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### Platos's microcosm and macrocosm – inspired by Hesiod?\*

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**ABSTRACT:** The main aim of the study is to identify the Hesiodian motifs in Plato's philosophy. Thus the study is founded on the assumption that myth (the poetic tradition) and *logos* (the philosophical tradition) do not represent two distinct paradigms in ancient Greek thought, but more a kind of thought continuity. We will look for these motives or analogies at the level of organisation of the world (*kosmos*) and at the level of organisation of society (*polis*). We will deal primarily with Plato's dialogues *Timaeus*, *Republic* and *Symposium*. The goal of the submitted study is to answer the question of whether and to what extent did Hesiod's work influence Plato's ideas about the organisation of the world and society as such.

**KEY-WORDS:** Plato, Hesiod, cosmos, *polis*, Eros, cosmology

Plato is generally considered to be a great opponent and critic of the poetic tradition,<sup>1</sup>

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which he perceives mainly through the work of Homer and Hesiod. In our text, however, we will not focus on those parts of the Platonic corpus that present a negative reflection of poetry on the part of philosophy. Our goal is to answer the question of whether and to what extent did Hesiod's work influence Plato's ideas about the organisation of the world and society as such. We will examine this problem at two levels: at the level of the microcosm and at the level of the macrocosm; that is, we will investigate Hesiod's influence on Plato's thinking within the social order (*polis*) and within the world order (*kosmos*). Plato's practical philosophy, that is, ethics and politics, is derived from his cosmological teachings – i.e. the state and the soul of the individual (if he/she is to be good and just) must be organised on the basis of the model<sup>2</sup>, according to which the whole universe and the world came into being. Thus, the order of the world is something primary for Plato. For this reason, we will first focus in our interpretation on the question of how Hesiod and his thinking influenced Plato's cosmology, that is, his interpretation of the origin of the world.

**Hesiod and Plato's *Timaeus*.** Plato's most famous dialogue, which provides a comprehensive interpretation of the origin of the world, is *Timaeus*. It is paradoxical that the interpretation we come across in this dialogue is labelled as myth<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it is a narrative that may not necessarily be true in all circumstances. Although the author himself does not at any point directly mention Hesiod's poems<sup>4</sup> in several places<sup>5</sup> the influence of this particular poet can be deduced<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps the mentioned inclination towards myth represents a kind of author's intention to liken his narration to a traditional poetic interpretation, which also moved on the level of myth. In *Tim.* 29c-d, the philosopher states that it is very difficult to make statements about the origin of the gods and the universe that would be true; therefore, we must have sufficient speech that is only similar to the truth. We could say that Hesiod is very similar in his interpretation in this regard. The poet needs the intervention of the divine Muses to be able to sing about the things that happened at the origin of the world<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the Muses themselves bring a doubt and uncertainty similar to that which

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<sup>1</sup> Cf, e.g., *Resp.* II. 377e-378a, *Resp.* III. 388e-389a; 391d, *Resp.* III. 390c, *Resp.* II. 379e, *Resp.* II. 381d, *Resp.* III. 386c-387a, *Resp.* III. 386a; 387c; 387d.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 36a-37a and also Komárková (1990) 36.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 29c-d.

<sup>4</sup> Hesiod is mentioned, along with Homer, only in the prologue and outside the cosmological context, cf. *Tim.* 21d.

<sup>5</sup> In the text *Hesiod in the Timaeus: The Demiurge Addresses the Gods*, for example, Mario Regali hypothesises that with the name of Demiurgos (dealing mainly with the part *Tim.* 41a) Plato was inspired by Hesiod and his etymologisation of divine names, cf. Regali (2010) 246-258.

<sup>6</sup> This is mainly part 40d-41a in the dialogue *Timaeus*.

<sup>7</sup> In a very similar way, *Timaeus* calls on the gods to help him interpret the beginning of the world. He does so according to an old tradition – κατὰ νόμον, cf. *Tim.* 27c-d.

Timaeus<sup>8</sup> has when speaking about the origin of the world. Hesiod's Muses sometimes tell the truth and sometimes lie<sup>9</sup>. While the gods in the *Theogony* are the contrivers of things both good and evil<sup>10</sup>, the Muses themselves have positive effects on humans<sup>11</sup>, symbolising harmony, peace and the friendship associated with the order established by Zeus. We find a similar motif in the dialogue in question, where the Demiurge guarantees a new order<sup>12</sup> that will create a harmonious and orderly *kosmos*<sup>13</sup>. Plato's Demiurge thus represents a kind of allusion to the order established by Zeus and the motif of an interconnecting bond – δεσμοί. Just as the Hesiod's Muses are a gift of the gods<sup>14</sup>, so the creator gave people sight (i.e. also the ability to think and to observe), which is considered to be a gift of the gods (παρὰ θεῶν δεδωρησθαί)<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, Plato's *Timaeus* and Hesiod's *Theogony* are not as radically different works as we might expect at first glance.

Furthermore, the mentioned texts also share a similar basis for the origin of the world – according to both authors; the world could not have originated from nothing that is *ex nihilo*. Plato explains the origin of the world such that it could not have emerged without a cause, because all existing things exist as a result of some external cause<sup>16</sup>. In Plato's view, the original disorder could not have arisen out of order, because in his system it is not possible that the good state is the origin of the bad – good can only cause good again. Hesiod approaches the primal beginnings in his *Theogony* in a similar way. At the beginning of everything stands Chaos. It is debatable, however, whether or not this involves a kind of initial disorder, because of the origin and interpretation of the ancient Greek term Χάος. Several strategies for translation exist for this term.

According to Luhanová, a kind of consensus exists among researchers regarding the etymological connection between two meaning groups – a) a connection to the adjective χαῖνος, which indicates properties such as rarity, gentleness or softness and thus captures the absence of a clearly designated and defined shape or solid form; b) a connection to the verb χάσκω, which means yawning or opening up to depth; in this sense it is used, for example, when speaking about a wide-open mouth or an animal's snout, but it is typically used in connection with death in the depths of the sea or the earth. The noun *chasma* (χάσμα),

<sup>8</sup> The alleged origin of Timaeus, the character after whom the dialogue is named, also connects Hesiod with the dialogue Timaeus. He is said to have come from Locri, from a place that ancient tradition links with Hesiod and his cult, cf. *Tim.* 20a.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Theog.* 22-34.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Pandora, *Theog.* 585.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Theog.* 55, 93, 102, 98-103.

<sup>12</sup> In a similar sense, Hesiod's Muses confirm Zeus's newly-established order and symbolise harmony.

<sup>13</sup> *Tim.* 32b-c.

<sup>14</sup> *Theog.* 102 δῶρα θεῶων.

<sup>15</sup> *Tim.* 47c.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 28b-c.

denoting a deep abyss, is commonly associated with this verb<sup>17</sup>. Kirk, Raven and Schofield are inclined towards the second semantic relation, and thus to the interpretation of Hesiod's use of the term χάος, and they argue that the noun is derived from the root χά, which refers to a gap or an opening, i.e. not to an empty space but to some bounded interval<sup>18</sup>. Thus, according to this interpretation, Hesiod's "in the beginning was Chaos" means that between heaven (Οὐρανός) and earth (Γαῖα) was a gap and the first stage of cosmogony was the separation of heaven from earth. West ascribes traits such as dark and foggy to Chaos on the basis of the lines in *Theog.* 736-45 and 807-14<sup>19</sup>. In his view, it seems that this is not a completely empty space (since it is minimally full of fog). At present, the interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos as a kind of gap or abyss<sup>20</sup> that originated at the beginning of the world is prevalent; thus, it was probably a kind of primal separation or division of cosmic elements. It is important to note, however, that in addition to this idea, Hesiod's Chaos is also a god<sup>21</sup> – and as a god, he is eternal and immortal. Thus, in the end, Plato and Hesiod deal with the beginning of the world in a very similar way. In both thinkers, something eternal stands at the beginning – in Plato it is an eternal and unchanging idea<sup>22</sup> and in Hesiod Chaos as a god. However, based on what has thus far been said (the idea that chaos was the original separation of the cosmic elements), to say that Hesiod's Chaos is associated with immutability is problematic.

But ancient authors themselves – Aristotle for example – saw a direct connection between Hesiod's Chaos and Plato's definition of the term χώρα in the dialogue *Timaeus*:

...In like manner there is a universal nature out of which all things are made, and which is like none of them; but they enter into and pass out of her, and are made after patterns of the true in a wonderful and inexplicable manner. The containing principle may be likened to a mother, the source or spring to a father, the intermediate nature to a child; and we may also remark that the matter which receives every variety of form must be formless, like the inodorous liquids which are prepared to receive scents, or the smooth and soft materials on which figures are impressed. In the same way space or matter is neither earth nor fire nor air nor water, but an invisible and formless being which receives all things, and in an incomprehensible manner partakes of the intelligible. But we may say, speaking generally, that fire is that part of this nature which is inflamed, water that which is moistened, and the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. more Luhanová (2014) 140-141.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kirk-Raven-Schofield (2004) 56.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. West (1966).

<sup>20</sup> The researcher Most (2018) translates Hesiod's Chaos directly as a *chasm*, i.e. an abyss or gap.

<sup>21</sup> Chaos is the divinity that forms its own progeny, namely Nyx and Erebus, i.e. night and darkness, cf. *Theog.* 123.

<sup>22</sup> *Tim.* 51a-b.

like<sup>23</sup>.

Thus, according to Aristotle<sup>24</sup>, Chaos is something like Plato's *chora*, that is, an empty space in which all other things arise. Such a space is necessary for the generation of all things, because each bodily being must necessarily be embedded in space. Aristotle's interpretation, however, is often problematic and burdened by the author's own conception. We cannot with certainty lean towards this identification even on the basis of the fact that Hesiod's primordial deity or principle occurs in the poem and elsewhere – and is located in the underworld, in Tartarus<sup>25</sup>. While Hesiod's Chaos is probably a god, we could label Plato's *chora* only as a means necessary for the origin of all other things.

**Hesiod and Plato's political philosophy.** Just as it is possible in Plato to identify certain analogies and similarities with Hesiod's poetic thinking on the level of cosmological reflections, it is also possible to see his influence in the field of political philosophy. Although Hesiod is certainly not an author who deals explicitly with socio-political issues, for Plato he is a source of inspiration in key state-forming moments. As we have several times stated, Plato is a critic of the poetic tradition, but his relationship with poets is ambivalent. He uses well-known passages from Hesiod strategically. Before moving on to examining the specific quotations from Hesiod found in Plato's dialogue *Republic*, we consider it necessary to explain the way Plato works with the ideas of the archaic poets. Why does he once criticise them but then in turn uses them elsewhere as a justifying argument that arrives in the same way as a *deus ex machina*?

We find the justification for such ambivalence in Plato himself, specifically in the dialogue *Phaedrus*, in *Phaedr.* 278c-d:

Go and tell Lysias that to the fountain and school of the Nymphs we went down, and were bidden by them to convey a message to him and to other composers of speeches—to Homer and other writers of poems, whether set to music or not (καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος αὖ ποιήσιν ψιλῆν ἢ ἐν ᾧδῃ συντέθηκε), and to Solon and others who have composed writings in the form of political discourses which they would term laws – ‘to all of them we are to say that if their compositions are based on knowledge of the truth (εἰ μὲν εἰδὼς ἢ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔχει συντέθηκε ταῦτα), and they can defend or prove them, when they are put to the test (εἰς ἔλεγχον ἰὼν περὶ ὧν ἔγραψε), [...]then they are to be called, not only poets, orators, legislators, but are worthy of a higher name [...].

From this passage we can read that Plato's Socrates makes a certain connection

<sup>23</sup> *Tim.* 50c-51b.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* 209b-209a.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Theog.* 814.

between the archaic tradition (Homer, Solomon, and others) and elenctic activity, that is, by the critical method of examining the truth by asking questions. The presented quotation from *Phaedrus* is followed by an important paragraph through which we can formulate the definition of a philosopher<sup>26</sup>. A philosopher, according to Socrates, is one who is able to subject individual texts from the previous tradition to scrutiny. Based on the formulation used – εἰς ἔλεγχον ἰὼν περὶ ὧν ἔγραψε – we can assume that this examination takes place precisely through the Socrates's *elenchus*. The researcher McMinn claims regarding this issue that Platonic myths provide fictitious records of eschatological convictions. At the same time, they are also a curious means for revealing the philosophical truths of moral content in these convictions, and although they are still within the limits of reason, they provide certain plausible probabilities. These probabilities take the form of truth and first principles, creating the so-called “background theory” to the subject theory, and in this way they provide the necessary condition that determines the logical limits of the proofs formulated in the epagogic part of Socrates's method<sup>27</sup>. In Plato's philosophy, myth is *logom*; it precedes *logu*, and is even truer than *logos* in the sense that it represents the first principle, the so-called “background theory”, which is superior to elenctic or maieutic activity and from which Socrates's examination is based and in which it often ends. When we return to the passage from the dialogue *Phaedrus*<sup>28</sup>, we can see that Plato himself does with myth exactly what a philosopher with a previous tradition should do. He posits it as a first principle, as a starting point, which is verified by the *logo*, or is subjected to elenctic activity (in *Phaedrus*: εἰς ἔλεγχον ἰὼν περὶ ὧν ἔγραψε). At the same time, this statement also becomes the answer to the question of why Plato leaves some old myths in their original form and significantly changes and criticises others. We reckon that Plato works with the whole poetic tradition in this way. For this reason, he criticises Hesiod's description of the gods, while at the same time cites him when he wants to find some way out and justification for the specific arrangements of a just State.

The key verses for the mentioned arrangement are those from Hesiod's work *and Days*, which speak about the various generations that lived in the world – the immortal golden generation that knew no suffering and was ruled by Kronos, the silver generation that was proud and did not want to worship the gods, the third bronze generation made of ash, the fourth generation of demigods who fought before Troy and Thebes, and last of all the iron generation, in which Hesiod and his brother Perses live. This mortal family line does not

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<sup>26</sup> *Phaedr.* 278d.

<sup>27</sup> See more McMinn (1990) 220.

<sup>28</sup> *Phaedr.* 278c-d.

know any respite from poverty and daily exertion<sup>29</sup>.

In *Republic* Plato refers to these verses as a Phoenician history, or as originating from Phoenicia (ἀλλὰ Φοινικικόν τι)<sup>30</sup>, and talks about so-called “noble lies” (γενναῖον ψεῦδος)<sup>31</sup>. This passage follows on from the previous parts of the dialogue, where the creators of a just republic state that the rulers will deceive the people for the purpose of gaining the common good. However, a kind of “higher lie” also exists that the rulers themselves should believe<sup>32</sup>. So we could say that there is a difference between ordinary lies and a noble lie – a noble lie will be believed even by those who have the highest knowledge, manage the dialectical art and contemplate the idea of Good. “Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children. But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son. And God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which they should so anxiously guard, or of which they are to be such good guardians, as of the purity of the race. They should observe what elements mingle in their offspring; for if the son of a golden or silver parent has an admixture of brass and iron, then nature orders a transposition of ranks, and the eye of the ruler must not be pitiful towards the child because he has to descend in the scale and become a husbandman or artisan, just as there may be sons of artisans who having an admixture of gold or silver in them are raised to honour, and become guardians or auxiliaries. For an oracle says that when a man of brass or iron guards the State, it will be destroyed”<sup>33</sup>.

Is it mere coincidence that the Phoenician myth is reminiscent of Hesiod’s story of the degenerative idea<sup>34</sup> of earthly history? We believe that Plato’s use of poetic myth is associated with his relationship to the art of poetry in general, as suggested above. Only a philosopher can understand the hidden truth, which, like *hyponoia*, is hidden behind a given myth or story.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. more *Op.* 109-199.

<sup>30</sup> cf. *Resp.* III 414c

<sup>31</sup> We could also translate the ancient Greek term *gennaios* (γενναῖος) as excellent or magnificent. Thus, this should be a lie that is not only noble but also magnificent. At the same time, it is a lie that refers to the different nature or origin of specific citizens in the Republic. In this sense, it is interesting that the adjective carries within it the same basis of the word as the noun *genos* (γένος), i.e. origin or birth.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. “How can we now convince the rulers themselves, if not other citizens, of the essential untruths we have been talking about”, *Resp.* III 414b-c.

<sup>33</sup> *Resp.* III. 415b-c.

<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that some researchers argue that Hesiod’s perception of history and individual generations is not degenerative, the generally accepted interpretive framework views the myth of metals as an expression of a certain degeneration, cf. Most (1997) 108.

But how is it possible that Plato's philosopher on the throne was unable to reveal this lie, and why is it necessary to deceive him with a myth?

The answer to this question is related to the theory of the tripartite soul, which is also found in the dialogue *Republic*. Each person, according to Plato, has three parts to their soul: reason (λογιστικόν), spirit (θυμοειδές) and appetite (ἐπιθυμητικόν). If the individual is to be good and just, the reason part must, with the help of the spirit, subdue the appetite or *epithymetic* component of the soul. What role myth plays in this process is revealed to us in *Timaeus*. In this dialogue Plato justifies the function of myth in relation to the control of bodily passions and pleasures and considers the liver to be the organ symbolising the epicentre of human desires. We could therefore consider this organ as a kind of seat of the appetite part of the soul. It is the lowest component of the soul that desires food, drink and other bodily needs and is unable to understand reason at all (λόγου μὲν οὔτε συνήσειν). Therefore, the gods assigned the liver as its seat; that is the organ which should see that the animal part of the soul will not be guided by “deceptive images and delusions” (ὕπὸ δὲ εἰδώλων καὶ φαντασμάτων ψυχαγωγήσοιτο). The liver fulfils this role by reflecting in itself, as in a mirror, the power of ideas based on reason (τῶν διανοημάτων ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ φερομένη δύναμις, οἷον ἐν κατόπτρῳ). The liver can frighten or soothe the irrational component of the soul such that it provides it with divine prophecies<sup>35</sup>. If we combine the presented information from the dialogue *Timaeus* with the doctrine of the three parts of the soul, Plato's noble lie becomes more understandable. The philosopher on the throne, like every citizen and man in general, has three components of the soul and likewise the previously mentioned liver. The component of the soul residing in this organ is incapable of understanding rational reasons and arguments. For this reason, it is necessary to use an irrational myth in order to convince it. The difference in the use of myths on individual citizens is probably only quantitative. While, for the inhabitants of the lowest classes, in whom the appetite component predominates, a large number of lies are required, while for philosophers a single noble lie is “sufficient”. This is a lie that we could compare within Platonic dialectics to something like the *arché anhypotethos*, that is, a presumption that is not further substantiated and disputed and on which all further dialectical research is based.

Plato does not openly and directly admit that this is a myth that in a certain form we also know from Hesiod; instead he mentions a certain Phoenician as its originator. There can be at least three reasons for such a description: 1) a contextual and literary reason, which follows from previous books – Plato will not present Hesiod as the originator of the most

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<sup>35</sup> *Tim.* 70e-71e, cf. more Kalaš-Škvrnda (2018) 218.



fundamental myth within his State, since he strongly criticises him in the previous pages; 2) geographical and historical – this means that Hesiod’s possible birthplace of Cyme could be assigned to a wider circle of Phoenicia, or we could work with the hypothesis that the ideas in Hesiod’s *Theogony* come from Phoenicia or have a broader Eastern-Oriental origin (which Plato could have known); 3) Plato created the character of a fictional Phoenician, because the original myth from Hesiod is altered to fit the tripartite concept of the State and man (three classes in the state and three components in the soul), and its importance consists in participating in creating the personal identity of rulers.

Hesiod mentions the individual metals when he speaks of the various stages of humanity which are progressing degeneratively – that is, from the best age to the worst period in which he and his brother Perses are living right now. Plato<sup>36</sup> in turn, uses these metals as a kind of justification for the three kinds of human nature. While Hesiod speaks of up to five stages in human history (no metal is attributed to age of the heroes), Plato seemingly needs only three metals. For this reason, two metals – iron and brass – are attributed to the lowest third layer in the State. It is thus evident that he modifies and adapts the structure of Hesiod’s myth (to a great extent) to his argumentative purpose.

The myth of the four metals thus plays a major role in Plato’s political thinking. Through this myth, the most important component of the State – the philosophers themselves – are deceived, i.e. those who should ensure total justice and have, so to speak, all power in their hands. At the same time, the philosopher at the head of Plato’s State has genuine knowledge, because he is able to “free himself from the cave” and contemplate the idea of the Good. For this reason, we imagine that Plato did not choose the myth in question randomly – he had to believe that this ancient story has such potential that it is able to deceive even a wise philosopher.

**Hesiod’s Eros between Plato’s microcosm and macrocosm.** For Plato’s epistemology and the ontology associated with it, the figure of Eros, or everything connected with Eros, including *erótiké techné* as such, is important. For him, the figure of this god as well as the effects that have traditionally been associated with him are significant. At the same

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<sup>36</sup> We find Hesiod’s myth of the metals in a certain form in Plato’s second state-building dialogue – *Laws*. In this dialogue we see the myth of a blissful city ruled by Kronos – the god who embodied reason. He speaks about the happiest government, which should become a model for every city that wants to be blissful. In an effort to imitate the symbolic rule of Kronos, we can see the motivation to imitate the rule of reason. “(...) In like manner God, in His love of mankind, placed over us the demons, who are a superior race, and they with great ease and pleasure to themselves, and no less to us, taking care of us and giving us peace and reverence and order and justice never failing, made the tribes of men happy and united”(Plato, *Leg.* 713e). In this dialogue, the rule of reason in the state is identified with Kronos and at the same time with gold, that is, with the golden thread of the law, which, as a puppet-master, guides citizens on the path for justice. A citizen does not have gold in his soul, but it is outside of him (man is drawn by the golden thread of reason – the law on which he hangs like a puppet), even though he may be connected to it, cf. see also Plato, *Leg.* 713e.

time, these effects underline the dual nature of the deity – on the one hand, danger and death are connected by him, and on the other hand, he has positive effects and through his power he helps people to participate in eternity or immortality. On the one hand, he evokes desirousness and binds the individual with irrational passions; while on the other hand, the correct dealing with Eros can make people better. Eros in the mythological understanding weakens people and the gods mainly through seeing – this negative aspect derives from his epithet λυσιμελής, i.e. the limbs relaxing, and this ability is directly connected to the organ of sight. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, love, which weakens the limbs, flow from under the eyelids to the Charites (the goddesses of charm)<sup>37</sup>. We could say that the mentioned god of desire arouses fear, because through vision, the eye or sight, he weakens mythological heroes (as well as gods) and thus threatens the performance of their heroic deeds. In the *Odyssey*, for example, the sight of the beautiful Penelope evokes in the suitors a desire that weakens their limbs: “The suitors’ limbs were weakened on the spot, so their love faded (ἔρω δ’ ἄρα θυμὸν ἔθελχθεν): they all desired to be beside her in bed (πάντες δ’ ἠρήσαντο παρὰ λεγέεσσι κλιθῆναι)”<sup>38</sup>. In the *Iliad*, it is again love that, through sight, obscures Zeus’s rational mind<sup>39</sup>. A reflection of this mythological thinking, which we can to a large measure identify with Hesiod, is also found in Plato. Plato’s Socrates is always excited when he sees a beautiful young man. For all this, we mention the well-known passage located at the beginning of the dialogue *Charmides*: “[...] he looked at me (ἐνέβλεψέν τέ μοι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς) in such an indescribable manner and was just going to ask a question. And at that moment all the people in the *palaestra* crowded about us, and, O rare! I caught a sight of the inwards of his garment, and took the flame (ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἐν ἐμαυτοῦ ἦν)”<sup>40</sup>. However, the dual nature of erotic power lies in the fact that with correctly selected *askésis* Eros is transformed into *erótiké techné* and becomes a part of Socrates’ education, or dialectical art. In this part of our text, we will work with the assumption that Eros is the element that links Plato’s microcosm and macrocosm. At the same time, we will argue in favour of the statement that Plato’s Eros is in a certain sense similar to Hesiod’s idea of Eros. We will ask the question in what specific way does Eros so perceived connect the microcosm and the macrocosm, i.e. the world of the divine and the world of the human, in Plato’s philosophy. Before moving on to Plato’s philosophy, we consider it necessary to present Hesiod’s perception of Eros.

Hesiod’s Eros is the only deity in *Theogony* who is born twice. If we were to disregard the assumption that the double birth of this deity testifies to several versions of the work, or it

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<sup>37</sup> *Theog.* 911.

<sup>38</sup> Homer, *Od.* XVIII.212-213.

<sup>39</sup> Homer, *Il.* XIV. 294.

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Charm.* 155c-d.

is proof that the poem originated as a conglomeration of several mythological stories, we could perceive this birth rather as a proof that confirms the mentioned double character.

Despite the fact that we find the personification of Eros in Homer's epics<sup>41</sup>, this god appears for the first time in Hesiod. He stands at the origin of the world and is the second deity born after Gaia. It is interesting, however, that Eros does not unite or bring together the gods of Hesiod. Chaos and Gaia at this first moment have not yet had any intercourse with anyone, and Gaia gives birth to her future partners on her own (Uranus and Pontus are born ἄτερ φιλότητος ἐφιμέρου, i.e. without a love affair). For this reason, it seems that Eros's power in Hesiod is more liberating than fertile – it helps the Earth bring into the world a multitude that is hidden in unity<sup>42</sup>. On the one hand, Hesiod's Eros is one of the primordial deities<sup>43</sup>, which stand at the beginning of the whole universe; on the other hand, he is born as a prankish companion of the Cypriot Aphrodite emerging from the sea foam<sup>44</sup>. Authors such as Luhanová<sup>45</sup> and Clay<sup>46</sup>, for example, state that the original cosmopoietic Eros is transformed and dissolved into Aphrodite. According to Luhanová, we can speak with a certain perspective about the transformation of the primordial Eros into the Olympic Aphrodite, or about the transformation of Eros as the original autonomous deity into one of several of Aphrodite's companions. Erotic attraction in the sense of loving desire, the pleasure of love and the procreation of offspring on the basis of earthly bonds, fall to the competence of this goddess. In this way, the Olympic goddess represents a kind of narrowly defined form of the original Eros. We could say, however, that her strength is in a sense weaker, because in Homer's case some goddesses, such as Hestia, Athena or Artemis, can bear up against her snares. The original Eros, however, has unlimited power over people and the gods<sup>47</sup>. For this reason, we could divide the scope of Hesiod's Eros by the macrocosm (primordial) and the microcosm (the companion to Aphrodite, who is more or less in charge of partnerships). We

<sup>41</sup> His power has similar effects, such as sleep or death, cf. *Il.* V 68 or *Od.* XX. 86.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hejduk (2007) 30-31.

<sup>43</sup> In the very beginning, there was Chaos. But then the earth goddess Gaia with a wide chest was formed. This was to become the safe seat of all the eternally immortal gods that inhabit the summit of the snow Olympus. In the deep bowels of the Earth with wide paths, Tartarus, full of opaque air, was created. Eros then followed, who pleasantly relaxes the bodily limbs and is the most beautiful of the gods. He is a god who easily overcomes the mind in the breasts of all gods and people and immediately subdues a will full of empty intentions, *Theog.* 116-122.

<sup>44</sup> Thus, the venerable goddess emerged from the foam. Her slender legs immediately stood on the lush grass that grew around a beautiful female figure. People and gods call her Aphrodite, because she was nourished by foam, which in Greek is called "afros". But she also has the name Cytherian, because she arrived in Cythera. Born in Cyprus, we again call her when we want to emphasise that she was born on this island. Sometimes people even call her "philomeideia", which literally means "loving male" because she was born from him. Eros accompanies her from the hour of her birth. The beautiful god of desire, Himeros, follows her from the first moment she joined the community of gods, *Theog.* 192-201.

<sup>45</sup> Luhanová (2014) 71.

<sup>46</sup> Clay (2003) 19.

<sup>47</sup> cf. Luhanová (2014) 71-72.

can also ascribe an analogous division to Aphrodite, because ancient Greek thought knows and differentiates between the competencies of the so-called Aphrodite Urania and Aphrodite Pandemia. Thus, Eros<sup>48</sup> (and Aphrodite as one of his later forms) – in a sense – unites the human realm and the divine realm, or said otherwise, into cosmic Eros and anthropological Eros. Cosmic Eros helps to release the many hidden in unity, and the earthly human form of Eros helps to unite the many into unity.

We find similar moments or ways of depicting Eros and his effects in Plato's philosophy. In Plato, Eros is also the one who unites the world of people and the world of the gods. Plato stylizes the figure of Eros-daimon into the figure of Socrates, who is not properly in either one realm or the other; he is in the middle and at the same time participates in both realms. The diffuse character of Hesiod's Eros thus becomes a kind of inspiration for the ideal of the Platonic philosopher – to be the one who unites and has both a fertile force and a relaxing force. In Plato's dialogue *Symposium* we find a description of Eros as a *daimona*<sup>49</sup>, who is standing midway between the world of men and the world of the gods – between ignorance and knowledge. “[...] and so he is never in want and never in wealth; and, further, he is in a mean between ignorance and knowledge. The truth of the matter is this: No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. Neither do the ignorant seek after wisdom. For herein is the evil of ignorance, that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels no want”<sup>50</sup>. The dual nature of Hesiod's Eros as one who frees many on the one hand and creates unity on the other, we find in the centre of Plato's ontological-epistemological doctrine – as part *anabasis* (ascent to eternal and unchanging ideas) and *katabasis* (descent back to the realm of people and an attempt to modify the original views and assumptions on which the philosopher based his dialectical examination). A component of Plato's *katabasis* and *anabasis* are methods of unification and separation, that is, *synkrisis* (as the union of plurality into unity) and *diakrisis* (as the separation of plurality from unity). This output to ideas, a part of which Eros is uniting but also separating (in the sense of a dialectical examination of entities and concepts), is found in the dialogue *Symposium*. This is a parable that is generally called “Plato's Ladder of Love” and is part of the speech delivered by the priestess Diotima. She was to teach Plato's Socrates what the essence of erotic art, or true desire is – that is, birth and procreation in the beautiful. True philosophical eroticism consists in connecting and dividing ideas in order to acquire genuine knowledge. Only in this

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 180d.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 202e.

<sup>50</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 203e-204a

way can a philosopher participate in eternity. “These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates, may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere”<sup>51</sup>. The peak of erotic art, according to Plato’s Diotima, is a glimpse of the idea of Beauty, that is, beautiful herself, through an output (anabasis) along the individual rungs of the ladder of love. When an individual learns true beauty, he will be able to go back (*katabasis*) to things he previously considered beautiful or love-worthy and check to see if they really are, or whether they participate in this idea of beauty.

How then does Eros connect the microcosm and the macrocosm in Plato? On the one hand, it is through the figure of the sage Socrates, who symbolises Eros standing between the world of people and gods. On the other hand, it is through *erotiké techné*, which is part of the dialectical method and the output to ideas. Love enables the philosopher to know the essence of all things and to acquire true knowledge. Thanks to true knowledge, the philosopher is able to organise the state well and fairly. At the same time this is also the same knowledge that

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<sup>51</sup> *Symp.* 210a-e.

Demiurgos initially used to organise the whole world.

**Conclusion.** On the one hand, Plato rejects the poetic tradition; on the other hand, myth often represents a kind of *arché anhypoteton* for him, a starting point that is no longer justified. In our article, we focused on an analysis of Hesiod's influence in Plato's philosophy. We were able to find this influence in several areas of Plato's thinking. The dialogue *Timaeus* is entirely in the spirit of Hesiod – the dialogue is labelled a myth, and Timaeus comes from Locri, a place that plays a significant role in Hesiod's life; Plato's concept of *chora* used to be traditionally linked with Hesiod's Chaos, and both ancient authors agree that the world cannot arise *ex nihilo*. Plato's dialogue *Republic*, in turn, presents Hesiod's myth about the four metals (albeit in an altered form) the mentioned *arché anhypoteton*. However, we think that Hesiod's depiction of Eros had the greatest influence on Plato's philosophy. While Hesiod's cosmic, primordial Eros helps to free the pluralities hidden in unity, the earthly human form of Eros in turn helps to unite the pluralities into a unity. Such a perception of Eros as an attractive and at the same time freeing force finds use in Plato's dialectical teaching.

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