The Functional Dimension of Myths in Plato's Philosophy:
A Hermeneutic Analysis

Platon Felsefesinde Mitlerin İşlevsel Boyutu: Hermenötik Bir Analiz

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ÖZET

Makalede Platon'un felsefesinde mitlerin işlevsel boyutu ve bu bağlamda iletişimsel yönleri hermenötik yöntemle irdelenecektir. Platon'un bütün diyaloglarında mitlerin doğasını ve işlevsel boyutunu ele almak çalışmanın sınırlarını aşacağı için temsil gücü yüksek olan diyaloglara başvurulacaktır. Makalenin merkeze aldığı sorunsalın akademide yeteri düzeyde ele alındığını söylemek zordur. Platon'un felsefesinde mitlerin konumuna odaklanan çalışmalar genellikle bu unsurların teorik işlevini ele alırken, onların diyaloglardaki iletişimsel işlevi göz ardı edilmektedir. Oysa Platon'un aynı zamanda bir yazar kimliği taşıdığı ve eserleri aracılığıyla toplumun geniş kesimlerine ulaşmayı amaçladığı veya en azından bu olasılığın dikkate alınması gerektiği kanaatini taşımaktayız. Bu çerçevede, çalışmanın sorunsalının özgün olduğu ve ilgili alana katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Makalede, Platon'un felsefesinde mitlerin, Sokratik yöntem etrafında insanların toplumsallaşmalarını sağlayan; önce bilge (sophos) ile muhataplar arasında, ardından da muhatapların hakikatle ilişkisi bağlamında kurucu bir iletişim unsuru olduğu savunulacaktır.

ABSTRACT

This article employs a hermeneutic method to examine the functional dimension of myths in Plato's philosophy and their communicative aspects within this context. Since addressing the nature and functional dimension of myths in all of Plato's dialogues would exceed the limits of the study, dialogues with high representativeness will be used. It is challenging to assert that the central issue addressed in this article has been adequately addressed within the academic community. A prevailing theme in scholarly works examining the role of myths in Plato's philosophy is the emphasis on their theoretical aspects. However, these studies often overlook the significance of these elements' communicative function within the dialogues. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that Plato was also a writer and thus sought to appeal to diverse social groups. In this context, it is hypothesized that the problem addressed in this study is original and will contribute to the relevant field. The article will argue that myths in Plato's philosophy are a constitutive element of communication that enables people to socialize around the Socratic method, first between the wise (sophos) and the interlocutors, and then in the context of the interlocutors' relationship with truth.

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INTRODUCTION

In Plato's dialogues, the distinction between myth[1] and *logos*[2] is frequently obscured. In addressing this issue, Morgan provides explanations regarding the ambiguity of the boundaries between myth and *logos*. He posits that it is appropriate to categorize the narratives that Plato refers to as "myths" as such. In this way, he asserts, subjective statements can be prevented (Morgan, 2004, p. 156). Nevertheless, it is evident that Plato himself does not adopt a definitive stance on this matter. For example, in paragraph 60d of the *Phaedo* dialogue, he refers to the tales of Aesop as "*logoi*" (τοὺς λογοὺς τοῦ Αισωώπου) (Plato 2 In paragraph 61b of the same dialogue, he refers to them as "myths" (δια ταῦτα μύθους Αισωώπου) (Platon, 2024, p. 7).

The issue persists, however, as the narratives designated as myths by Plato exhibit considerable divergence. It may, therefore, prove beneficial to categorize these myths according to their similarities and differences. Morgan, for instance, proposes a classification system comprising three distinct categories:

a) Traditional myths as conveyed by poets,
b) Myths designed for educational purposes,
c) Myths that engage with philosophical concepts (Morgan, 2004, pp. 162-163).

In his dialogues, Plato tends to adopt a critical stance towards the role of myths. Conversely, it seems reasonable to posit that Plato believed that, in certain instances, the participants in his dialogues (and indeed, some readers) would be unable to fully comprehend the issues being discussed. In such cases, he resorts to the use of myths. The question, therefore, is to identify which myths Plato employs in these instances. This, in turn, provides insight into which myths he mentions negatively. It is evident that the myths he uses in situations where the dialog participants lack comprehension are, for the most part, those that he himself has created. In the dialogue of the *Statesman*, the Athenian stranger informs his interlocutor that the introduction of myth serves two purposes: "firstly, to illustrate that all others are rivals to the true shepherd, the object of their search, and secondly, to identify those who merit this reputation" (Platon, 1998, p. 44). This passage demonstrates that the stranger's explanation cannot be conveyed through *logos* alone, but rather, it is more effectively elucidated through myth.

Additionally, Plato's dialogues present issues that are not addressed through the use of *logos*. To illustrate, in the dialogue *Politeia*, the subject of the afterlife is not addressed through the use of the *logos*, but rather through the medium of myth, specifically the myth of Er. Similarly, in the *Phaedo* dialogue, the concept of the afterlife is elucidated through the medium of myth. What is the rationale behind Plato's decision to explain the afterlife through myth rather than through the use of the *logos*? It is possible that there are instances in which Plato deems the *logos* to be ineffective. Edelstein (1949, p. 464) posits that Kantian and Romantic thinkers believe that Plato resorts to myth because he is aware of the limitations of reason. Edelstein posits that Kantians and romantics perceive instances within the dialogues where the logos is inadequate and that Plato is cognizant of this. It is challenging to concur with Edelstein's observation. The assertion that "there are cases in the dialogues where the *logos* is dysfunctional" lacks sufficient evidence to be considered a valid thesis. Similarly, it is challenging to assert that there is a fundamental contradiction between myth and *logos* in Plato's dialogues. It is accurate to conclude that Plato critiques *traditional myths as narrated by poets*, as classified by Morgan. However, it is challenging to assert that he is fundamentally opposed to myth, which represents a form of expression of thought in general, or that he establishes a dichotomy between myth and *logos*. Instead, it can be proposed that Plato endeavors to establish a harmonious relationship between myth and *logos*, a perspective that is closely aligned with his understanding of philosophy.

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[1] *Myth, mythos;* story, tale, legend, news, rumor (Çelgin, 2011, p. 441).

[2] *Logos;* word, evidence, proof, debate, philosophical discussion, reason, reason, intelligence, common sense, common sense, thought, explanation (Çelgin, 2011, p. 402).

The Position of Myth within Plato's Philosophy

In his dialogues, Plato presents a scene. At one end of the scene is the sage (*sophos*), and at the other end is the philosopher (candidate), along with other individuals. The levels of knowledge and cognition exhibited by the candidate philosopher and the other individuals differ. In other words, the participants in the dialogue are not all at the same level of knowledge and cognition. To illustrate, in the *Politeia* scene, Socrates is depicted as the sage (*sophos*). The scene in question does not feature a candidate philosopher; rather, the other individuals present are either sophists or ordinary people. In engaging with these individuals, Socrates is understood to select his narrative according to their respective levels of knowledge and comprehension. In the dialogue *Politeia*, Socrates engages in a discussion about the afterlife with Glaucon as his interlocutor. Given the limited scope of Glaucon's (and the others') knowledge and understanding, it is evident that the discourse on the afterlife must take the form of myth. It is evident that Glaucon is unable to grasp the narrative about the afterlife that can be accessed through *logos*. In the course of the aforementioned dialogue, Socrates states, "However, I believe that the methods currently employed will not yield the desired results." "We must therefore pursue a more circuitous and challenging route to attain it" (Platon, 2016a, p. 218). In paragraph 504b, he elucidates the nature of the "longer" and "more arduous path." "As previously stated, there is a more circuitous route to attaining the highest knowledge of these virtues, which are self-evident to those who embark upon it" (Platon, 2016a, p. 333). As William W. Tait notes, the "long and arduous road" is a reference to the distinctive concept of science. "It leads to a more precise and profound understanding of the subjects that the guardians of knowledge must master" (Tait, 2002, p. 3). Socrates elucidates certain matters to Glaucon and the other interlocutors through the medium of myth, rather than *logos*, given that they are not yet equipped to traverse the "longer" and "more arduous path." In the dialogue *Politeia*, Socrates elucidates the concept of the afterlife to Glaucon through the medium of myth. It is also established that this myth, which is that of Er, was created by Plato (Thayer, 1988, p. 379). Glaucon is only able to comprehend the afterlife through the lens of myth. In conclusion, it is imperative to consider the context in which myth and *logos* are conveyed in Plato's dialogues.

Another intriguing scenario arises in the *Gorgias* dialogue. Socrates states, "Listen then to this beautiful story" (Ἄκουε δή, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ *λόγου(logou)*). It may be perceived as a work of fiction, but it is, in fact, a factual account. The veracity of the information I am about to present is beyond doubt. (ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσει *μῦθον (miton)*, ὡς ἐγῴμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ *λόγον (logon)* ὁ Ἀ ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω *λέγειν (legein)* "For as truth itself will I speak what I now set forth" (Platon, 2017, p. 123). Although this is not reflected in the Turkish translation of the dialogue, in the original dialogue, Socrates informs his interlocutor that they will likely dismiss what he is saying as a myth, but that what he is saying is a *logos*. From this, we can infer that despite Socrates initiating the discussion through the use of the *logos*, the interlocutor's level of understanding and comprehension is insufficient to grasp the concept as such. To gain insight into the nuances of knowledge and cognition, it is essential to delve into the narrative known as the "analogy of the divided line," as presented in the dialogue *Politeia*.

Socrates requests that the audience consider a line that has been bisected at two distinct points along its length. He posits that the larger portion of the line represents the graspable *(noeton)*, while the smaller portion represents the visible *(horaton)*. He proposes that each part be divided in half again, maintaining the same proportion. He refers to the object of knowledge of the initial portion of the visible *(horaton)* as "reflections" *(eikones)* and the state of knowledge as "delusion" *(eikasia)*. The object of knowledge pertaining to the second part is designated as "physical things" *(eoiken)*, while the state of knowledge is identified as "belief" *(pistis)*. In the initial segment of the comprehensible *(noeton)*, he designates the object of knowledge as mathematical objects *(hupotheseos)* and the state of knowledge as inference *(dianoia)*. He similarly designates the object of knowledge of the second part of the graspable *(noeton)* as ideas *(eide anupothetos)* and the state of knowledge as apprehension *(noesis)* (Platon, 2016a, pp. 343-345). This narrative, known as the "analogy of the divided line," suggests that individuals occupy a specific position on this continuum. In other words, the conceptualization of the levels of knowledge and perception of

individuals can be seen to have a counterpart in Plato's analogy of the divided line. The levels of knowledge and cognition exhibited by Socrates' interlocutors in the dialogues can be situated within a specific position on the divided line. It would be unreasonable to expect someone who is unable to describe mathematical objects *(hupotheseos)* to be able to infer from them *(dianoia)* to someone whose state of knowledge is delusion *(eikasia)*. Even if such a word is uttered, the individual whose state of knowledge is delusional *(eikasia)* will perceive it as a myth. It can be argued that Plato observes this situation in his dialogues and, taking into account the level of knowledge and perception of the participants, employs the use of logos at times and myth at other times.

As a matter of fact, in the *The Symposium* while the dialogue participants recount a myth about love *(eros)*, Socrates references the logos that Diotima conveys to him about love *(eros)*. At one point in the narrative, Diotima states, "Nevertheless, I will proceed to relate this account in its entirety, without reservation." "Attempt to comprehend it to the best of your abilities" (Platon, 2014, p. 142) emphasizing the challenge of initiating discourse through *logos*, akin to the "lengthier and more arduous path" described in paragraph 435d of the *Politeia* dialogue. This may be the sole instance in Plato's dialogues where he endeavors to elucidate the intelligible *(noeton)* through *logos*, eschewing the conventional approach of employing myth. This may be attributed to the presence of both the sage *(sophos)* and the philosopher in the *The Symposium* scene. In the context of Diotima and Socrates, Diotima is the sage *(sophos)*, Socrates is the philosopher, Socrates is the sage *(sophos)*, and Alcibiades and Aristodemos are the philosopher candidates. As previously stated, Plato employs the "longer" and "more arduous path" in the scene of the sage and the philosopher. In other words, he opens the comprehensible *(noeton)* through *logos*.

Characteristics and Functions of Myths in Dialogues

According to Luc Brisson, Plato refers to myth 87 times in his dialogues. Sixty-nine of these instances align with the narratives that the ancient Greeks referred to as myths. Brisson (1998, pp. 141-142) notes that Plato himself created 27 of the 69 myths. The remaining 42 myths are as follows: *Kratilos* 408c8, *Gorgias* 505c10, *Laws III* 699d8, VIII 840c1, *Philebos* 14a4, *Statesman* 272c7, *Politeia* I 350e3, II 376d9. Brisson (1998, p. 143) also identifies several other instances of myth in Plato's works, including 377a4, a6, b6, c1, c4, c7, 378e5, 379a4, III 391e12, 398b7, and *Timaeus* 23b5. The following are examples of myths created by Plato himself: The myth of Atlantis (*Timaeus* 26e4), the myth of the judgment of the dead (*Gorgias* 523a2, 527a5), the myth of Er (*Politeia* X 621b8), and the myth about the nature and destiny of souls (*Phaedrus* 253c7) (Brisson, 1998, p. 143) are examples of such myths. In his analysis, Glenn W. Most identifies eight common features present in Platonic myths.

1) The majority of Platonic myths are monological in nature.
2) The transmission of Platonic myths to younger audiences is frequently facilitated by an older individual.
3) The term "Platonic myth" is used to describe a narrative that originates from ancient times and is transmitted orally, whether based on historical events or purely fictional.
4) Platonic myths concern events and issues that are not always verifiable.
5) The authority of Platonic myths derives from tradition rather than from the narrator.
6) Platonic myths have a psychological impact.
7) Platonic myths have a narrative style, not a dialectical structure.
8) Platonic myths occur either at the beginning or at the end of a dialectical discussion (Most, 2012, pp. 16-18).

It can be argued that Plato also sought to reconcile the mythological traditions of ancient Greek civilization with the tenets of his own philosophical system. In this context, it is evident that Plato occupies a dual role as both a myth-maker and a myth-critic. "A fable is a falsehood in its entirety, even if there is an element of truth within it" (Platon, 2016a, p. 114). In the dialogue *Politeia*, Plato offers a critical review of the myths of Homer and Hesiod. He distinguishes between true and false knowledge regarding the nature of gods and heroes, ultimately concluding that the myths of Homer and Hesiod are unsuitable for education in *Kallipolis* (Platon, 2016a, p. 127).

In ancient Greece, myths served as the primary source of belief for the people of that era. In this context, Erwin Rohde posits that Homer's narratives reflect the dominant beliefs of his historical epoch. "One might posit that Homeric poems represent the popular belief of their time". (Rohde, 2020, p. 74). In light of this evidence, it seems plausible to suggest that Plato sought to alter the prevailing belief system in Athens by introducing new mythological narratives. Allen asserts that Plato held the view that belief affects action. "Plato's emphasis on the interconnection between belief and action ultimately led him to conclude that philosophers could alter actions, and thus politics, by modifying beliefs" (Allen, 2011, p. 55). Indeed, the introduction to the dialogue *Politeia* demonstrates that Kephalos takes the stories about death seriously and performs actions to please the gods (330d-331b). In other words, the actions of the ancient Greeks were guided by their beliefs, or myths. Myths provide individuals with insight into the nature of their surrounding world and the actions they must take to ensure their survival. The aspiration to attain such knowledge also serves to unite those who seek it. In this sense, it can be argued that myths not only constituted the belief systems of the ancient Greeks, but also served as a crucial element in ensuring their socialization. As Dumézil notes, mythology attempts to reconstruct an 'ideology', which he defines as a conceptualization and evaluation of the fundamental forces that govern both the natural and supernatural realms, as well as individuals, society, and their collective identity. In a sense, myth provides a rationale for events that people encounter in life and find difficult to comprehend, thereby rendering those events insignificant. It can be postulated that Plato was cognizant of this phenomenon and sought to indirectly influence beliefs and actions by introducing new myths. As previously stated, *logos* is not a universally applicable means of communication. In contrast, myth represents a suitable means of communication for the majority of people. The representation of truth through the form of myth is the most appropriate means of facilitating contact with that truth for all individuals. In contrast, the representation of truth through *logos* can only be understood by those who possess the requisite level of knowledge and perception *(noesis)*. Dinkelaar's thesis that Plato resorted to myths because he was an authority and attempted to legitimate his writings by occasionally expressing his philosophy through myth (Dinkelaar, 2020, p. 37) can be evaluated in this context. It is evident that Plato's contemporaries were not unfamiliar with the concept of myth. Consequently, Plato is conscious of the fact that he is communicating with individuals who are already familiar with the concept of myth. The rationale behind Plato's occasional incorporation of mythological elements in his dialogues can be attributed to the fact that his interlocutors were already well-acquainted with such narratives. Furthermore, as Dinkelaar correctly asserts, myths were regarded as authoritative. It is important to consider the role of myth in the everyday lives of ancient Greeks. In the context of Greek mythology, the natural and the supernatural are not regarded as distinct and separate realms. Rather, they are seen as interdependent and intertwined. This is evident in the way the Greeks experienced sacredness in their daily lives and in their interactions with the divine. The same sense of reverence and awe that they felt in their relationship with the gods during ceremonies was also present in their encounters with the natural world (Vernant, 2016a, p. 11).

Myths delineating the genesis of the deities, the genesis of the universe, the exploits of heroes, intercession between deities, relations between deities and heroes, and intercession between deities and humans, among other topics, served both as a foundation for belief and as a mechanism for socialization, by articulating the proximity between the realms inhabited by the deities and the realms inhabited by humans. The fact that the gods possessed supernatural abilities and intervened in human affairs necessitated awareness of their whereabouts and the occurrences that transpired in their realm. Such knowledge enabled indirect governance of the populace, who gathered (socialized) around these myths. In this sense, it can be argued that Plato was aware of the persuasive power of myths and attempted to influence people both by invoking existing myths and by creating new myths. In other words, in the context of ancient Greek society, myth served as an effective means of communicating ideas and beliefs. In this context, Mangion's analysis focuses on the myth about the origin of writing (Platon, 2016b, p. 87–89) in the Phaedrus dialogue and its function as a means of communication. According to the aforementioned source, "it is evident that the spoken word itself constitutes a privileged medium for the acquisition of knowledge, a relationship that is corroborated by Phaidros. When this dialectical process is successful, "speech"

conveys its own life, its spirit, to the addressee, transformed by communication" (Mangion, 2017, p. 12). Derrida further underscores the communicative significance of the myth concerning the origin of writing in the Phaedrus dialogue (Derrida, 2014, p. 36–37). Moreover, the myth not only facilitates the transmission of thought but also ensures its comprehensibility to all recipients. The myth, as posited by Cassirer (2005, p. 21–22), serves to stimulate the imagination of its audience, thereby animating the narrative within the minds of its recipients (Laughlin & Throop, 2001, p. 719).

The concept of a divided line can be employed to illustrate the manner in which myth serves as a conduit for those whose level of knowledge and cognition is belief (pistis) to establish contact. It is not the case that all individuals will achieve the level of comprehension (noesis) in terms of knowledge and perception. It is feasible to attain this level through dedicated effort. In comparison, it can be stated that, on average, individuals possess knowledge and cognition at the level of belief (pistis). Indeed, in the Protagoras dialogue, it is noted that the use of myths to communicate with young people is a common practice and, in a sense, a successful one (Platon, 2022, p. 20). As previously stated, in the dialogue Politeia, Socrates, for instance, prefers a method of communication that his interlocutors can utilize rather than the "longer" and "more arduous" approach. The "longer" and "more arduous path" is one that can be pursued by those who have attained the level of comprehension (noesis) in terms of their knowledge and cognition. Nevertheless, in the dialogue of the The Symposium, Diotima employs the more circuitous and challenging route, presuming that Socrates is capable of navigating it. From the perspective of noesis, Socrates comprehends the narrative of the idea of love. Socrates' comprehension of the narrative, achieved through the longer and more challenging path, is evident in his presentation of the information he has received from Diotima as a monologue[1] to the participants of the banquet. Socrates does not engage in a dialogue with Diotima regarding the information she provides. Instead, he opts for a monologue. It can be argued that this is not an arbitrary but a deliberate fiction.

In the view of Plato, dialogue[2] represents a means of comprehension for a subject by its interlocutors. Indeed, the fact that a topic is the subject of a dialogue necessitates that it be subjected to thorough discussion by the participants of the dialogue. It is only through such discussion that participants in the dialogue can become acquainted with the subject matter to the extent of their existing knowledge and comprehension. Nevertheless, monologue does not possess such a function. In a monologue, the interlocutors are, in a sense, not participants in the discussion of the topic at hand. This is due to the fact that they are unable to engage in constructive criticism and express their opinions on the subject matter. For example, when Socrates presents the narrative of love as a monologue to the banquet participants, some of his interlocutors fall asleep and some of them get drunk. Plato deliberately presents the narrative of love to those who can understand it in terms of comprehension *(noesis)*. Representational expression *(mimesis)* is no longer effective at that level. This is evident from the fact that the banquet participants do not know when Socrates leaves the assembly and fall asleep.

The Concept of the "Noble Lie" and Its Function

The myth that Socrates refers to as his "noble lie," which is based on a Phoenician fable, is of significant importance. The myth posits that all citizens originate from a common geographical source. The premise that all citizens originate from a common soil establishes the potential for the formation of fraternal and affectionate bonds between them. However, the myth does not conclude there. Socrates proceeds to elaborate further as follows: "You are all brothers on the site." However, the deity responsible for your creation has imbued those among you who possess the capacity for leadership with a quality akin to gold (...). Furthermore, he has added silver to the leaven of those who are capable of being leaders, and iron and bronze to the leaven of the owners

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[1] The individual act of reasoning (Lewinski, 2011, p. 2).
[2] Reciprocal speech (Çelgin, 2011, p. 154).

of farms and other arts (Platon, 2016a, p. 184). In this passage, Socrates authorizes rulers to disseminate myths that are designed to influence the behavior of citizens. In a sense, the maintenance of order in *Kallipolis* is dependent on the dissemination of myths by the ruling class to the citizenry. This is because not all citizens possess the same level of knowledge or perception. Consequently, disclosing the truth may potentially result in a deterioration of order. In this sense, it can be argued that truth has both a distributive and a regulative power. In other words, failure to convey the truth to citizens through appropriate means will result in the disruption of order. The question thus arises as to the most appropriate means of conveying the truth to citizens. It is a matter of myth, or perhaps more accurately, the use of myth. Socrates could have chosen to prioritize logos over myth at this juncture, but he did not. This was likely because he was aware that not everyone had the same level of comprehension *(noesis)*. Perhaps if he had presented the truth using logos, everyone would have interpreted it in a different way, socialization would have ceased, and chaos would have ensued instead of order. Mevlana's "elephant in the dark story" is a relevant example here.

In ancient times, the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent transported an elephant to a city. In the evening, the elephant was placed inside a building with limited illumination. Due to the absence of light, the elephant was entirely invisible. Individuals who had no prior experience with elephants entered the location where the elephant was situated in the absence of light and attempted to identify the animal by touching it. The entire assembly was in a single file. The next individual proceeded to interact with the elephant. One of the individuals inadvertently made contact with the elephant's trunk. He subsequently emerged and stated: The elephant appeared to resemble a pipe. Another individual proceeded to grasp the elephant's ear. Upon exiting the enclosure, he stated, "The elephant resembles a fan." Another individual made contact with the elephant's leg. The subject perceived the elephant to be akin to a pillar. A man of considerable height made contact with the elephant through manual contact, resulting in his hand reaching the elephant's posterior. He asserted that the elephant was akin to a throne. However, had they possessed a lamp and observed the elephant with their own eyes, they would not have misinterpreted and misrepresented the elephant, nor would they have misinformed others. It is common for individuals to disseminate false information when they speak as if they possess extensive knowledge on a subject when, in fact, they lack sufficient understanding (Mevlana, 2017, pp. 49-50).

It is evident from this account that while all individuals possess accurate information about the elephant, they are collectively unaware of the full extent of its significance. The elephant represents the absolute truth, and direct contact with it is unmediated. In other words, they have the potential to interact with the elephant directly, yet they still make errors. This is due to their inability to integrate the parts they encounter. This integrative ability is analogous to the concept of understanding *(noesis)* in Plato's philosophy. In evaluating the role of myths in Plato's dialogues, it is essential to consider Mevlana's "elephant in the dark story." Myths are crucial for comprehensively understanding the elephant before direct contact. They stimulate the imagination, preparing the ground for *logos*, which is the foundation of philosophy in Plato's view.

CONCLUSION

Plato's dialogues constitute an invitation to philosophical inquiry. It is, in fact, inaccurate to describe Plato's dialogues as philosophically oriented. The authorship of these texts is a matter of debate. In his *Letters (Letter 7)*, however, Plato offers the following perspective on the matter: It is therefore impossible for any individual, whether they have learned these concepts from me or from other sources, to fully comprehend them. I do not intend to produce a written work on this subject. In the same way that other sciences cannot be expressed in words, this is also the case here. It is only after a considerable period of reflection and engagement with these issues that the truth emerges, akin to a spark in the soul, and subsequently develops organically. If it were necessary to put the teaching in written form, I would be the optimal candidate for this task. However, if I were to undertake this endeavor and fail to do it justice, I would be profoundly disappointed. If I believed that I was compelled to document my teachings in written form, and if I believed that I could elucidate them in a manner that would be accessible to the general public, what could be a

more worthwhile endeavor in my lifetime than to commit my insights to paper, thereby providing a valuable resource for those seeking guidance? Nevertheless, it would be unwise to attempt to elucidate these concepts through the medium of what is popularly termed "proof." It is, of course, unnecessary to concern oneself with those who are able to discern the truth spontaneously, provided that they are able to do so with minimal guidance. As for the remainder, they view philosophy as unwarranted and unjust, or harbor grandiose expectations, convinced that they have attained the pinnacle of knowledge (Platon, 1997, p. 54).

As the aforementioned paragraph indicates, Plato asserts that he did not compose any philosophical texts. The question thus arises as to why someone who did not write anything about philosophy would nevertheless compose the dialogues. The answer is that the dialogues serve as an invitation to engage with philosophical discourse. It is evident that these invitations are characterised by a distinctive style of writing. In constructing his dialogues, which are texts that serve as invitations to philosophy, Plato employs myth in a specific manner. He observes firsthand the impact of myths on the polis. Myths played a pivotal role in the religious and political organization of the *polis*. Additionally, myths facilitated a specific form of socialization. With this in mind, Plato not only "corrected" existing myths but also created new mythological texts. These texts aimed to foster a provisional socialization that would lead to the formation of the Academy. In other words, he constructed dialogues to temporarily unite those who aspired to engage in philosophical pursuits within the Academy under the guidance of a sage.

The optimal setting for philosophical discourse is the Academy. Additionally, Plato posits that philosophy can be represented in writing. He asserts that one cannot engage in philosophical discourse by merely agreeing or disagreeing with the arguments presented in writing. Furthermore, he suggests that philosophy has an experiential aspect that extends beyond the realm of logical reasoning. This is explicitly stated in his *Letters*. [1] "I have not authored a treatise on this subject, nor do I intend to do so." This is due to the fact that they cannot be expressed in the same way as other sciences through the use of words. "It is only after one has devoted a substantial amount of time to grappling with these concepts, after having dedicated one's entire life to contemplating them, that the truth emerges as a sudden flash of insight, then gradually takes shape and develops organically" (Platon, 1997, p. 54). As philosophy is not a practice, the dialogues can be seen as an imitation or representation *(mimesis)* of philosophy. In other words, the dialogues present philosophy as a form of discourse that can be understood by all, regardless of their level of knowledge or comprehension. Myths, therefore, function as a tool that imitates and represents *(mimesis)* philosophy in dialogues. Myths fulfill a communicative function by uniting disparate segments of society around a shared veracity. Plato employs a series of narrative techniques, rather than a single film, to convey a consistent truth to individuals with varying levels of understanding and knowledge. It is acknowledged that certain components of this series may prove tedious for individuals with extensive knowledge and comprehension. However, this potential boredom is mitigated by the incorporation of diverse narrative techniques in other segments. However, individuals with limited knowledge and understanding demonstrate a high level of curiosity and enthusiasm in their engagement with all aspects of the series. This is how Plato's objective as a writer is realized. The act of engaging with his dialogues has the potential to foster a sense of shared understanding, thereby facilitating the establishment of a unified social fabric. In essence, myths serve as a tangible embodiment of philosophical concepts in Plato's dialogues.

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[1] The majority of scholars concur that *Letter* 7 was authored by Plato. Guthrie examines this issue and reaches the following conclusion: "Thirty-six experts consider the seventh letter to be authentic, while fourteen experts claim otherwise. Additionally, twenty-two experts believe that letter eight was written by Plato, while three experts hold a differing view." (Kolosko, 2006, p. 4).

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Uzun Öz

Platon'un diyaloglarında mitin nerede bittiği, *logos*'un nerede başladığı konusu çoğu zaman belirsizdir. Bu konuyu ele alan Morgan, mitin ve *logos*'un sınırlarının muğlaklığına yönelik açıklamalar yapar. O, Platon'un mit diye adlandırdığı hikayeleri mit diye tasnif edilmesinin uygun olduğunu ileri sürer. Ona göre ancak bu şekilde öznel beyanların önüne geçilebilir (Morgan 2004: 156). Fakat Platon'un kendisi bu konuda açık bir yaklaşım sergilemez. Örneğin *Phaidon* diyalogu 60d paragrafında Aisopos'un masallarına *logoi* derken (τοὺς λογοὺς τοῦ Αισωώπου) (Plato 2024: 5) yine aynı diyalogun 61b paragrafında *mitos* (δια ταῦτα μύθους Αισωώπου) (Plato 2024: 7) der. Sorun bununla da bitmez. Çünkü Platon'un mit dediği hikayeler de kendi aralarında farklılık arz eder. Platon diyaloglarında bir sahne sunar. O sahnenin bir ucunda bilge (*sophos*) diğer ucunda filozof (adayı) ve diğer şahıslar yer alır. Hem filozof adayının hem de diğer şahısların bilgi ve idrak düzeyleri farklılık sergiler. Başka ifadeyle diyalog iştirakçilerinin tamamı aynı bilgi ve idrak düzeyinde değiller. Örneğin *Politeia*'nın sahnesinde bilge (*sophos*) olarak Sokrates var. Söz konusu sahnede filozof adayı yer almaz, Sokrates hariç diğer tüm şahıslar ya sofist ya da sıradan insanlardır. Sokrates'in söz konusu şahıslarla konuştuğu zaman anlatısını o şahsın bilgi ve idrak düzeyine göre seçtiği anlaşılır. Sokrates'in *Politeia* diyalogunda ölüm sonrasına dair konuşma yaptığı zaman muhatabı Glaukon'dur. Glaukon'un (ve

diğerlerinin de) bilgi ve idrak düzeyi ölüm sonrasına dair konuşmanın mit formunda olmasını gerekli kılar. Çünkü Glaukon'un *logos* üzerinden açılacak ölüm sonrasına dair anlatıyı kavrayamayacağı ortadadır. Söz konusu diyalogun bir yerinde Sokrates, konuyu anlatırken "ama sana şunu diyeyim ki Glaukon, bence şimdiki tartışmamızda kullandığımız yöntemlerle aradığımız şeyi tam olarak bulamayacağız. Çünkü buna varmak için daha uzun ve daha çetin bir yol izlememiz gerek" (Platon 2016: 218) der. "Daha uzun" ve "daha çetin yol"un ne olduğunu ise 504b paragrafında anlatır. "Demiştik ki bu erdemler üzerinde en üstün bilgiye ulaşabilmek için daha uzun bir yol daha vardır, bu yolu yürüyenlere bu erdemler apaçık görünür" (Platon 2016: 333). William W. Tait'e göre "uzun ve çetin yol bilimin özel kavramına referanstır. Bu yol, bekçilerin öğrenmesi gereken mevzuların daha kesin, daha derin idrakini sağlar" (Tait 2002: 3). Sokrates, Glaukon ve diğer diyalog iştirakçilerine "daha uzun" ve "daha çetin yol"la yürüyebilecek kabiliyette olmadıkları için bazı konuları *logos* üzerinden değil, mit üzerinden anlatır. Yine *Politeia* diyalogunda Sokrates, ölüm sonrasını mit üzerinden Glaukon'a anlatır. Ayrıca bu mitin (Er mit'i) Platon tarafından oluşturulduğu bilinir (Thayer 1988: 379). Glaukon ancak mit üzerinden ölüm sonrasını kavrayabilir. Özetle Platon'un diyaloglarında mitin ve *logos*'un kime söylendiği hususu esastır. Bir başka ilginç durumsa *Gorgias* diyalogunda ortaya çıkar. Sokrates, "dinle öyleyse şu güzel hikâyeyi! Ἄκουε δή, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ *λόγου (logou)*. Sen masal sanacaksın ama ben gerçek bir hikâye olduğuna inanıyorum; çünkü, anlatacaklarım doğrudur, bundan emin olabilirsin. (ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσει *μῦθον (miton)*, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ *λόγον (logon)* ὃ Ἀ ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω *λέγειν (legein)*" der (Platon 2017: 123). Diyalogun Türkçe çevrisine yansımamış olsa da diyalogun orijinalinde Sokrates'in muhatabına sen benim anlattığıma mit diyeceksin ama anlattığım bir *logos*'tur der. Buradan anlaşılır ki Sokrates *logos* üzerinden konuyu açsa da muhatabın bilgi ve idrak düzeyi onu *logos* olarak kavramaktan yoksundur. Kişinin bilgi ve idrak düzeyiyle ne kastedildiğini anlamak için *Politeia* diyalogunda yer alan "bölünmüş çizgi analojisi" diye bilinen anlatısına başvurmak gerekir. *Gorgias* diyalogunda Sokrates, "dinle öyleyse şu güzel hikâyeyi! Sen masal sanacaksın ama ben gerçek bir hikâye olduğuna inanıyorum; çünkü, anlatacaklarım doğrudur, bundan emin olabilirsin" der. Diyalogun orijinalinde Sokrates'in muhatabına sen benim anlattığıma mit diyeceksin ama anlattığım bir *logos*'tur der. Buradan anlaşılır ki Sokrates *logos* üzerinden konuyu açsa da muhatabın bilgi ve idrak düzeyi onu *logos* olarak kavramaktan yoksundur. Sokrates, iki farklı uzunlukta kesilmiş bir çizgi düşünülmesini ister. Söz konusu çizginin büyük kısmının kavranılır (*noeton*) küçük kısmınınsa görünür (*horaton*) olanı temsil ettiğini söyler. Her kısmın aynı orantıyla yeniden ikiye bölündüğünün varsayılmasını ister. Görünür olanın (*horaton*) ilk kısmının bilgi nesnesini yansılar (*eikones*), bilgi durumunu ise sanı (*eikasia*) olarak adlandırır. İkinci kısmının bilgi nesnesini fiziksel olanlar (*eoiken*), bilgi durumunu ise inanç (*pistis*) olarak isimlendirir. Kavranılır (*noeton*) olanın ilk kısmının bilgi nesnesini matematiksel nesneler (*hupotheseos*), bilgi durumunu ise çıkarış (*dianoia*) olarak adlandırır. Yine kavranılır (*noeton*) olanın ikinci kısmının bilgi nesnesine idealar (*eide anupothetos*), bilgi durumuna ise kavrayış (*noesis*) ismini verir. "Bölünmüş çizgi analojisi" diye isimlendirilen bu anlatıyla birlikte bir anlamda insanların bu çizginin bir yerinde konumlandıkları fikri çıkarılabilir. Yani insanların bilgi ve idrak düzeyleri diye kavramsallaştırmaya çalıştığımız şey, Platon'un bölünmüş çizgi analojisinde bir karşılık bulur. Platon diyaloglarında 87 kez mite başvurur. Bunlardan 69'u Eski Yunanlıların mit dediği anlatılara uygundur. Söz konusu bu 69 mitin 27'sini ise Platon kendisi oluşturmuştur. Geriye kalan "42 mitten bazıları şunlardır: *Kratilos* 408c8, *Gorgias* 505c10, *Yasalar* III 699d8, VIII 840c1, *Philebos* 14a4, *Devlet Adamı* 272c7, *Politeia* I 350e3, II 376d9, 377a4, a6, b6, c1, c4, c7, 378e5, 379a4, III 391e12, 398b7, *Timaios* 23b5. Platon'un kendisinin oluşturduğu mitlerden bazıları ise şunlardır: Atlantis miti (*Timaios* 26e4), ölülerin yargılanması miti (*Gorgias* 523a2, 527a5), Er miti (*Politeia* X 621b8), ruhların doğası ve kaderi hakkındaki mit (*Phaidros* 253c7). Sokrates'in "soylu yalanı" dediği, bir Fenike masalına dayanarak anlattığı mit önemlidir. Bu mit, bütün yurttaşların aynı topraktan geldiğini anlatır. Herkes aynı topraktan geldiği için yurttaşlar arasında kardeşlik ve sevgi bağları kurulabilir. Fakat mit bununla bitmez, Sokrates konuşmasına şöyle devam eder: "Siz hepiniz sitede kardeşsiniz. Ama sizi meydana getiren tanrı, aranızdan önder olacak yetenekte olanların mayasına altın katmıştır (…). Yardımcıların mayasına gümüş, çiftliklerle öbür sanat sahiplerinin mayasına ise demir ve tunç katmıştır" (Platon 2016: 184). Burada Sokrates, yöneticilere yurttaşlara karşı mit söyleme yetkisi verir. Bir anlamda *Kallipolis*'te düzen, yöneticilerin yurttaşlara mit anlatmasıyla sağlanır. Çünkü yurttaşların tamamı aynı bilgi ve idrak düzeyine sahip değiller. Durum böyle olunca onlara hakikati anlatmak belki de düzenin aleyhine bir gelişmenin yaşanmasına da sebebiyet verebilir. Hakikatin bu manada düzenleyici gücünün yanında dağıtıcı gücünün de olduğu söylenebilir. Başka ifadeyle hakikat, uygun vasıtalarla yurttaşlara aktarılmazsa düzen bozulur. Platon'un diyalogları felsefeye davetiyedir. Aslında Platon'un diyaloglarında felsefe yapılmaz. Platon tarafından yazılıp yazılmadığı tartışılır olsa da *Mektuplar*'ında (*7. Mektup*) felsefeye dair herhangi bir şey yazmadığını savunur. Felsefeye dair herhangi bir şey yazmayan biri diyalogları niçin yazmış? Sorunun cevabı, diyalogların felsefeye birer davetiye olduğudur. Ve bu davetiyelerin özel bir yazım tarzı olduğu ortadadır. Platon diyaloglarını yani felsefeye davetiye olan metinleri kurgularken mitlere belli bir amaç doğrultusunda başvurur. Zira o, mitlerin *polis*'in üzerindeki etkisini birinci elden gözlemler. Mitler *polis*'in hem dini hem de siyasi olarak teşkilatlanmasında belirleyici gücü sahipti. Buna ek olarak mitler,

belli bir türde toplumsallaşmaya da sebebiyet verdi. Platon, mitlerin bu etkisini göz önünde bulundurarak hem eski mitleri "düzeltti" hem de yeni mitler içeren metinler ortaya koydu. Söz konusu metinler Akademi'ye davet eden geçici bir toplumsallaşmayı hedefler.