

CHTHONIC THEMES IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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The use of chthonic, or underworld, themes in Plato's *Republic* provides an important dimension to the overall treatment of poetry and myth-making in the dialogue. It is the afterlife and the condition of existence in the underworld which constituted the most difficult issues faced by Greek poetry. As Socrates indicates at the beginning of Book 3, the poetic presentation of the afterlife and the underworld is noticeably deficient (386B4-387D6).

Voegelin,¹ Brann,² Kayser,³ and Sallis⁴ have argued that the symbolism evoked at the outset of the dialogue is meant to convey a journey down into Hades. Voegelin was the first to see the importance of ascent and descent in the symmetrical presentation of the *Republic*:

For the Piraeus, to which Socrates descends, is a symbol of Hades. The goddess to whom he approaches with prayers is the Artemis Bendis, understood by the Athenians as the chthonic Hecate who attends to the souls on their way to the underworld...⁵ The descent of Socrates to Hades-Piraeus in the opening scene of [Book 1] balances the descent of Er, the son of Armenius the Pamphylian, to the underworld in the closing scene of [Book 10]. Moreover, Plato underlines the parallel between the underworlds of Socrates and Er by a play with symbols, for the festival of Bendis is characterized by the equality of participants. Socrates can find no difference in the quality of the processions; a common level of humanity has been reached by the society in which Socrates is a member. In Hades, in death, again all members are equal before the judge, and Er, the teller of the tale, is a Pamphylian, a man "of all tribes," and Everyman.⁶

¹ E. Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 3: *Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge, 1957), 52f.

² E. Brann, "The Music of the *Republic*," *Agôn* 1 (1967), 1-117.

³ J. R. Kayser, "Prologue to the Study of Justice: *Republic* 327a-328b," *Western Political Quarterly* 23 (1970), 256-65.

⁴ J. Sallis, *Being and Logos* (Pittsburgh, 1975), 315f.

⁵ See A. F. von Pauly, *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, rev. G. Wissowa (Stuttgart, 1937), 3, pt. 1, 269-71; and Strabo 10. 471. On the worship of Bendis at Piraeus, see Xenophon *Rep. Ath.* 1. 17.

⁶ Voegelin, 54.

Brann and Kayser⁷ have employed the first line of the *Republic* in an attempt to demonstrate the Hadean symbolism. This line reads: Κατέβην χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ μετὰ Γλαύκωνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος... It is usually translated: "Down I went yesterday into Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston..." The line, however, can also be rendered: "Down I went into Hades with the Light of the Best." The pivotal interpretation involves the somewhat unusual construction εἰς Πειραιᾶ. Brann contends:

Indeed there is something curious about its style: ancient as well as modern Athenians, when they visit their harbor, do not usually go "to Peiraeus" but "to *the* Peiraeus" (e.g., Thucydides VIII, 92. 9); this is Cephalus' own usage (328C6), and since he lives there he ought to know. The phrase εἰς Πειραιᾶ is to be heard in a special way. Now it happens that the Athenians did have a special meaning in this name – it meant the "beyond land," ἡ Πειραιᾶ⁸ the land beyond the river which was thought once to have separated the Peiraia peninsula from Attica.⁹

This "land beyond the river" is seen as the land across the river Styx-Hades. Sallis suggests that, bearing this in mind, "almost the entire *Republic* consists of an ascent out of Hades."¹⁰ Since, as Kayser was the first to note, "Socrates' initial discussion is held with a man [who is] dead," that is, with Cephalus, there is added another reason to suspect "that the descent into Piraeus corresponds to a descent into the underworld."¹¹

The probability of this symbolism in the initial line of the *Republic* being intentional is heightened by the testimony of three classical commentators to the effect that the first words of the dialogue (four or eight, depending on the commentator) were found after Plato's death written many times in various arrangements on a tablet.¹² The wording, we may assume, was considered especially significant. On the symbolism, Brann contends that: "Socrates, by descending with Glaucon into the mythical setting of the Peiraia underworld, has shown him that he lives his life as one imprisoned in a mortal Hades. But this demonstration is itself a release, the first step of the rescue: unlike the poets who fail to wrestle from Hades the shades they de-

⁷ Loc. cit.

⁸ See Demosthenes 21. 10; Pauly, 19, pt. 1, 78; A. Korte's treatment in *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 57 (1902), 625f.; and Sallis, loc. cit.

⁹ Brann, 2-3 (italics in original).

¹⁰ Sallis, 319.

¹¹ Kayser, 258.

¹² Diogenes Laertius 3. 25. 37; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Comp.* 209; and Quintilian 8. 6. 64.

sire (*Symposium* 179d), Socrates, a new Heracles, knows the way to bring Theseus back up to the world of light."¹³

In addition to the outset of the dialogue, there are numerous other allusions to Hades and the afterlife in the course of the *Republic*. These include the continuous presence of Bendis, the Thracian Hecate, Cephalus' fear of the myths told about Hades (330D7-8), the charming of the snake (358B1-3),¹⁴ the descent into a cavern in the myth of Gyges' ancestor (359D3-5),

¹³ Brann, 109-110. According to legend, Heracles was given twelve labors to perform by Eurystheus. The final and most difficult of the labors was to descend into Hades and defeat the three-headed dog Cerberus. During the course of this trial, Heracles rescues the future founder of Athens – Theseus. See Plutarch, *Theseus*; Euripides *Herac.* 1220f.; Thucydides 2. 15; and Pausanias 1. 26, 8. 2. It is conceivable that through such imagery, as Brann suggests, Plato sees Glaucon as the founder of a new Athens.

The trials of Heracles are further reflected in the *Republic*: the bearding of the Nemean lion (341C1-2); the defeating of the Hydra (426E6-8); defeating a snake (358B1-3); the conquest of the Amazons (equality of the sexes – 451D4ff.); Diomedes' mare (493D6); the Erymanthian boar (the "city of sows"—372D4ff.); and Cerberus (588C2-4).

¹⁴ Snakes were considered from earliest times to be symbols or manifestations of chthonic deities and regions. See, for example, M.P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), 324; C. Seltman, *The Twelve Olympians* (New York, 1960), 190; and W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford, 1947), 64f. Snakes were often present in Greek ritual and cult activities; see J.S. Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge, 1912), 268; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1966), 114; J. H. Croon, *The Herdsman of the Dead* (diss. University of Amsterdam, 1952); and Aelian *Nat. An.* 9. 2. Zeus (Aristophanes *Pl.* 733f.; Nilsson, 542) and Dionysius (Euripides *Bac.* 1017f.; especially so in Thrace, see E. Rohde, *Psyche*, 8th Ed., trans. W. B. Hillis [London, 1925], 12ff., 253ff.) are particularly associated with snakes in ritual.

We find snakes associated with basic religious systems in the Minoan-Mycenaean period. See A. W. Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* (Berkeley, 1942), 50; D. Thompson, "A Geometric House and Proto-Attic Votive Deposit," *Hesperia* 2 (1933), 604-9; and M. P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenaea*, Rep. ed. (Philadelphia, 1972), 125. Cecrops, and early mytho-historical king of Athens, was often pictured with a serpent's tail (see, for example, Harrison, 262). Asclepius, Throphonios and Erichonios were also associated with the snake as chthonic symbol. A. Walton, "The Cult of Asklepios," *Cornell Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1894), 11; W. H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings* (Cambridge, 1902), 202; J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge, 1908), 348-49; G. W. Elderkin, "The Cults of the Erichthion," *Hesperia* 10 (1941), 113-24; and Pausanias 9. 39ff., 21. 60-61.

Athena is believed by some to have been originally the Minoan palace protectress – a snake goddess. See M. P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, 2d ed., trans. F. J. Fielden (New York, 1964), 13; id., *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion* 30, 491-92, 498; Dodds, 15; and C. G. Starr, "The Re-Discovery of Early Greek History," *The Historian* 24 (1962), 142 (Athena serving a similar function in the Mycenaean period). Aspects of this identification persist into Athenian practice. See Apollodorus 3. 9. 1; and Pausanias 1. 41. 6.

Additionally, the snake was an enduring symbol of the dead and the soul throughout Greek history. See Aelian *Nat. An.* 1. 51; Philostratus *Her.* 288; R. Norton, "Greek Grave Reliefs," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 8 (1897), 58; F. Garrison, "The Greek Cult

Musaeus on the just and their position in Hades (363C3f.), the terrors to be expected in the afterlife if sacrifice is not performed in this life (365A1-3), the paying of penalties in Hades (366A4-6), the Homeric view of existence in Hades (386B4ff.), the "earth brotherhood" of the myth of autochthony (414D6f.), the cavern of the cave image and the necessity of descent (514A3ff.),¹⁵ the soul as Cerberus (588C2-4),¹⁶ Hades' cap (612B5),¹⁷ and the symbolism of Er (614B4ff.).

Other elements in the dialogue, more speculative perhaps in reading, may well be added to this list. For example, Cephalus departs the discussion (at 331D9) for sacrifices. Adam¹⁸ contends that the sacrifice would be to Zeus Herkeios. Zeus, as the household protector, was often pictured as a snake and associated with the underworld.¹⁹ Consider also the labeling of the initial city discussed in the dialogue as a "city of sows" by Glaucon (372D4). Pigs were a staple sacrifice to the underworld,²⁰ figured in the Eleusinian Mysteries,²¹ and were important in religious purification.²² The association of pigs with the founding of a city also reminds one of the practice used by the Delphic Oracle in the selection of city sites. Animals were often used in such foundings.²³ Upon occasion, the specific animal was a pig.²⁴

of the Dead and the Chthonic Deities in Ancient Medicine," *Annals of Medical History* 1 (1917), 35-53; Harrison, *Themis*, 268ff.; J. A. Scott, "Exposure of the Dead in Greek Funeral Processions," *Classical Journal* 30 (1937), 41-43; and D. C. Kurtz and J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (Ithaca, 1971), 78-79, 239. Snakes were also believed to be manifestations of dead heroes. See Pausanias 1. 36. 1, 5. 20. 2; Harrison, *Prolegomena* 325ff.; and Persson, 20.

¹⁵ See 520C1 and 539E3 (this "second descent" must be understood in terms of 533B1ff.).

¹⁶ See Sallis. 316-17. Cf. Homer *Ody.* 8. 367; and Hesiod *Theog.* 311. Lucian (*Phil. St.* 16) contends that Socrates' oath "by the dog" may relate to Cerberus as well. For the oath, see Rep. 399E5, 567D12, 592A7; *Gorg.* 461A7-B1, 466C3, 482B5 ("the dog god of the Egyptians"); *Phaedo* 98E5; *Apol.* 22A1; *Crat.* 411B3; and *Phaedr.* 228B4.

¹⁷ The ability of the cap to render one invisible is seen by some to reflect the original meaning of Hades' name. See J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1963), 2, 430, n. on 612B12; and A. Bloom, *The "Republic" of Plato* (New York, 1968), 471, n. 10. In the *Cratylus*, however, Socrates (at 404B1-4) sees the etymology of Hades' name flowing from εἰδέναι ('knowing'), rather than ἀϊδής ('invisible').

¹⁸ Adam, 1, 4, n. on 328C16.

¹⁹ See, for example, Nilsson, *History*, 35, 125-26.

²⁰ See Guthrie, 193, and note 33 infra.

²¹ See, for example, Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 52ff.

²² See Aeschylus *Eum.* 281ff.; and Athenaeus 9. 375.

²³ Pausanias 4. 34. 8; Strabo 13. 604; Apollodorus 1. 92; and Athenaeus 7. 361.

²⁴ Diodorus Siculus 7. 3. 4; cf. Plato *Laches* 196E1f.

Finally, the prevalence of the number 3 and its multiples in the dialogue also reflects the apparently pervasive presence of such numbers in various chthonic cults and rituals.²⁵ As recipients of the dead and as guarantors of soil fertility, the chthonic deities and manifestations occupied an intermediary position between man and earth, which may partially account for the use of triads and similar references in their cults and worship.²⁶ A similar intermediary position is seen in the function of the numeral in the Pythagorean tetractys.²⁷ Here, the end result is the combination of odd and even into unity, and Plato does provide us with an apparent connection between the chthonic and numbers (see *Laws* 828C6f.).

There can be little doubt, therefore, that Plato has provided a wide range of Hadean, or chthonic, allusions in the dialogue. With respect to the city in speech constructed in the dialogue, the chthonic is squarely placed in contrast to the institutions of Apolline revelation. Socrates explicitly commends the fundamental establishment of regulations in the city to Apollo, through the Delphic Oracle (427B2-3).

Most Olympic deities appear to have had chthonic beginnings in terms of worship, cults, and the like. The evidence is particularly strong for Zeus,²⁸ Athena,²⁹ and Poseidon,³⁰ but other gods³¹ and heroes³² also have clear un-

²⁵ See O. Skutch, "Notes on Metempsychosis," *Classical Philology* 54 (1959), 114.

²⁶ See Rohde, 159; Rouse, 13; Guthrie, 209, 218; and F. B. Tarbell, "Greek Ideas as to the Effect of Burial on the Future of the Soul," *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 15 (1884), 36-45. Fairbank's contention that the chthonic deities were not associated with crop fertility is certainly incorrect. See A. Fairbanks, "The Chthonic Gods of Greek Religion," *American Journal of Philology* 21 (1900), 248.

²⁷ Iamblichus *Pyth.* 150, 162; and Aristotle *Met.* 986^a 15f..

²⁸ See Pausanias 2. 2. 8, 14. 8, 24. 219; J. W. Hewitt, "The Propitiation of Zeus," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 19 (1908), 61-120; and C. Bonner, "Herpokrates (Zeus Kasios) of Pelium," *Hesperia* 15 (1946), 51-59.

²⁹ See Pausanias, 6. 16. 7, 9. 34. 1; Strabo 9. 411; Pindar, *Pyth. Od.* 12. 6ff.; Ovid *Met.* 4. 798ff.; Euripides *Hel.* 1315; Sophocles *Ajax* 450, fr. 760; Aristophanes *Kn.* 583, 793; R. Luyster's intriguing study "Symbolic Elements in the Cult of Athene," *History of Religions* 5 (1965), 133-63; and note 14, supra.

³⁰ Homer *Il.* 15. 204; and Ovid *Met.* 4. 298ff.

³¹ See, for example, Homer *Il.* 9. 158ff.; Sophocles *Ant.* 200; Strabo 14. 1. 44; Euripides *Bac.* 1017f.; and M. P. Nilsson, "New Evidence for the Dionysiac Mysteries," *Eranos* 53, (1955), 28-40.

³² On Heracles, see J. H. Croon, "Artemis-Theria and Apollo Thermios and Oetean Heracles Cult," *Mnemosyne*, quar. ser. 9 (1956), 215-16; F. Jesi, "The Thracian Heracles," *History of Religions* 3 (1964), 261-77 (especially the discussion of Thasos on 271); and M. P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley, 1932), 187f.; on Theseus, Harrison, *Themis*, 316ff.; on Trophonios, and the popular practice of incubation-revelation at his sanctuary, see Pausanias 9. 39, 24. 231; and Aristophanes *Clouds* 506-8. On incubation, see L. Johnson, "Incubation-Oracles," *Classical Quarterly* 43 (1948), 349-55.

derworld connections. Similarly strong chthonic elements are in evidence in major religious festivals in Athens – the Thesmophoria,³³ Anthestria,³⁴ and Diasia³⁵ in particular. As Rohde notes,³⁶ there were also cults and temples to the chthonic throughout Greece.

Apollo, however, is the noticeable exception to the typical chthonic pattern of Greek religious development.³⁷ Apollo did, however, figure prominently in the *unseating* of a chthonic being – the Pytho at Delphi,³⁸ and the very structure of that temple indicated an earlier chthonic dimension.³⁹ Henceforth the Delphic Oracle, still referred to as the Pythian Oracle (see

³³ During the Thesmophoria, pigs were sacrificed to the chthonic powers. The caverns into which the pigs were placed were called *megara*. See Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 122; and G. Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, 3d ed. (Garden City, 1955), 14-15. On the function of the *megara*, see Porphyry, *De Antro Nymph.* 6; Eustathius 1387; Philostratus *Her.* 6. 11.; and Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 125, 129.

³⁴ The Anthestria was a sort of "all souls festival." As Harrison observes: "The formula used at the close of the Anthestria is in itself ample proof that the Anthestria was a festival of All Souls...[S]ome portion at least of the ritual of the month Anthestria was addressed to the powers of the underworld, and... these powers were primarily the ghosts of the dead," *ibid.*, 36; see also *ibid.*, 58; and J. D. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year* (Princeton, 1975), 113-14. The connecting thread between the earlier and the later usages of the festival (it was taken over as a Dionysiac rite) appears to be the Pithogia – the first day of ceremonies. It was, literally, an opening of the *pithoi*. The term came to mean "wine-jars" or "wine-flasks" – an obvious reference to Dionysius. Earlier, however, the term stood for "earthenware," of the type used in burial urns. The Chytrai, or third day of the ceremonies was reserved for the dead in both versions of the festival.

³⁵ The Diasia was a major festival to Zeus. It appears, however, to have been originally a festival to the chthonic manifestation Meilichios. The epithet Meilichios was often associated with Zeus, especially with regard to this festival. See Murray, 13-14; Guthrie, 228; Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 23, 28.

³⁶ Rohde, 158ff.

³⁷ The most often seen position espoused by modern scholarship on Apollo's name is that he was originally the Dorian god of the assembly (Apellon; Apellei). See Seltman, 109; Guthrie, 73, n. 2; and Murray, 49. Harris' position that Apollo may have been a pantheistic divinity of the northern "Hyperborean" regions, later to be absorbed by the Greeks, has received some support. See J. R. Harris, "The Origin of the Cult of Apollo," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 3, 1 (1916), 10-47. See also Pindar *Pyth. Od.* 29ff.; Alcaeus fr. 72; Bacchylides 2. 58ff.; and Sophocles, fr. 790.

³⁸ Apollo's victory over the chthonic presence at Delphi is recounted in the *Hymn to Apollo*, ascribed to Homer (*Hym.* 3. 260ff.). The name Pytho (which literally means "I rot") stems from the decay resulting from sunlight upon the manifestation. See *ibid.*, 363. There is also a strong snake imagery in the Pytho story. See L. Baynard, "Pytho-Delphes et la légende du serpent," *Revue des Études Grecques* 56 (1943), 25-28; and S. Davis, "The Snake Cult in Greece and the Oracle of Apollo," *Scientia* 47 (1953), 83-86.

³⁹ Several have suggested an early incubation function for the temple. See A. P. Oppe, "The Chasm at Delphi," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 24 (1904), 214-38; and T. Homolle, "Resemblance de l'omphalos delphique avec quelques représentations égyptiennes," *Revue des Études Grecques* 22 (1919), 338-58.

Rep. 461E2-3, 540C1), spoke as the Greek spirit.⁴⁰ It is Apollo's oracle who determines that Socrates is the wisest (*Apol.* 20E6-21A7).⁴¹ Now it is Apollo, through the same oracle, who is to see to the most basic requirements of legislation in the city of the *Republic*. By invoking Apollo, Socrates founds a Greek city as Greek cities were expected to be founded.⁴² Socrates receives the divine sanction for the cults, temples, sacrifices, forms of worship, manner of treating the dead, and what daemons and heroes are to be honored.⁴³ Socrates places before the god of reason the truly nomothetic – that is, the fundamental legal founding – enterprise (427B3-4: ...πρῶτα τῶν νομοθετημάτων). Apollo, the god of vengeance and discord in the *Iliad* has become Socrates' god of order in the *Republic*.

As Apollo is responsible for the purging of luxuries from the city of the dialogue (399E1-6), so also is the city under his tutelage responsible for the purging of knowledge – the identification of truth as standard, rather than opinion. The founding which occurs in the *Republic* is one accomplished by the dictates of reason. The revelation of the path toward the truth serves to dispel the shroud hanging about conceptions of the afterlife.⁴⁴

The chthonic themes running throughout the *Republic* – from the initial descent of Socrates and Glaucon into Piræus to the ascent of Er the Pamphylian – serves to structure a decisive break with the poetic tradition on the subject of the afterlife. The fear of punishment, which prompts the doing of

⁴⁰ The definitive work on the Delphic Oracle is H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, 4 vols. (1956). While the Apolline oracle at Delphi is certainly the best known, Apollo had oracles throughout the Aegean. See Herodotus 1. 182, 8. 135; and Pausanias 7. 2. 4, 7. 3. 1, 7. 1. 3.

⁴¹ See H. W. Parke, "Chaerophon's Inquiry About Socrates," *Classical Philology* 56 (1961), 249-50 and E. de Strycker, "The Oracle Given to Chaerophon About Socrates (Plato, *Apology* 20e-21)," in *Kephalaton*, ed. J. Mansfield and L. M. de Rijk (Assen, 1975), 39-49.

⁴² The Delphic Oracle was almost always consulted prior to the founding of a city or colony. See Diodorus Siculus 12. 12; Pausanias 7. 2; Athenæus 8. 62; see also Xenophon *Mem.* 1. 3. 1, 4. 3. 16; and Plato *Laws* 759D5f.

⁴³ See *Rep.* 427B6-8; also, 461E2-3, 540C1, and 592A7-9.

⁴⁴ There are three important aspects to this passage. First, it is specifically the presence of Apollo which effects the purging. Second, the purging almost escapes the notice of the interlocutors. The identification of justice in Book 4 has a similar character. Third, the purging prompts Glaucon to recognize the moderation which has taken place in the discussion. Glaucon's initial luxuries – those of the table (see 372D7f.) – had first been advanced by Polemarchus at 332D1.

Knowledge of the afterlife, or at least opinions about the afterlife, is to be the result of order and is to supersede that regard for the afterlife instructed by fear. It is not accidental, therefore, that prominent among the chthonic symbolisms of the *Republic* are those which address the subjects of fear and retribution.

good deeds or the bribing of gods through sacrifice,⁴⁵ now gives way to the purification required of the *individual*.⁴⁶ A far different picture than that painted by the poets is presented by Socrates on this matter. At 497E9ff., Socrates outlines the lives of those who live in the city, and concludes: "But when bodily strength ceases, and they are beyond serving in political or military capacities, then from that time on they will dwell and not work at anything, save in an incidental way, intending to live happily, and when an ending comes to life, the life lived will be crowned with a fitting portion in the place" (498B8-C4). A life lived well on earth, ending in a justified "retirement," produces a joyous existence in the "hereafter."

The chthonic dimension in the dialogue is also reflected in each of the myths presented during discussion – Gyges' ancestor descends beneath the earth and returns in the myth presented by Glaucon in Book 2 (359C6-360B2), the "earth-brotherhood" beneath the soil in the myth of autochthony presented by Socrates at the end of Book 3 (414B8-415C6), and Er's travels in the afterlife at the end of Book 10. By distinguishing his view of the afterlife from that of the poetic perspective, Socrates not only places his approach to the instruction provided by poetry at odds with the manner in which that instruction has actually been transmitted, he likewise contrasts the view which the dialogue will offer on the most non-sensual aspect of poetry's material – the aspect which addresses what we might today call faith.

There is, however, a deeper reason for the concern with the afterlife. Unless the manner in which opinions about the afterlife and the underworld are considered, there is little possibility that Plato's approach, or an approach for that matter, is likely to prove successful. The position of religious beliefs in the workings of the polis is a fundamental and important one. Basic to those beliefs is a view of the afterlife and the relation of the afterlife to the conduct of one's existence. In this sense, such concerns as those expressed for the afterlife, the underworld, and the chthonic deities, are basically political considerations. These considerations historically extend even to the dimensions of law.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. 330D4f. with 331A3f.; also 361C2f., 362C1-6, and 362E4ff.

⁴⁶ Socrates is a characterization of purification rites. According to tradition, he was born on a day of Athenian purification (Diogenes Laertius 2. 4) and his death is determined by one – his sentence cannot be carried out until the sacred ship returns from its yearly voyage to Delos (*Phaedo* 58A10f.; *Crito* 43C9f.). The death scene in the *Phaedo* is preceded by a purification imagery – Socrates takes a bath before his self-administered execution. (*Phaedo* 116A2f.).

⁴⁷ The position held by the chthonic deities in Greek religion made it quite likely that the domain of the dead would influence the laws of the living. There can be little doubt, owing to the role played by family religion, the recognition of chthonic vengeance in

By instructing opinion on the non-fearful non-retributive dimensions of a proper regard for the afterlife, at least for those who practice a just and orderly existence, the *Republic* blunts one of the most pervasive holds which poetry exercised over the Greek mind. When Plato sets about the task of having Socrates present myths of his own choosing, therefore, they are presented against a quite different backdrop than those of the poets. It is hardly incidental that the Socratically presented myths in the *Republic* do not take place until the very nature of poetry and its myth-telling have been subjected to extensive criticism and revision in Books 2 and 3.

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criminal law, and the characterization of Hades as the founder of law, that the origin of law is integrally related to the development of underworld deities in Greek religion. See Sophocles *O. T.* 863ff., *Ant.* 519, fr. 703; Aeschylus *Eum.* 263; Plato *Crito* 54A8f., and *Laws* 865D5. The Greek word for law (*νόμος*) originally meant something which was sung, further testifying to the religious nature of its beginnings. Only at a comparatively late date are they put down in writing. See F. B. Jevons, "Greek Law and Folk Lore," *Classical Review* 9 (1895), 247-48; J. A. R. Munro, "The Ancestral Laws of Cleisthenes," *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1939), 84-97; J. H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Laws* (Baltimore, 1950); and M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969).

The rise of religious ideas on pollution and purification is undoubtedly related to various aspects of chthonic belief. The fear that religious guilt or pollution (*μιάσμα*) was contagious and could not be discarded save by purification rites was an eduring feature of Greek literature. See Herodotus 1. 91; Hesiod *Erga* 240; Aeschylus *Septem* 597ff., *Eum.* 62-63, 281ff.; Sophocles *O. T.* 863ff., *Ant.* 773ff., *Oed. Col.* 1482f.; Euripides *Iph. Taur.* 380ff., 1229, *Her.* 1233f., *Hippol.* 1379; Antiphon *Tetra* 1. 1 3; Plutarch *12th Greek Question*; Solon 12. 4ff.; and Diogenes Laertius 4. 46. The concepts of religious pollution and purification were deeply established in Greek Law. Murder trials were considered religious acts (Rohde, 179), and "wrath" (*χόλος*) was recognized as a legal institution. See Voegelin, *The World of the Polis*, vol. 2 of *Order and History*, 89; and Nilsson, *History*, 195-96. The procedure of administering hemlock, that is, of self-administered death, is a result of a fear of infection by pollution. This is a direct implication of the chthonic basis for early law. See Homer *Il.* 9. 98ff.; Hesiod *Erga* 256ff., *Theog.* 901ff.; and G. N. Calhoun, "The Early History of Crime and Criminal Law in Greece," *Proceedings of the Classical Associations of England and Wales* 18 (1921), 86-104.