αὐτὸν τούτον, ὡς ἐπειδὴ ψυχῆ μὲν ἢ ψυχῆι πάντων τούτων αἰτιαὶ ἐφάνησαν, ἀγαθαὶ δὲ πᾶσαν ἀρετήν, θεοὺς αὐτὰς εἶναι φήσομεν, εἴτε ἐν σώμασιν ἐνούσαι, ζῶα ὄντα, κοσμοῦσιν πάντα οὐρανόν, εἴτε ὅπη τε καὶ ὅπως; ἔσθ' ὅστις ταῦτα ὁμολογῶν ὑπομενεῖ μὴ θεῶν εἶναι πλήρη πάντα;

ΚΛ. οὐκ ἔστιν οὕτως, ὦ ξένε, παραφρονῶν οὐδεὶς.

Will we then formulate about all the stars and the moon, about the years and also the months and about all the seasons a different assertion than just the same assertion that we, because soul or souls proved to be the cause of everything – good (sc. souls) but with a view to the virtue as a whole – will assert that they are gods, be it that they are now living beings, in bodies, be it that they order the whole heaven where or however? Is there anyone who, if he agrees with this, stubbornly continues to claim that not everything is full of gods?

Kleinias: No one, my dear guest, can be so out of his senses (*Lg.* X 899b3-c1 Burnet).

The basic religious trait focused on in this article, which became apparent in the *Nomoi* in the context of the discussion of astronomy as a school subject for all and with regard to the newly postulated astral gods, is taken up again in Book 12 of the *Nomoi*, when the establishment of the Nocturnal Council is discussed: the members of the Nocturnal Council must, as it says there (*Lg.* XII 966c-968b), take care of theology. The Athenian succinctly summarizes the previ-

⁴⁴ M. Erler, *Platon, in Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Völlig neubearbeitete Ausgabe. Die Philosophie der Antike*, edited by H. Flashar, Basel, Schwabe, 2007, vol. II, p. 467.

ous discussion when he attributes the necessary respect for the gods (see θεοσεβές) to the following two principles:

οὐκ ἔστιν ποτὲ γενέσθαι βεβραίως θεοσεβῆ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα, ὃς ἂν μὴ τὰ λεγόμενα ταῦτα νῦν δύο λάβῃ, ψυχὴ τε ὡς ἔστιν πρεσβύτατον ἀπάντων ὅσα γονῆς μετείληφεν, ἀθάνατόν τε, ἄρχει τε δὴ σωμάτων πάντων, ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοισι δὴ, τὸ νῦν εἰρημένον πολλὰκις, τὸν τε εἰρημένον ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις νοῦν τῶν ὄντων τὰ τε πρὸ τούτων ἀναγκαῖα μαθήματα λάβῃ, τὰ τε κατὰ τὴν μουσαν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας συνθεασάμενος, χρήσεται πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἡθῶν ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ νόμιμα συναρμοσπόντως, ὅσα τε λόγον ἔχει, τούτων δυνατὸς ἤ δοῦναι τὸν λόγον.

No member of the human race is ever going to be a firm religious believer unless he has a grasp of these two things we are now discussing: first, that soul is, of all things which are involved in coming into being, the oldest; that it is a think immortal, and that it controls all physical bodies; and further to that – something we have repeated many times – that in the region of the stars it is mind which is in control; he must also have a grasp of the studies preliminary to these, and must observe those elements of music and poetry which have some connection with them, applying them, with due harmony, to the habits and practices of morality; also, where things have a rational explanation, he should be capable of giving that explanation (*Lg.* 967d4-968a1 Burnet; transl. Schofield/Griffith⁴⁵).

On the one hand the soul is immortal and ruler over the physical, on the other hand the guide for all being is the Nous to be located *in the stars*. Thus, here, at the end of the *Nomoi* conversation, the Athenian once again unmistakably refers to the indissoluble close connection between the soul and the stars, which is (at an appropriate level) recognizable to the members of the Nocturnal Council.

In the *Timaeus*, above all, the relationship of the individual human souls to the stars was described in the context of a cosmological myth and connected with the ethical goal of eudaimonia, which, of course, was only accessible to a few, the philosophers. In contrast, the connection of soul and stars is different here in the *Nomoi*, namely seen not from an ethical, but a theological perspective: here, too, the stars do have souls, but these are the reason for the divinity of the stars themselves, which now, because of their cosmos, their orderly, reasonable orbits, function and act as venerated gods themselves. So here the divinity and the religious worship of the cosmos, the stars, as new gods replacing the old ones, is in the foreground. Thus, the occupation with astronomy is emphatically freed from the reproach of impiety and rather receives the rank and function of an astral religion or theology. What is missing in the context of the *Nomoi*, however, is a conception of the Beyond that is connoted with astral psychology and astral religion as it became clear in *Phaedo*, *Politeia* and also in the *Timaeus* in different ways for the souls travelling without a body.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Laws*, cit., p. 468.

6. The Pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis*

Let us now take a look at a work from the Old Academy that is particularly relevant in our context, the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis*, which, according to the *Suda* entry, also bore the title Φιλόσοφος⁴⁶. Philip of Opus may⁴⁷ or may not be the presumed author⁴⁸. In the present context the literary presentation of astronomical and psychological considerations, which reminds of Platonic dialogues like *Timaeus* and *Nomoi*, but on closer inspection admittedly deviates from them⁴⁹, is just as important as the theological-religious perspective. In formally close connection to the *Nomoi* dialogue the same interlocutors discuss the necessary course of education for the Nocturnal Council. The main question is ultimately an ethical one, it is the knowledge (σοφία) that guarantees the people according to eudaimonia⁵⁰. For the author of this text, star observations and celestial phenomena, briefly: astronomy, play a central role. In this context, therefore, the soul and divinity of the celestial bodies are also discussed (*Epin.* 982a-984a). In addition, there are broad statements about the astral sphere, in which for the first time the ether is explicitly named as the fifth element (*Epin.* 981c) and can be assumed to be the region of the stars⁵¹. The planets bear the names of known gods (e.g. Aphrodite, Hermes etc.), so that here we can identify, apart from a psychologization of the stars (cf. *Lg.* 896e-899a; 966d-968b), an astral theology described in the text as fundamentally important⁵², in the context of which even the demand for a state cult for astral gods is raised (*Epin.* 985d-987a). The Athenian offers a reference to an afterlife in the sky, admittedly a little vaguely, most

⁴⁶ *Suda* <Φιλίππος ὁ Ὀπουντικός> Φιλόσοφος = Φ 418 Adler IV, see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, in *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Völlig neubearbeitete Ausgabe. Die Philosophie der Antike, Band 3: Ältere Akademie, Aristoteles, Peripatos*, edited by Hellmut Flashar, Basel, Schwabe, 2004, pp. 3-174, here p. 103.

⁴⁷ For discussion see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., pp. 106 f.

⁴⁸ E.g. L. Brisson, *Epinomis: Authenticity and Authorship*, in *Pseudoplatonica*, edited by K. Döring, M. Erler and S. Schorn, Stuttgart, Steiner, 2005, pp. 9-24, here pp. 21-23.

⁴⁹ See F. Aronadio, *Das Göttliche und die Götter in der pseudoplatonischen Schrift Epinomis*, in *Platon und das Göttliche*, edited by D. Koch, I. Männlein-Robert and N. Weidtmann, Tübingen, Attempo-Verlag, 2010, pp. 8-29 and F. Aronadio, *L'Epinomide: Struttura compositiva e contenuti teorici*, in *[Plato] Epinomis*, edited by F. Aronadio, M. Tulli and F. Petrucci, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2013, pp. 13-178, here pp. 135-159.

⁵⁰ The *Epinomis* has a very similar conception of σοφία to Xenocrates, who sees it as the highest science, cf. Xen. Περὶ σοφίας; Krämer translates *On philosophy*, see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., p. 49.

⁵¹ See *Ti.* 55c, and J. Dillon, *How does the Soul direct the Body, after all? Traces of a Dispute on Mind-Body Relations in the Old Academy*, in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy*, edited by D. Frede and B. Reis, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 349-356, here p. 355 with note 12.

⁵² See L. Simeoni, *L'Epinomide, Vangelo della religione astrale*, in *Epinomide. Studi sull'opera e la sua ricezione*, edited by F. Alessi, F. Ferrari and M.C. Dalfino, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2012, pp. 179-199; F. Aronadio, *L'Epinomide: Struttura compositiva e contenuti teorici*, cit., pp. 91-98.

likely still reminiscent of the *Timaeus* (42b3-5), when he allows only the happy ones to reach blissful places during their lifetime after physical death, after intensive occupation with the orderly circulation of the celestial bodies:

ὄν ὁ μὲν εὐδαίμων πρότον μὲν θαύμασεν, ἔπειτα δὲ ἔρωτα ἔσχεν τοῦ καταμαθεῖν ὅποσα θνητῇ φύσει δυνατά, ἡγούμενος ἀριστ' οὕτως εὐτυχέστατά τε διάξειν τὸν βίον τελευτήσας τε εἰς τόπους ἡξειν προσήκοντας ἀρετῇ, καὶ μεμνημένος ἀληθῶς τε καὶ ὄντως, μεταλαβὼν φρονήσεως εἰς ἃν μίας, τὸν ἐπιλοιπὸν χρόνον θεωρὸς τῶν καλλίστων γενόμενος, ὅσα κατ' ὄψιν, διατελεῖ.

This (sc. cosmic order) was first admired by the man equipped with a good daemon, but then he got the urge to understand as much as a mortal could by nature, because he believed that this was the best and happiest way to live, and that after his death he would come to the places that would suit his virtue. And as a truly and genuinely initiated mystic, the only one with a share in the one reason, he lives the rest of the time continually as a beholder of the most beautiful things, as many are to be seen (*Epin.* 986c5-d4 Burnet).

The Athenian has already described εὐδαιμονία as something that only a few will be able to do in their lifetime in the opening of the dialogue (*Epin.* 973c4-d1), but he refers to «beautiful hope» (καλὴ ἐλπὶς, *Epin.* 973c6) as a reward in the hereafter for all honorable efforts. After the so epistemologically and theologically important role of astronomy has been discussed in detail, the Athenian refers back to the positive hope of reward in the hereafter, reserved for only a few, which now reveals itself as a «perpetual show of the most beautiful», if you like, as an eternal contemplation of the stars. Even here the thoughts of the Athenian or *Epinomis* author may not seem to be really coherent⁵³, but in this passage alluding to mystery events the absolutely central role of astronomy becomes unmistakably recognizable: It appears as it were as philosophy or rather replaces it and at the same time is described in unmistakable religious tones⁵⁴. The same thought is again formulated by the Athenian towards the end of the dialogue in a concluding frame (*Epin.* 992b2-c3), so that once again astronomy is identified with the new piety to be desired, replacing the popular religion (*theosebeia, eusebeia*)⁵⁵.

With the *Epinomis* there is thus a text representative of the discussions in the Old Academy, which reflects the internal discourse

⁵³ See F. Aronadio, *Das Göttliche und die Götter in der pseudoplatonischen Schrift Epinomis*, cit., pp. 8-29.

⁵⁴ This is suggested by the sequence of cognitions described in *Epin.* 986c5-d4: θαύμασεν – ἔρωτα ἔσχεν – καταμαθεῖν – μεμνημένος – μεταλαβὼν φρονήσεως – θεωρὸς τῶν καλλίστων γενόμενος διατελεῖ. Cf. a similar initiation into philosophy via different stages by the Middle Platonist Theon, *Exp. rer. math.* 14,17-16, 2 H.

⁵⁵ See also *Epin.* 990a.

on the soul as the heavenly substance aether⁵⁶, on astral theology and celestial gods⁵⁷, as well as the theological, astronomy-related, new options for religiosity and cult, but which seems to represent individual approaches. In our context it is important that in the *Epinomis* a particularly *religious* conception of scientific astronomy can be recognized. In addition to that – also with regard to the eudaimonia of man on this side and the less concrete (not explicitly located in the sky) eudaimonia beyond – the concept of astronomy as new theology drafted here is an ultimately elitist option reserved for only a few.

7. Heraclides Ponticus

With Heraclides Ponticus, who had entered the Academy in 365 at the latest and who had served as deputy headmaster in the Academy during Plato's third Sicilian journey (361/360 B.C.), it is not surprising that the fragments, testimonies and work titles (see D.L. V 86-88) reveal an interest in astronomy, in the conceptual connection of soul and stars as well as in soul journeys outside the body which is quite similar to that which is identified in the above mentioned Platonic texts⁵⁸. In our context, Heraclides is probably one of the most exciting figures among the representatives of the Old Academy, alongside Plato: even if he did not, like Eudoxus of Knidos, who was close to the Academy, postulate the movement of planets in mathematical calculations or homocentric spheres⁵⁹, Heraclides is a pioneer of important later astronomical theories such as the rotation of the Earth's axis and the annual movement of the Earth itself⁶⁰ and his astronomical speculations are closely associated

⁵⁶ For Plato's integration of physicalist theories (e.g. Heraclitus) of the soul's affinity with aether, see H.-J. Waschkies, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 52-54 and especially G. Betegh, *Eschatology and Cosmology*, cit., pp. 37 f.

⁵⁷ F. Aronadio, *Das Göttliche und die Götter in der pseudoplatonischen Schrift Epinomis*, cit., pp. 8-29. Corresponding ideas about astral theology can also be found in early Aristotle: e.g. frg. 21 Ross = Cicero, *De natura deorum* II 16,44, on this see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., p. 109. Xenocrates, for instance, in his writing *Περὶ θεῶν*, gives allegorical names to elementary forces with the names of the (traditional) gods; thus the astral gods receive Olympic names (frg. 19 and 20), the demiurge is called «Zeus» etc.; see also P. Boyancé, *La religion astrale de Platon à Cicéron*, in «Revue des Études Grecques», 65, 1952, pp. 312-350, here p. 333; in general, for the hierarchical theology recognizable here, see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., pp. 107 f.

⁵⁸ Heraclides is erroneously described by Diogenes Laertius (based on a misleading note of Sotion) as a pupil of Aristotle, see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., pp. 88 f.; for his biography see J.-P. Schneider, *Héraclide de Pontique*, in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, edited by R. Goulet, Paris, Éd. du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 2000, vol. III, pp. 563-568, here p. 564.

⁵⁹ See H.-J. Waschkies, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 36 f.

⁶⁰ See work titles such as *Περὶ τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ* (frg. 104-117 Wehrli).

with psychological concepts. In the following a few relevant aspects will be picked out⁶¹.

Heraclides apparently represented an equality of essence between heavenly bodies and soul⁶²: he describes the soul of man as «light-like»⁶³ (Ἡρακλείδης φωτειδῆ τὴν ψυχὴν ὠρίσατο) or as «light», perhaps also as «aether»⁶⁴, postulating with the soul as light-body or aether, of course, an extremely ethereal, but nevertheless material soul. Because of the light-character of the soul he relates it to the astral sphere and its light-character, especially to the (supralunar) Milky Way (γαλαξία), from which it came and where it goes again after the death of the body – even if the Milky Way was probably for him rather a «place of passage» for the higher regions like the sub-solar and fixed star area (for the blessed), a kind of «Hades in the sky» (frg. 94 Wehrli: τὸν Ἄϊδην τὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ)⁶⁵. The comparability of soul and stars, their luminousness, is an idea that we also find hinted at in Plato: the best proof for this is probably Plato's *Politeia* (621b4), when in the Er myth the souls after drinking from the river Amelēs «fall like shooting stars» onto the earth and into new bodies⁶⁶. The idea of the close relationship between the light-like soul and the stars, or even its sidereal origin, which is tangible in Plato and Heraclides Ponticus, suggests that in Plato's case we are dealing with literary, in Heraclides' case, with speculative reflexes of contemporary cosmological speculations about the fifth element of which the stars are supposed to consist, which were discussed in the Academy⁶⁷. As already in the *Epinomis* (see above), there are also speculations in Heraclides about the connection of the fifth element (aether) with

⁶¹ For astronomy see H.B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides Ponticus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 58-87.

⁶² This is (as well as the view that the soul is ultimately ethereally material) actually considered a Hellenistic-Stoic idea, P. Moraux, *Quinta essentia*, in RE XXIV, 1963, pp. 1171-1263, here pp. 1195 f. and p. 1246.

⁶³ Heraclides Ponticus, frg. 98a Wehrli; see also Heraclides Ponticus, frg. 98d Wehrli: Παρμενίδης δὲ καὶ Ἴππασος καὶ Ἡράκλειτος πρῶτῃ ταύτην (sc. τὴν ψυχὴν) κεκλήρασιν – ὁ δὲ Ἡρακλείδης φωτειδῆ.

⁶⁴ Heraclides Ponticus, frg. 98b Wehrli: *Heraclides Ponticus lucem* (sc. *animam esse docuit*); see also 98c and 100 Wehrli; as «Aither» see frg. 99 Wehrli, see J. Dillon, *How does the Soul direct the Body, after all?*, cit., pp. 354 f.

⁶⁵ Heraclides Ponticus, frg. 96 Wehrli: Δαμάσκιος τὴν Ἐμπεδοτίμου περὶ τοῦ γάλακτος (sc. ὑπόθεσιν) οἰκιοῦται, ἔργον αὐτὴν οὐ μῦθον καλῶν. φησι γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἰδὸν εἶναι ψυχῶν τὸ γάλα τῶν τὸν Ἄϊδην τὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ διαπορευομένων. Cf. id. frg. 97 Wehrli. Heraclides seems to be close to Pythagorean teachings when he assumes that each star is a separate cosmos with an air envelope (frg. 113 Wehrli).

⁶⁶ See also *Ti.* 41df.; 42d.

⁶⁷ It was represented, for example, by Philippus of Opus, see H.-J. Waschkies, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 50-53; possibly (according to Boyancé in a letter to Wehrli) a Plutarch testimony (*De E apud Delphos* 11,390A; see Wehrli p. 93) can be read as a hint that Heraclides postulated a (fifth) substance beyond the fiery realm, which he defined as «light» (φῶς) and which he does not seem to have called «aether», see H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., p. 91.

the heavenly origin of the soul⁶⁸. Beyond the speculations and conceptions about the connection between psychology and astronomy, which are still recognizable to us, Heraclides deals with the phenomenon of the separation of the soul from the body, perhaps out of medical, but certainly out of religious and psychological interest. Traditional titles such as *On the Suspected Death or on Diseases* (Περὶ τῆς ἄπνου ἢ περὶ νόσων frg. 76-89 Wehrli)⁶⁹ document reflections on the possibilities of a soul wandering without a body, as do his dialogue about the θεῖος ἀνὴρ Abaris, in which Pythagoras also plays an important role (frg. 73-75 Wehrli)⁷⁰, his intensive examination of soul journeys and soul migration as well as ecstatic phenomena. In addition, there is the title handed down by Plutarch Περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου (*On Things in Hades*, frg. 72 Wehrli), where related considerations of Heraclides about the otherworldly fate of the soul freed from the body can be recognized, as well as his thesis, which is represented elsewhere, that the (supralunar) Milky Way as «Hades in the sky» is at least a temporary residence for the disembodied souls, and the celestial bodies are inhabited in general⁷¹. However, his cosmological speculation about the afterlife does not seem to provide a special place of residence for philosophical souls, as is promised in Plato's *Phaedo* (see above) or in the *Phaedrus* (249ab)⁷².

All in all, the interesting profile of a member of the old Academy emerges here, which, quite independently and perhaps even in deviation from Plato's soul teachings (see above the light-like soul), merges contemporary and inner-academic astronomical discussions with speculative and above all religious and religious-philosophical approaches⁷³.

⁶⁸ See P. Moraux, *Quinta essentia*, cit., pp. 1193 f.

⁶⁹ See H.B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides Ponticus*, cit., pp. 13-36.

⁷⁰ P. Boyancé, *L'«Abaris» d'Héraclide le Pontique*, in «Revue des Études Anciennes», 36, 1934, pp. 321-352.

⁷¹ See Cic. *rep.* VI = *somm. Sc.* 15f., where the Milky Way is mentioned as a place for the just and pious. On the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochos*, see I. Männlein-Robert, *Ps.-Platon, Über den Tod. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit interpretierenden Essays versehen von I. Männlein-Robert, O. Sebelske et al.*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2012, pp. 21-26.

⁷² There, after three reincarnations, the philosopher returns to a place *above* heaven; good but not philosophically active people reach a place *in* heaven. Cf. (with an eye on Heraclides) the man who fell off the moon as cosmic guarantor for a settlement at least on the moon, who admittedly at the same time is also supposed to testify to the rotation of the earth's axis (Heraclides frg. 115 Wehrli), see also H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, cit., p. 96.

⁷³ Cf. his purely religious interpretation of the earthquake of Helike 373 B.C., see J.-P. Schneider, *Héraclide de Pontique*, cit., p. 568 and I. Svitczou, *Heraclides of Pontus and His Cosmic Theory: An Innovator or a Revisionist of the Ancient Cosmology?*, in «Akademia Athenon: Philosophia epeteris tu Kentru Ereunes tes Hellenikes Philosophias. Yearbook of the Research Center for Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens», 35, 2005, pp. 175-181.

8. Historical Context and Contemporary Discourse

Finally, the observations made so far are to be embedded in a larger framework: we have seen that in his later dialogues – and there predominantly in the context of myths – Plato closely links his ideas about the soul, especially the soul after separation from the body, with contemporary and inner-academic astronomical speculations⁷⁴. This results in an unconventional conception of the afterlife that deviates considerably from the traditional (Homeric) and popular belief in the afterlife and from the more recent concepts of the afterlife of mysteries and the Orphic cults as well. Rather, Plato creates an afterlife on a philosophical basis that is situated in the cosmos: in the aether and among the stars. By doing so, Plato obviously picks up a contemporary religious discourse according to which the soul goes to the stars at the death of the body, i.e. the afterlife is located in the sky. Such conceptions⁷⁵ probably ultimately go back to pre-Socratic, perhaps Pythagorean speculations about a spherical shape of the earth: thus, for the idea that the activity of the soul reflects the circular movements of celestial spheres and stars⁷⁶, reference is made to Parmenides or to Anaxagoras' theories about the spherical shape of the earth⁷⁷, to Pythagoras and Pythagoreans (such as Archytas)⁷⁸ with corresponding speculations or the so-called *Parapegmata* of Meton (ca. 432 B.C.), an astronomical calendar, which also required a spherical shape of the earth or at least a free-floating earth⁷⁹. In this context, reference should also be made to Empedocles, who also made a serious reinterpretation when he described the earth as Hades and formulated the return of man to his original divinity as his goal, apparently differentiating different areas in the cosmos for the

⁷⁴ Only in myths, see F. Solmsen, *Plato and Science*, in: *Kleine Schriften III*, edited by F. Solmsen, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York, Georg Olms, 1982, pp. 217-236, here p. 220; H.-J. Waschki, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 43 f.

⁷⁵ See W. Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon*, Nürnberg, Hans Carl, 1962, p. 335.

⁷⁶ L. Ballew, *Straight and Circular in Parmenides and the «Timaeus»*, in «Phronesis», 19, 1974, pp. 189-209.

⁷⁷ See his mention in Plat. *Phd.* 97b-99b, and H.-J. Waschki, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 33 f.; P.S. Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013 (Paperback, 2016), pp. 168-174.

⁷⁸ See Diogenes Laertius VIII 48 on Pythagoras, a critical review of this is given by C.H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 115-118.

⁷⁹ See H.-J. Waschki, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., p. 37 f.; D.L. Couprie, *Heaven and Earth in Ancient Greek Cosmology. From Thales to Heraclides Ponticus*, New York, Springer New York, 2011, p. 166.

transmigration of the different souls to them⁸⁰. In any case, at least from a philosophical point of view, since the 5th century B.C. neither a traditional Hades under and beyond the known world nor the «Islands of the Blessed» located at the edge of the earth could be located any longer⁸¹. Epigraphically, this idea can already be proven in the epitaph for those who fell in the battle of Poteidaia (432 B.C.)⁸², which is thus the oldest popular testimony to date to the dualistic idea according to which the souls after death are taken up by the aether above and the bodies by the earth below⁸³. Probably the oldest literary evidence of the migration of the soul or the πνεῦμα to heaven can be found in the second half of the 5th century BC in the Pseudo-*Epicharmeia* as well as in the Attic tragedy especially of the later Euripides⁸⁴. However, the majority of the evidence suggests that according to Plato, this idea, in which the soul in accordance with its best part⁸⁵ ascends to heaven after the death of man, did not prevail in wider circles of the population, but rather the traditional idea of an underground Hades continued to dominate⁸⁶.

Plato is apparently the first philosopher to combine pervading pre-Socratic theories of the 5th century with Eleusinian as well as Orphic-Pythagorean ideas about the soul and the afterlife⁸⁷. In doing so, he amalgamates poetic and popular religious ideas with current

⁸⁰ E.g. Empedocles, D.-K. B 120: ἤλυθόμεν τόδ' ὑπ' ἄντρον ὑπόστειρον («We came under the roof of this cave here»); D.-K. B 121: *orcus Empedocli est terra*; D.-K. B 121 born as ἀπερπεία χώρον. For the differentiated cosmological placement of the souls see in detail S. Trépanier, *From Hades to the Stars: Empedocles on the Cosmic Habitats of Soul*, in «Classical Antiquity», 36, 2017, pp. 130-182.

⁸¹ W. Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon*, cit., p. 335; M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion. Zweiter Band: Die Hellenistische und Römische Zeit*, München, C.H. Beck, 1988⁴, especially pp. 490-497; P. Friedländer, *Platon als Geograph. Die Anfänge der Erdkugelgeographie*, in *Platon*, edited by P. Friedländer, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1954², vol. I, pp. 260-283; A. Mihai, *Soul's Aitherial Abode According to the Poteidaia Epitaph and the Presocratic Philosophers*, in «Numen», 57, 2010, pp. 553-582; I. Männlein-Robert, *Von der Höhle in den Himmel*, cit., pp. 58 f.

⁸² CIA I 442 = CEG I 10 Hansen.

⁸³ See P. Capelle, *De luna stellis lacteo orbe animarum sedibus*, cit., pp. 34-36; W. Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon*, cit., p. 339 notes 20 and 340; I.P. Culianu, *Psychanodia. A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1983, p. 10.

⁸⁴ For the Ps.-*Epicharmeia* see e.g. 23 B 9 D.-K.; 23 B 22 D.-K.; for Euripides: Eur. *Supp.* (c. 421 BC listed) 1140 f.: αἰθῆρ ἔχει νιν ἤδη, / πρὸς τετακότας σποδᾶς; Eur. *Supp.* 531-536: εἶσατ' ἤδη γῆ καλυφθῆναι νεκρούς, / ὅθεν δ' ἕκαστον ἐς τὸ φῶς ἀφίκετο / ἐνταῦθ' ἀπελθεῖν, πνεῦμα μὲν πρὸς αἰθέρα, τὸ σῶμα δ' ἐς γῆν; *Hel.* (412 BC listed), Eur. *Supp.* 1013-1016: καὶ γὰρ τίσις τῶνδ' ἐστὶ τοῖς τε νερτέροις / καὶ τοῖς ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὁ νοῦς / τῶν κατθανόντων ζῆ μὲν οὐ, γνώμη δ' ἔχει / ἀθάνατον εἰς ἀθάνατον αἰθέρ' ἐμπροσθ'; also Eur. *Or.* 1683-1690; Eur. frg. 971 TrGrFr V,2 Kannicht; see W. Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon*, cit., pp. 338 f. Cf. Aristoph. *Pax* 832 f.: οὐκ ἔν ἄρ' οὐδ' ἄ λέγουσι, κατὰ τὸν αἰθέρα / ὡς ἀστέρεις γιγνόμεθ', ὅταν τις ἀποθάνῃ; / μάλιστα.

⁸⁵ The Presocratics since Heraclitus and Diogenes of Apollonia considered the soul to be part of a cosmic element, see G. Betegh, *Eschatology and Cosmology*, cit., p. 32 and *passim*.

⁸⁶ See A. Chaniotis, *Das Jenseits: Eine Gegenwelt?*, cit., p. 164.

⁸⁷ From a slightly different perspective, but with the same result see G. Betegh, *Eschatology and Cosmology*, cit.

cosmological and astronomical⁸⁸ observations and speculations, which are apparently being discussed in the Academy, and presents them in the literary guise of (afterlife) myth⁸⁹. In doing so, he seems to have developed original concepts of his own, such as the provenance of the immortal human soul from the stars, the soul and divinity of the stars themselves, as well as the honouring of virtuous or even philosophically living people after their death by a special placement in cosmic Hades and their (at least temporary)⁹⁰ removal from the cycle of reincarnations.

The following aspects are particularly important:

1. The fact that in Plato's view, although every soul has sidereal quality and provenance from a star, not every soul can return there unconditionally after the death of the body, but that strict ethical rules of life must have been observed. Whoever lived virtuously during his lifetime and oriented his way of life intellectually towards the divine, i.e., to the highest degree, someone who practiced philosophy, will be privileged in the hereafter: His soul will be placed higher in the sidereal cosmos and will apparently even (at least for a certain time) be excluded from the cycle of reincarnations; he will be granted eternal eudaimonia. The philosopher in particular thus becomes an exemplary human being with promising prospects in the afterlife.

2. The role of astronomy, which since the *Phaedo* then became increasingly concrete in Plato's late work and even played a central role for psychological theories and conceptions among his students. Here the significant new connection between natural philosophy and ethics, a teleological conquest of materialistic conceptions of contingency⁹¹, as it were, can be identified as a new close connection between cosmological theory and ethical practice⁹². For in Plato's *Phaedo*, for example, man must sufficiently purify and prove himself by perfecting the virtues. Anyone who succeeds in this is a philosopher and comes to the realms from where he can observe the stars, i.e. practise astronomy: So astronomy is here known to the philosopher in the hereafter as a result and reward, as a permanent occupation for those who have lived well. While in the *Politeia* Plato reacts to

⁸⁸ For mathematical structures, relevant for the identity of the soul, see *ibidem*, p. 48.

⁸⁹ On the importance of Eudoxus from Knidos for Plato's unconventional cosmological speculations, see H.-J. Waschki, *Kosmologische Spekulationen bei Platon und Aristoteles als Reflex der exakten Wissenschaften ihrer Zeit*, cit., pp. 36-42 and M. Erler, *Platon*, cit., p. 467.

⁹⁰ M. Vorwerk, *Mythos und Kosmos*, cit., p. 57 and p. 63.

⁹¹ See M. Erler, *Platon*, cit., p. 450.

⁹² See also Plat. *Ti.* 90d1-d7, with F. Ferrari, *L'Epinomide, il Timeo e la «saggezza del mondo»*. *Osservazioni introduttive*, in *Epinomide. Studi sull'Opera e la sua Ricezione*, edited by F. Alesse and F. Ferrari, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2012, pp. 19-33, here pp. 24 f.

contemporary scientific theories about the macrocosm (cf. the spindle scene), but concentrates there on the representation of a teleological cycle in the final myth, in the later *Timaeus* and in the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis*, on the other hand, the observation of the stars is the fundamental prerequisite as well as a continuation of philosophical activity in the hereafter, which is in principle possible for everyone, but only a few can succeed. The *Epinomis in particular* is characterized by a special concentration on astronomy as an actual and essential activity for (some) philosophers: Instead of virtue now astronomy functions as springboard to otherworldly-cosmic eudaimonia.

3. Plato's pupils have developed his new approaches with their own accentuations. The comparison between Plato and the *Epinomis* author as well as Heraclides Ponticus reveals above all one serious difference: Plato himself merges new religious ideas and cosmological-astronomical speculations with his psychology, above all the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its otherworldly eudaimonia on trial during his lifetime. With Plato we can thus identify the transposition of *new religious concepts into the philosophical* as well as a *religious conception of scientific* (cosmological resp. astronomical) *considerations*. This can be clearly seen in his highly original design, where the afterlife in the sky is considered the scene of origin as well as the final destination of the wandering, repeatedly incarnated human soul, while the (fixed) stars in the cosmos prove to be sensually perceptible, but in turn divine and eternal beings.

All in all, it can be said that Plato with his great literary myths and concepts of the Beyond, his unconventional and imaginative amalgamation of psychological and astronomical considerations formulates a *redesign* of the hereafter with regard to space and cosmos as well as to ethics and psychology. In comparison to the popular belief in Hades this proves to be downright contradictory to and incomparably more differentiated and presuppositional than the purely religious ideas of the mystery cults. Plato thus renegotiates the great religious theme of the afterlife and the migration of the human soul postulated as immortal under philosophical and contemporary scientific premises. His students in the Academy, such as the author of the *Epinomis*, Xenocrates or Heraclides, place a much stronger emphasis on the religious aspects, for example with regard to astral gods, astral cult or ecstatic phenomena⁹³. Thus they undertake – and

⁹³ P. Boyancé, *La religion astrale de Platon à Cicéron*, cit., pp. 312-350 and D. Pesce, *Il platonismo religioso di Filippo di Punte e di Eraclide Pontico*, in *Idea, Numero e Anima. Primi contributi a una storia del platonismo nell'antichità*, edited by D. Pesce, Padua, Libreria gregoriana editrice, 1961, pp. 45-53 are more detailed.

this is the reverse of Plato's – a decidedly *religious conception* of Platonic philosophical concepts, but in the end they have continued his approaches and in doing so have modified them individually.

Abstract

Plato's literary conceptions of the Beyond of the human soul integrate the entire space of the cosmos and move the eschatological space of traditional Hades up to heaven. Astronomy is now combined in an idiosyncratic way with Platonic psychology, ethics, religion, and theology. Two strategies can be observed: the philosophical rationalization of ancient mythotopoi and a new religious conception of astronomy. Plato's students in the Academy, such as the author of the *Epinomis*, Xenocrates, or Heraclides, place a much stronger emphasis on the religious aspects (astral gods) and undertake – and this is the reverse of Plato's – a decidedly religious conception of Platonic philosophical concepts.

Keywords: Plato, Soul, Immortality, Astronomy, Religion.

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