

BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

PLATO: JUSTICE IN THE AFTER-LIFE

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Declaration of originality

I, the undersigned Richard Vizváry, hereby declare that I have produced this thesis on my own using sources listed in Bibliography, under the guidance of my thesis advisor Matthew Post, ABD.

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This thesis is a product of much reading, research and reflection over the last few months, but it is also a product of my interests.

Writing a thesis, while juggling with various other issues, requires focus, but also help, patience, time, and indulgence from others. Above all, I want to thank the smart and generous thesis advisor Matthew Post, ABD. He made the work a pleasant experience, for which I am very grateful.

I am dedicating this work to my father who has always been there for me.

Abstract

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Key terms: Socrates, justice, myth, after-life, immortal soul, valuable life, metaphor.

This thesis is an attempt to examine after-life myths in Plato's philosophy. It is about the seriousness of Socrates in recounting these myths, his purpose of recounting them and their function.

In the first part, the thesis introduces the after-life myths in several of Plato's works, since it is the main concept it works with.

Then it moves to the part where it examines Socrates' seriousness in recounting the after-life myths, providing several arguments against them, supported with some works that deal with this issue.

The following part introduces the phenomenon of the immortal soul which is extremely crucial to the topic at hand. It tries to argue that Socrates does not provide sufficient arguments in favor of it, and thus he does not support the idea that the after-life myths he speaks of are real.

Then, the thesis reintroduces the after-life myths in each particular work, arguing how each of them is likely to be interpreted, based on the idea that one does not have to understand them literally.

In conclusion, the thesis argues that Socrates does not give sufficient argument either for the after-life in recounting the after-life myths, or for the

immortal soul and thus it concludes, following several examinations, that Socrates' purpose is rhetorical and he wants to teach people how to live in accordance with justice.

Abstrakt

Meno: Richard Vizváry

Názov práce: Platón: Spravodlivosť v posmrtnom živote

Bratislavská Medzinárodná Škola Liberálnych Štúdií

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Kľúčové pojmy: Sokrates, spravodlivosť, mýtus, posmrtný život, nesmrteľná duša, hodnotný život, metafora.

Táto práca je pokusom o skúmanie mýtov o posmrtnom živote v Platónovej filozofii. Je to o vážnosti Sokrata pri hovorení týchto mýtov o posmrtnom živote, jeho cieľoch pri ich hovorení a ich funkcií.

V prvej časti, práca predstavuje mýty o posmrtnom živote v každej Platónovej práci, pretože to sú hlavné koncepty s ktorými pracuje.

Potom sa presúva do časti, kde skúma vážnosť Sokrata pri hovorení mýtov o posmrtnom živote, ponúkajúc niekoľko argumentov proti, podporených s už urobenými prácami na túto tému.

Ďalšia časť uvádza fenomén nesmrteľnej duše, ktorý je v tejto téme veľmi dôležitý, nakoľko je jeho súčasťou. Pokúša sa hovoriť, že Sokrates nemá dostatočné argumenty aby to potvrdil, a preto ani toto nepodporuje myšlienku, že mýty o posmrtnom živote, ktoré hovorí druhým sú skutočné.

Ďalej, práca znovu predstavuje mýty o posmrtnom živote v každej práci, hovoriac čo každý z nich pravdepodobne znamená, na základe myšlienky, že by sa nemali vykladať doslovne.

Na záver, práca hovorí, že Sokrates nepodáva dostatočný argument ani pre posmrtný život, pri hovorení mýtov o posmrtnom živote, ani pre nesmrteľnosť duše a tak usudzuje, po niekoľkých skúmaniach, že Sokratov zámer je rétorický a chce naučiť ľudí, aby žili podľa spravodlivosti.

Foreword

This thesis is about Plato. But literally, it is about Plato's interpretation of Socrates, since the thesis is based on the after-life myths, which are told by Socrates. Many people consider Socrates' replies to be his opinions about the after-life. Nonetheless, it is difficult to argue about that in this way. Thus the thesis analyzes and examines Socrates' seriousness in telling these after-life myths. Is Socrates really serious about the after-life? If not, what is his purpose in telling these after-life myths? What can these myths teach us about justice?

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Introduction

“You too must be of good hope as regards death, gentlemen of the jury, and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death” (Plato, Apology, 1997, 41d).

This sentence demonstrates what this thesis is about. One could say that it is a summary of everything important, which is included in it. Since the thesis is concerned with explaining metaphors, its very name is also a metaphor. Justice in the after-life is meant as a just way of life expressed in Plato’s after-life myths told by Socrates. Metaphors expressed as after-life myths are an important part of Socrates’ speeches, since it shows the importance of justice and the valuable way of life within Plato’s philosophy. One could even say that it shows us how much Socrates regards the valuable and just way of life.

The main task of this thesis is to analyze Socrates’ arguments about the nature of the after-life. The main question to deal with then is whether Socrates is serious about the after-life. The presupposition is that he is not serious in telling these after-life myths; however, this question takes a large part of this thesis, and it is a subject of examination with several arguments.

The thesis examines the Socrates’ after-life myths as following:

1. The after-life myth in *Gorgias*
2. Socrates’ imaginary dialogue with the laws in *Crito*
3. The after-life myth in *Phaedo*
4. The after-life myth in *The Republic Book X*
5. The after-life myth concerning the immortality of the soul in *Phaedrus*

After the analysis of these myths, it moves to the part where arguments for the question about Socrates’ seriousness in telling the after-life myths are introduced. Several arguments are introduced here. First of all, there is a

logical argument that Socrates cannot have knowledge about the after-life and thus he cannot be serious in this issue.

Since the thesis is based on close readings of the after-life myths, works already in existence that deal with the question of Socrates' seriousness will be used as secondary sources. Several works have been done concerning this question and one can divide them into two categories. The first encompasses works that argue in favor of Socrates' seriousness, while the other includes works that oppose this notion.

The first category includes argument of Alice Van Harten, that ever since Socrates was sentenced to death he has been serious about the after-life (Harten, 2011). This category also includes the argument of Raymond Moody, who in his book *Life After Life [Život po Živote]*, tries to support the thesis statement of his book - that there is an after-life - and uses these after-life myths in order to support the thesis (Moody, 2010). In the second category, which is against Socrates' seriousness in the issue of the after-life myths, there are arguments of, for example, Daniel W. ISSLER, who advocates for hidden ethical arguments in these myths rather than take them seriously (ISSLER, 2009, p.2). Furthermore, the argument of Keping Wang about the myth in *The Republic Book X*, concerning the argument that these myths should serve as a proposal for the proper way of life, is introduced as well (Wang, 2009). Last, but not least, the argument of Anthony Hooper, that these myths should educate either the ignorant or philosophers, has its place (Hooper, 2010). In this part of the thesis, there is sufficient argument that Socrates is not serious about the after-life myths, since the part where Socrates criticizes himself for being a poet is included too.

Then another question takes its place, and it is what purpose do these myths serve then? The answer is partially found already in the secondary sources introduced above, but also in a close reading of Plato's works. In *The Republic Book X*, *Gorgias* and *Apology*, several hints are made by Socrates,

which tell that these myths serve as metaphors for an education about a good and valuable life.

But there is another important issue within this topic, which is the immortality of the soul. Socrates argues in *Phaedrus*, *The Republic Book X* and *Timaeus*, that the soul is immortal, but in a logical conclusion, he is not serious even about this issue, since in *Timaeus* he argues something contradictory to other works, and he explains there what the usage and what the meanings of the word “soul” are.

There is one issue which requires to be explained in more detail. The thesis often argues about a good life, a valuable life, a just life, a proper life, etc. All these expressions mean the same, according to Socrates’ framework of it. It basically means a life which ought to be lived in accordance with justice. The evidence for this can be found in *Crito*, where Socrates literally says that: “[T]he good life, the beautiful life, and the just life are the same” (Plato, *Crito*, 1997, 48b-48c). This work also provides evidence as to how much regard Socrates gives to justice. This, at the same time, implies that justice, in this context, is a principle according to which everybody should manage their life.

This thesis uses the expression “myth” very often. The meaning of this expression is basically what everybody understands “myth” to be. It actually describes something that happened a long time ago; it can also mean something that has not been proven, but what the majority of people believe to be true. It might also be something that people consider plausible.

One might ask what the after-life actually means. In the context of this thesis, the after-life means a period of time after the death of one’s body. In other words, it is a place where “people” go after they are done living the earthly life. This expression is closely connected to another, that of the “immortal soul”, which is also very dominant throughout this thesis paper. Basically, this expression means literally what it says. It means that the soul is immortal.

Another frequently mentioned word is also “metaphor”. By metaphor, the thesis, in fact, argues about some deeper sense which is included at this time (within the thesis) in Socrates’ after-life myths.

Regardless of other issues, one might ask why Socrates and not Plato. Socrates was a philosopher whom we consider to have been Plato’s teacher. Plato was a philosopher too. The vast majority of Plato’s works are dialogues. The main character of the dialogues is Socrates, and that is why the thesis argues that the after-life myths are Socrates’ and not Plato’s, since it supposes that Plato in his dialogues interprets some Socrates’ speeches and conversations.

Myths

Many Platonic dialogues conclude with some of Socrates' many accounts about the nature and character of the after-life. In most cases, he argues the same. Almost in each case, this myth is an end to a discussion about justice, or a proper way of life, since this is concerned with everybody's destiny in the after-life, because only one's acts would be important there.

Gorgias

In this Platonic work, there is a dialogue between Calicles and Socrates. In the very end, Socrates tells a myth which is concerned with the nature and character of the after-life. In the beginning of the myth, Socrates argues about the nature of the judges who should judge people after death and, according to that particular judgment, send them to suffer for the unjust life they would have lived, or to live in happiness on some islands for the just life they would have lived, far from those who would have been unjust. He argues that these judgments have to be done after death because if they were to be carried out before death, people might act as though if they had been the best in the world and they might also appear so. This means that in such a case the judgments would be completely inobjective and would not have a character like to real judgments. These judgments would be inobjective because, as Socrates argues, people would cheat on the judges and play a role where they would be seen as the most just of persons. But if these judgments were to be done in accordance with the characters of the soul, which the judges could see, Socrates argues that nothing like that would happen. Clothes and behavior before the eyes of the judges might confuse them, lead them to make a wrong judgment call. But the character of the soul will show the real character of each particular person. Then Socrates moves to the description of the soul after death. He says that, just like the body, also the soul retains the same character after death. He gives here examples of a fat body, that it remains fat also after death, and then he says that also the souls of the unjust

and bad remain the same after death and that these judges can see nothing more than the character of the soul. Then he argues that there are three kinds of souls in this after-life tribunal. First, the souls are divided into just or good and unjust or bad. Then the bad souls are divided yet into curable and incurable. As Socrates says, the curable souls suffer for a while and when they are cured they are sent to the good souls, but the incurable souls remain suffering to serve as examples to scare others from being unjust and bad (Plato, Gorgias, 1997, 523a-527e).

Crito

In this dialogue, Socrates tries to persuade Crito that the laws are higher than one's interests. Socrates, in the very end, starts to talk like the laws and he tries to advocate that he cannot violate the laws, even if they are unjust because, as he says, the laws will reply that only according to them his father married his mother and they raised him into who he is today and that one cannot pay back injustice to laws, just as one cannot pay back injustice to his parents. "We have given you birth, nurtured you, educated you, we have given you and all other citizens a share of all the good things we could" (Plato, Crito, 1997, 51d). He further says that everyone has to obey the laws and to follow their commands, even if it were to harm him. The further argument is that these laws gave him freedom to leave the city when he arrived at the voting age. He also tries to advocate that, for the period of his lifetime, he has tried to persuade people that justice is the highest and the only one value, and that justice in this life will also be valid in the after-life and that is why he will now sound like a fool who brakes his promises and who violates the principles which he has been telling throughout his lifetime to be the most valuable and almost the only one valuable (Plato, Crito, 1997, 50a-54d).

Phaedo

In this dialogue, Socrates tries to persuade his colleagues about the nature of the after-life and about the value of justice in this life. It is in the time, when Socrates is to drink the poison and die. In the first part of the myth, Socrates describes the nature of the Earth. Then he moves the argument into the tribunal of the souls of the dead people. He says that everyone is to go through this tribunal, both the most just person, and the most unjust one. Then he describes the destinies of the respective souls. First, he describes the destiny of those who lived an averaged life: "Those who have lived an average life make their way to the Acheron and embark upon such vessels as there are for them and proceed to the lake. There they dwell and are purified by penalties for any wrongdoing they may have committed; they are also suitably rewarded for their good deeds as each deserves" (Plato, *Phaedo*, 1997, 113d-113e). Then he says that there are incurable souls which have to suffer. But there are also souls which had committed serious injustice and crimes, but who suffered for a lifetime for this wrongdoing. Socrates argues that these will have the opportunity to please those whom they harmed to forgive them. If they are successful in the pleasing, they will no longer suffer. And finally, Socrates says that there are souls who lived a pious life and these are freed from these horrible places and are to live in happiness, on the true Earth as he describes it. He also argues that the most valuable conditions are made for philosophers in the after-life, but he says that there is no time and there are no words to describe such a beautiful place (Plato, *Phaedo*, 1997, 110b-115a).

The Republic Book X

In this myth, Socrates tries to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus about the character of justice and he tells a myth concerning the after-life. It is a myth of the soldier, Er, who experienced the after-life. Er had died in war, and when he was to be buried he came back to life. He experienced the tribunal of the

souls, which Socrates describes in other myths, and the judges told him that he is only an audience and that he should tell people what the after-life is about. These judges ought to sentence just and good souls to take benefits from their proper lives and the unjust and bad ones to suffer. He saw the souls of dead people talking to each other. Further, the bad souls are to be punished ten times for each bad deed they committed, and the good ones are to be rewarded in the same measure for their good deeds. Then the myth is concerned with the good souls. These, after some period in this holy place, are to choose their next life. As Socrates interprets Er, the destiny of a particular life is predetermined and it is only up to the soul which life it will choose. However, the souls cannot see the consequences of choosing a particular life, but he argues that if this choice is made by reason, a good and just life can be chosen. After having done this choice, the souls were brought to the river Carelessness, to drink certain measure of water and to forget everything and then when they were going to sleep around the midnight, there came a thunder and an earthquake, and each soul was brought into the life it has chosen. Er was brought back to his previous life (Plato, Book X, 1968, 614b-621d).

Phaedrus

In this dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, Socrates tells a myth and argues about the immortality of the soul and about the value of justice. He argues that the soul is immortal because the soul is a beginning. He says that if something has a beginning it cannot have either a further beginning or an end, because if it did, it would not be a beginning. According to this myth, the soul is immortal also because a beginning moves by itself and not by something other and because a beginning is also the source of movement for other things. Then he tells the myth about the nature of the souls, and about the journey to the Gods. He says, that only the just and good souls will find their way to the Gods because the unjust and bad ones would not be able to

find such a way because they would be held down by the bad part of them, which is injustice and badness. He also argues about the nature of the after-life, and the destiny of a bad and a good soul, which is as in other myths, that bad souls are to suffer the injustice they committed and the good ones should have benefits from the justice which they lived in accordance with. In the very end, Socrates tells something similar to the myth in *The Republic Book X*. It is that a soul chooses its next life (Plato, Phaedrus, 1997, 243c-250c).

In summary, Socrates argues about the after-life as something that concerns this life. He argues that the deeds committed in this life will be seen by the judges and then these deeds will be either rewarded or punished in the after-life. His account about the after-life is based on the argument that the soul is immortal and that it will take both its justities and injustices to its after-life journey. However, he distinguishes the after-life journey, which is prepared for philosophers, just persons, and unjust persons who committed some ordinary injustices, and unjust persons who committed some serious injustices, for example a murder. The best after-life conditions, according to his account of the after-life are prepared for the philosophers, but good conditions and benefits are prepared also for just persons. The unjust persons who did not commit serious injustices can be cured, according to his account, and after finishing this process of cure, they will be sent to live in benefits with the just ones. But those who committed some serious injustice will suffer for an endless period of time.

Is Socrates Really Serious about the After-Life?

In order to answer this question, one has to read Socrates' speeches very carefully and pay attention to each word which he uses, especially in such parts where he tells some myth either about the immortal soul or about the after-life and its implications for justice.

Socrates, but also anyone else, might believe and might be persuaded about the existence of the after-life, but there is no clear evidence for the after-life either in his speeches, or anywhere else. It is simply a fact that no one can prove the existence of it, since no one can bring forth a sufficient argument for its existence. But on the other hand, no one can prove that it does not exist. For the sake of argument, it will be useful to work only with the first part of this argument which is that no one can prove the existence of the after-life, and what is more, a good starting point will be that such a wise person like Socrates was could not have been persuaded about its existence, since there is no rational evidence.

However, there are two major arguments in this issue. As it might be obvious, these are:

1. Socrates is serious about the after-life

And

2. Socrates is not serious about the after-life.

The follower of the first argument is for example Mrs. Alice van Harten. In her article *Socrates on life and death (Plato, Apology 40C5-41C7)*, she tries to give an argument that Socrates started to think about the nature of the after-life during the time he was imprisoned, while he was waiting to meet his fate (Harten, 2011).

One may think of this as an implication of the argument that since Socrates is himself involved in this issue, he is serious in his speeches, where he addresses some accounts about the after-life. It sounds logical that if one is

himself involved in some issue, he would think of it much more deeply, and he would try to give as good an account as he could in this issue. But the after-life is an issue where all people are involved and Socrates was involved in it even before he was imprisoned and sentenced to die, either. In other words, death is something which awaits all people, and that is why it is not proper to give an argument that Socrates started to think about it when he was imprisoned. But one may argue against this notion also with the fact that Socrates had dealt with the after-life even before he was imprisoned, since he had given an account and an after-life myth in the dialogue *Gorgias*, which is considered to be an early Platonic dialogue. However, as it has been said, one cannot prove or disprove this notion, but it does not seem very likely to be true, according to the facts and arguments that were used here.

Another opinion which supports the argument that Socrates is serious about the after-life is presented in the book of Raymond A. Moody *Life After Life [Život po Živote]*. Moody tries to demonstrate the truth and the seriousness of the after-life myths in Plato's dialogues. Dialogues like *Gorgias*, *Phaedo* and *The Republic Book X* are mentioned here, and they are explained as literally as they are written, in order to support the existence of the after-life. However, Moody, in the end of his chapter on Plato, says that Plato does not necessarily think of the after-life exactly like he describes it in his dialogues and after-life myths, but that he still follows the opinion that there is an after-life (Moody, 2010).

Moody seems to take these after-life myths literally, but one does not have to be surprised, since the purpose of his book is to prove the existence of an after-life. But this interpretation of Plato's - and thus also Socrates' - account of the after-life might very well seem like a great misinterpretation of what both Plato and Socrates had in mind and what was their purpose in telling these after-life myths. No one can prove the existence of the after-life, and that is why one has to look for something different in it, rather than literally explain what is there or believe in it, since it seems to be a hidden teaching for a

better life and, as it will be shown later, Socrates himself indirectly confesses to it. But, since there is also the tail side of the coin, one has to consider the fact that ,just like in the previous case, this counterargument does not disprove Moody's opinion because, as it was mentioned above, no one can either prove or disprove the existence of the after-life.

After having introduced and made some comments on the argument that Socrates is serious about the after-life, one should not forget that there is another opinion which argues that Socrates is not serious about the after-life, and that there is something more in it, since the after-life myths are only metaphors.

One of these arguments is presented by Daniel W. Issler in his work *The Role of Afterlife Myths in Plato's Moral Argument*. The work is aimed at the myths in *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and *The Republic Book X*. The purpose of his work is to demonstrate that the after-life myths in Plato's philosophy have a purpose of some moral education. Thus he admits that Socrates is not serious in telling these myths, but that he wants to motivate, or in some cases, scare people into living a virtuous life (Issler, 2009, p.2).

This opinion seems to be the logical conclusion of a proper study of Plato's philosophy. One ought always to keep in mind that Socrates cannot give a sufficient argument for the existence of the after-life, and that is why such a conclusion seems to be a necessary one. Since within the framework of Socrates' speeches, he himself gives a lot of instruction to arrive at this conclusion, but since he never says that literally, one can argue in both of presented ways.

Another opinion like that is presented in Keping Wang's theory that the Plato's myths ought to serve as an education of the human soul. In this theory, the after-life myth in *The Republic Book X*, is illustrated as an example of Plato's proposal for the proper way of one's behavior and thus for the proper way of living a life (Wang, 2009).

Then there is similar argument presented by Anthony Hooper, who has the idea that the myths are education not only for the ignorant but for the philosophers as well (Hooper, 2010).

These kinds of arguments, which have in common the opinion that Socrates is not serious about the after-life when he is telling the myths, have in common yet another element. All of them consider these myths as an education either of the soul, or of human conduct. This common element is also very important for this analysis, since it is one of its presuppositions, which are attempted to be verified here.

There are passages in Plato's philosophy where Socrates himself tells about his seriousness about the after-life either directly or indirectly.

Socrates mentions something about his seriousness concerning the after-life in *Apology*. He says about death that it is: "either the dead are nothing and have no perception of anything, or it is, as we are told, a change and a relocating for the soul from here to another place" (Plato, *Apology*, 1997, 40d). He allows here that what he is talking to his friends about the nature of the after-life does not necessarily have to be true. If it was, why would he, at the end of his life, confuse his friends with the argument that death is one of two? His statement makes sense only in the context which supports the argument that Socrates is not serious about the after-life. The context is that he simply cannot give a sufficient argument for the after-life, since no one can know the nature of the after-life, nor can they prove its existence. In other words, he allows here that he is not able to give a proper and sufficient argument for the after-life.

One can consider this to be a direct confession of Socrates about his account of the after-life, but there are also indirect ones. One of them is introduced in the very end of *The Republic Book X*, when he says the last words in his dialogue with Glaucon, after telling the after-life myth.

He literally says: “if we were persuaded by it, and we shall make a good crossing of the river of Lethe and not defile our soul. But if we are persuaded by me . . .” (Plato, Book X, 1968, 621c-621d).

What does he mean by the words “but if”? Does this not mean that his teaching is different from the teaching in the after-life myth he has told? If he had been serious about this myth, why would he have made this statement in the very end, after having told it? This is just another argument which will support the followers of the opinion that Socrates is not serious and does not give a proper and sufficient argument for the after-life. That is why one has to pay great attention and to be very careful while reading these dialogues and Socrates’ speeches and after-life myths. This example is the best example of how one single word can change the meaning of the context, because if there was not this word, the meaning and consequences of his speech would have been totally different, as they seem to be now, when the text is read carefully enough.

Even in *Gorgias* he shows and allows that these after-life myths do not have to be necessarily true. At one point, after having finished the after-life myth, he tells something that sounds like he himself admits that this myth does not have to necessarily be a true one. “Maybe you think this account is told as an old wives’ tale, and you feel contempt for it. And it certainly wouldn’t be a surprising thing to feel contempt for it if we could look for and somehow find one better and truer than it” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 1997, 527a).

Here again, Socrates shows that this account of the after-life is not as strong as it seems. Here he basically admits that there might be another option, which means that he himself weakens the seriousness of the myth. Why would it not be surprising to feel contempt for it? Probably because there is not enough evidence for taking it for granted, and even such a smart person like Socrates was could not give this evidence.

There is a passage in *The Republic Book X*, where Socrates gives some criteria as to how to judge the seriousness of poetry. He says that there are three approaches in creating something. These are:

1. The one who invites the idea of something
2. The one who creates a real particular idea of something
3. Those who imitate the ideas, who do not create it, but only abstractedly create some imitation of it without having knowledge about the nature of it.

In other words, he says that these are:

1. Gods
2. Craftsmen
3. Painters, poets, etc.

He further argues that poets do not have sufficient knowledge of things, and thus they cannot argue and teach us anything about the nature of things, but they only imitate the Gods or the craftsmen, since they are in the third place in creating something (Plato, Book X, 1968, 596a-598d).

This argument that Socrates makes here seems to be a very logical one. But, it also seems that he gives here criteria as to how to judge the seriousness of someone who is telling a myth, does not it? Is not Socrates the one who puts himself into the role of a poet when he is telling some after-life myth? Nevertheless, this will require a little more analysis. Can one argue that Socrates is a creator of the very idea of the after-life, in the sense which he says that the Gods are? Definitely not. Can one say that Socrates is a creator of the idea of the after-life, in the sense which he says that the craftsmen are? Definitely not. Can one say that Socrates is an imitator of the knowledge of the after-life when he is speaking about it? This seems to be very possible, and what is more, it seems to be the most likely possibility of these three. This means then, that Socrates is actually criticizing himself, when he is telling some after-life myth, since he himself says that such a person is only an imitator of those who have real knowledge about it. A logical conclusion that Socrates is not serious, but that he is a “poet” when he argues about the after-life must take its place here.

However, here is a stage where a conclusion that the after-life myths of Socrates are metaphors takes its place. But, here takes place the question, metaphors for what? Maybe the better question would be: Why metaphors? Because it is philosophy and in philosophy everything has its special meaning and if these myths are not meant to be explained literally, one has to consider them as metaphors for something else. It seems that the best possible explanation for this would be that the after-life myths are metaphors for justice. There are arguments as to how one might arrive to this conclusion and these arguments can be found easily, since Socrates himself gives some hints what these metaphors should represent.

One of these hints can be found in *Gorgias*. At the very end of this dialogue, Socrates tells Callicles, who is his partner in the dialogue, that it is better to live a just life. He says that he himself believes in this and that he lives and will live according to this principle, since it is more beneficial than any other way of life and than he tries to address this way of life to all human beings (Plato, *Gorgias*, 1997, 526d-527e).

Since he says this after he has told the after-life myth, one can easily connect these two elements and thus come to the conclusion that the after-life myth was told in order to support Socrates' idea about the just and valuable way of life. The chronology of his arguments makes great sense now, since he first tells the after-life myth, which has implications on justice, and then he makes the conclusion that a just life is the most valuable one and he tries to spread this idea among others.

Another similar hint can be found in his speech in the *Apology*. When he is talking to the people who convicted him, he says that they do not live in a right way, since they want to discredit everyone who tries to educate them about how to live properly, and he further argues that the only valuable way here is to live as good as possible (Plato, *Apology*, 1997, 39c-39e).

Here he makes an indirect hint that he was the one who wanted to educate people about how to live a life as good as possible and he was discredited. But one might see there his own confession; that he wanted to educate people about how to live a good life, and that is why it can be considered also as an explanation of what the metaphors of the after-life myths ought to explain about the life.

On the other hand, the argument that Socrates actually is serious about the nature and character of the after-life might find its followers, since Socrates seems to be serious about the after-life in the dialogue *Phaedo*, where Socrates' literally last minutes are described. He argues there according to the content of the after-life myths he told and what is more, he explains them literally (Plato, *Phaedo*, 1997, 115d-115e). This might cause a little confusion, since it really sounds convincing when someone, only a few minutes before his death, argues about the after-life. But one may very well argue against it that since there is evidence, and most of it was shown here, that there is only a little possibility that Socrates was serious even in this situation. The argument will turn in the direction that it is a lot more possible that he is playing a game, and that he is really serious about his idea of educating people about how to live a better and more valuable life, just because of the presented arguments.

Immortality of the Soul

There is another way of examining Socrates' seriousness about the after-life. It is through his arguments about the immortality of the soul, which is one of the most important, if not the most important, aspects in the argument about the existence of the after-life.

Socrates gives several accounts and arguments concerned with the immortality of the soul.

The first one is in *Phaedrus*. Before he starts telling a myth, concerning both the immortality of the soul and the after-life vision, he argues that the soul is immortal. He supports his argument with a logical conclusion - that the soul moves itself. As he says the soul is not moved by something else, and what is not moved by something else, but by itself, is constantly moving and it is immortal. It is because, as he further argues, if something is moving itself, it cannot be stopped, since it has no other source of movement but itself. Then he moves the argument into the direction that the soul is a beginning. He argues there that everything has a beginning and what does not have one, is a beginning itself. And what is a beginning itself cannot be born from something else, nor it can be destroyed, since it can never start again from something else. He argues that this is the reason why a self-mover is a source of motion (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 1997, 245c-246a).

As it has been said, this seems to be a logical argument, since something that is moving itself is a source of movement both for itself and for other things, and such a source of movement is also a beginning, since it does not start from something else, but from itself and it cannot be destroyed, since when something is born from something else and it can be destroyed, one cannot say about it that it is a beginning, nor that it is immortal.

Before he starts to tell the mentioned after-life myth in *The Republic Book X*, Socrates produces another argument. He argues that the soul is immortal, since it is not destroyed by its own vices and evils, nor is it destroyed by the vices and evils of something else. He says that the human body can die

because of some illnesses, but it never dies because of eating a meal which is somehow corrupted. This implies that a thing is not destroyed by something else's vices and evils, but only by its own vices and evils. As he further argues, the vices and evils of the soul are injustice, licentiousness, cowardice and lack of learning. But, as he goes on, none of these can destroy the soul. And that is how he came to the conclusion that the soul is immortal because it dies neither because of the vices and evil of its own nor because of the evils and vices of something else. In order to support this argument, he tells yet it cannot happen that there will be a lesser amount of the souls, since none of them can be destroyed, nor can happen its opposite, which is that there will be a greater amount of the souls, since no immortal thing can become more numerous (Plato, Book X, 1968, 608d-611a).

It seems clear that also this argument for the immortality of the soul is a logical one, but in order to understand better the last part of the argument, which is concerned with the amount of the souls, it can be viewed from the point of view of the argument in *Phaedrus*. It means that the amount of the souls is unchangeable, since a soul is itself a beginning and thus it cannot be born from something, nor it can be destroyed, and thus the amount of the souls is unchangeable.

However, there is different kind of argument in Plato's work *Timaeus*. First of all, it is different because of the main character which introduces the arguments is Timaeus, while Socrates is only listening. Nevertheless, one could say that Socrates agrees with this speech, either because he does not show any objection during Timaeus' speech, or because he praises Timaeus in the very beginning of this work for having great intellectual endeavours (Plato, *Timaeus*, 2008, 20a-20b).

The argument is different from those which are introduced above, since Timaeus tells something contradictory to Socrates. At one point, he implies that the soul actually has a beginning, when he says that the soul is created (Plato, *Timaeus*, 2008, 36e-37a). He says there that the structure of the souls

was made by some creator. But how can a soul be created when Socrates' main argument, which is mentioned above as well, is that the soul is immortal since it is not created, nor it can be destroyed, and the amount of the souls is unchangeable, since a soul is neither created nor destroyed? And Socrates does not intervene here, or anywhere later on, to correct Timaeus saying something contradictory about the soul. Under these circumstances the soul is mortal and the amount of the souls is changeable, which means that Socrates' conclusions and arguments for the immortality of the soul are fully destroyed. This would simply imply that Socrates is not serious even about the immortality of the soul, and that he uses some rational explanations to persuade people that there is such thing as an after-life because in the other case his myths would be useless in the probably educational purpose they ought to have.

According to the Greek understanding of the word "soul", there comes another conclusion why Socrates is not serious even about the immortality of the soul. As it is introduced in *Timaeus*, the planets or the universe have a soul (Plato, *Timaeus*, 2008, 41d-41e), animals have souls (Plato, *Timaeus*, 2008, 42c-42d) and human beings have souls as well, since Timaeus argues that it is possible that a soul becomes a woman instead of a man (Plato, *Timaeus*, 2008, 42c).

It is obvious that Socrates uses the term "soul" in all its meanings, since ,at one point in *Phaedrus*, he says that: "Every soul is immortal" (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 1997, 245c-245d), whereby the term "every soul" he does not mean only the soul of a human being, but all the other souls, too. If not, he would say there literally that it is meant only for the souls of human beings.

But, then again, his argument for the immortality of the soul would not give some deep sense, since there comes up the question: "Would planets and the universe go to the after-life, too?". What would planets do there? Does he want to persuade the souls of planets and the universe to live better lives because it is beneficial? One might agree that the way of life which Socrates

suggests is valuable and worth to live for human beings, but what about planets and the universe? Should they be judged according to how justly they have lived? What would be the proof of such a judgment? It does not seem to be a logical conclusion from Socrates' premises, and thus one might say that probably this is not the right conclusion for this kind of argument. But, if he wants to apply this only for human souls, why does he argue about all kinds of souls, instead of arguing only about the human ones?

One solution, however, might be that Socrates, by arguing about the immortality of the soul, wants to support his myths concerning the after-life, in order to persuade people to live the proper life. But, just as in the issue of his seriousness in telling these myths, here comes up a question, how can he prove that the soul is immortal? Can he simply know this? The most probable answer is no, since he even contradicts himself in the mentioned passages in *Timaeus*.

Now, one can suppose that Socrates does not adduce an argument for the immortality of the soul. But he does it with full regard to it which means that he does not want to argue that the soul is immortal. According to the afore mentioned evidence, it seems clear that he wants wise people to come to this conclusion, since he gives so many contradictions which, if read carefully, cannot be overseen. Another issue is that even if it was true that the soul is immortal, how would that support his account of the after-life? Of course, if there would be clear evidence that the soul is immortal, a conclusion that there has to be something after the death of the body takes its place. But it does not have to be necessarily what Socrates is saying in the after-life myths. In other words, there are two possibilities. One is, according to Socrates' arguments, that the soul is not immortal and thus one cannot argue about some place where the souls ought to go after the body is dead(the after-life). The other one is that the soul might be immortal, but nevertheless, it does not prove that souls ought to go to such a place. Therefore, both of these possibilities have one conclusion, which is that Socrates cannot support

his account of the after-life with logical arguments either for the after-life or for the immortality of the soul. According to the fact that Socrates was a very smart and intelligent person, one can suppose that he knows what he is talking about, and that he has some other purpose in arguing for the immortality of the soul and for the after-life, which is probably, as it was mentioned above, to teach people something about justice, and to give them hints how to live a good life.

At this point, one can say that there is enough evidence that Socrates is not serious even in his argumentation concerning the immortality of the soul. This will imply that he cannot be serious even about his myths concerning the after-life, since it is not clear whether the soul is mortal or immortal. But, just as one cannot argue that the soul is immortal, since one cannot have knowledge about that, at the same time he cannot argue the opposite.

Myths - Metaphors

Now it has been proven that Socrates is not serious in telling these myths, but that there is a hidden teaching in it, each myth and its contents will look a little bit differently. One has to consider that Socrates wants to teach people how to live a good, just and virtuous life and he uses these after-life myths as supporting arguments for his teaching.

Gorgias

As it was mentioned earlier, Socrates, in the very end of this dialogue, tells a myth. This myth is concerned with the character of the judges and the destiny of each particular soul. Now, it can be said that the part where he describes the character of the judges is a hidden teaching about how to live a good and virtuous life. This myth is full of scary situations in the after-life which have to scare, in this case, Callicles, and show him the way how to avoid these scary situations after he is dead. Socrates wants to scare him that the judges he describes will see each justice and each injustice he commits during his life, and according to these just and unjust acts, they will sentence him either to take his rewards for a just life and to live in happiness, or to suffer for the injustices he committed. It is clear now that this is the way Socrates wants to persuade Callicles to live a just life, but because of the evidence which was shown earlier, the purpose of this after-life myth is only this, since Socrates cannot be serious about the character and nature of the after-life. However, if we consider this myth to be a metaphor, it is clear what Socrates wants imply when he tells about the destiny of a just soul and the same of an unjust one. But what does he want to imply with the character of the judges? It is probably nothing more than a metaphor for the issue that these judges can see every act of a person and that is the thing which influences their judgment. In other words, it is a metaphor for what is important in life because, as he says there, these judges do not care about the look and the wealth and these transient things, but they care about the

things which last forever and which will be remembered, and these are the acts of a person. Thus it can be said that he wants to imply and teach Callicles not to care about these transient things, but to care about how he will act and to care more about justice than about anything else.

Crito

Although there is not a myth concerning the after-life in this dialogue, it is very important in the issue of Socrates' teaching about a just, good, valuable and virtuous life. As it was said, Socrates, in the very end, tries to speak like the laws and thus to persuade Crito about the nature of justice. One can see here how much attention Socrates gives to justice and how he behaves when he is arrested and waits for death. This is a sign of Socrates' seriousness about the value of justice. He advocates there that he cannot violate the laws, since he shared all the benefits they had provided for him, and that now he has to share also the bad side of them. It is not hard to consider this Socrates' speech where he imitates the laws as a teaching about justice, since he clearly shows what justice means to him and the example is he himself. He does not want to violate the laws, since for his life time he tried to teach people about the nature of justice, and now, when he is to choose whether to commit an injustice to the laws, or to stay just and in the harmony with the laws, he chooses to stay just and in the harmony with the laws; to stay on his principles about justice and very likely also to persuade others about the seriousness of his teachings about the character of justice.

Phaedo

This myth, in comparison with Socrates' speech in *Crito*, is fully concerned with the after-life. This might sound a bit confusing because, as it was mentioned, it is told only a while before Socrates dies. But one should

consider the fact that Socrates, as it was proved above, is not serious about the nature and character of the after-life as he describes it, but, on the other hand, he is serious about the nature and character of justice. Just as in *Gorgias*, he talks about the destiny of the unjust souls and also about the destiny of the just ones. It is also not very difficult then, after having considered how serious he might have been while telling this myth, to find there the teaching about how to live a just and virtuous life. Even in his last minutes he tries to advocate that justice is the most beneficial and virtuous value. Thus one can be more persuaded by the teaching of Socrates, and by the values he believed in, since justice seems to be the highest value for him, and he teaches his colleagues to live in accordance with it even in his last few minutes. Why else would he do that, after having proven that the stories about the nature and character of the after-life are just metaphors, since he cannot be serious while telling it?

The Republic Book X

This myth is told in the very end of the discussion about justice and this myth concerns the after-life, too. Socrates gives great regard to justice here, since like in other myths, he also tells about the destiny of the good and bad souls. But here comes up a very big issue. How can one talk about justice and just deeds, if, according to this myth, the souls choose their next life which is fully predetermined? It is very difficult to give sense to Socrates' teaching about how to live a just and virtuous life when one's decisions are already predetermined. How, then, can a person change and take his advices serious, if he or she is already predetermined to live either a just, or an unjust life? There is something more to it, and this is also a metaphor which Socrates uses to teach people how to live better and more just lives, and he also warns them to use reason in their everyday life. One does not have to consider this myth a myth concerning the after-life but in fact a metaphor for this life. Socrates wants to say that if one chooses to live a certain kind of life, and he

or she chooses to be a certain kind of person, he or she cannot avoid certain bad consequences, and that is why one has to be very careful and to use reason, when he chooses to live his life in a certain way, not to overlook the possible pros or cons of that particular way of life. He also implies here that a completely just life is the best way how to live a life because justice has no cons, but instead it has a lot of pros and it helps avoid the worst possible consequences in choosing a way of life, which is to be a completely bad and corrupted person.

Phaedrus

This myth is also concerned with a hidden teaching about justice, if one considers that Socrates is not serious about the after-life, since his arguments can neither prove it, nor are sufficient to persuade one about its existence. As it was mentioned earlier, Socrates argues about the immortality of the soul and about its nature, and he uses this after-life myth to support his arguments about justice. He, just as in other myths, speaks also about the destiny of the good and bad souls. He wants to teach about a just and proper way of life, while scaring Phaedrus that if he is not just, he will never attain to the pure good and the level where the Gods are. In the very end, he uses the same metaphor like in *The Republic Book X* - which is that souls choose their next life - which one has to consider a metaphor for this life and the process of choosing to be a particular kind of person and to live a particular kind of life. Thus one can say that Socrates uses metaphors and the after-life myth which has to either scare or persuade people to live better lives and to give them some know-how as to how a virtuous and valuable life is to be lived.

In summary, one can see that in each of the after-life myths Socrates gives some hint as to how to live a valuable life. He implies a hidden teaching about this way of life. In each of these myths, he connects this way of life with

justice, which then implies a necessary conclusion that justice is an important element in the way of a valuable life. In these myths, he introduces justice as an unshakeable and unchangeable principle; one might argue even as the highest principle of life. In some of these myths, as it is described above, he even talks about real-life situations where one has to choose to be a particular kind of person, and he also gives hints as to how this choice is to be made in order for a person to make it well. In some other myths he argues that all deeds are concerned in judging what kind of life a person lives and that none of these are overlooked from the point of view of justice, since each of them should be either rewarded or punished.

Conclusion

It seems that the aim of this analysis, which was to prove that Socrates is not serious in telling the after-life myths, but rather he wants to teach people something about justice and the good way of life, has already been met. Several arguments, which appear quite satisfactory, were introduced and step by step they led to the aim being met. But several further things ought to be mentioned, either for the broad scope of the thesis, or for the sake of a further examination and analysis of this issue.

One of these things is Socrates' division and differentiation between knowledge, opinion and ignorance. He divides these three stages of truth, but which of them is the most suitable to Socrates' with respect to his after-life stories? He argues that knowledge is dependent on what is and ignorance on what is not, but then he says that opinion is dependent on something that is and that is not, since it is in between knowledge and ignorance. It is clear that Socrates has only an opinion on the issue of the after-life, since it is not clear whether it is, or whether it is not and thus it is something in between. Socrates himself characterizes such things as opinions (Plato, Book V, 1968, 477a-480a).

This is another possibility of proving that Socrates does not have knowledge of the after-life. This is proven in previous chapters, since it is the main issue of the thesis. On the other hand, Socrates is not ignorant about this issue either. How could he be ignorant, if he shows some logical arguments, like the one which is mentioned above concerning the possibilities of what death can be in the *Apology*? Thus the necessary conclusion is that Socrates has only an opinion about this issue, since he does not have knowledge and still he is not ignorant of it.

The next issue is whether Socrates is not telling something what he calls a noble lie. Noble lie, as he describes it, is some lie which is told with the best aims, and which should serve the best purpose and the best consequences. It

is a lie which is noble because of the good consequences it should bring forth (Plato, Book III, 1968, 414b-415c).

If the conclusion of the thesis is correct, what else is Socrates doing if not telling a noble lie? He tells something which he himself is not sure is true, as true stories in order to persuade people to live better and more valuable lives. In other words, he lies to people in order to provide them something good. Since the consequences and the purpose of his lies are good, one cannot argue something other than that they are noble lies.

The last of my suggestions for further examination, which is worth to be mentioned here as well, is that when Socrates tells some after-life myth, he never tells it as his own story, but he always interprets someone else. When he introduces the after-life myth in *Gorgias*, he starts with the words: "As Homer tells it. . ." (Plato, *Gorgias*, 1997, 523a). In *Phaedrus*, he introduces a speech of Stesichorus, by which he introduces the myth (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 1997, 244a). In *The Republic Book X*, he tells an after-life myth which is based on what a soldier Er said about the nature of it (Plato, Book X, 1968, 614b).

This is also evidence that Socrates is not serious in telling the after-life myths, because he does not tell his own stories, but they are always stories based on what someone else said. It also proves that Socrates does not have knowledge about the after-life because if he did, he would tell his own stories and not someone else's, and thus he can have only some opinion on this issue, but based on this one cannot argue that Socrates has knowledge about the after-life. But nevertheless, all of these suggestions for further examination would require a deeper analysis.

However, as it has been mentioned several times, this is an issue which no one can either prove or disprove. Thus one can suppose that, according to these findings, Socrates cannot have knowledge about the after-life, but still he can have opinions about it. The same applies to the immortality of the soul.

Nevertheless, this thesis provides some conclusions which seem to be rational ones, but still one has to bear in mind that these conclusions are only possibilities, since, again, no one can disprove that Socrates' arguments are true, but that he only seems not to be serious in the issue of the after-life and thus have another purpose in arguing for it, and on the other hand, just as the thesis goes along, no one, even not Socrates, can prove it.

Resumé

Na to, aby človek správne pochopil či už Platónovo alebo Sokratovo učenie a odhalil tak ich skutočné zámery pri filozofovaní, musí čítať danú filozofiu veľmi precízne. Keďže práca sa zaoberá témou mýtov o posmrtnom živote v Platónovej filozofii, skúma a predstavuje postupne mýty v jednotlivých Platónových dielach ako *Gorgias*, *Kritón*, *Faidon*, *Štát Kniha X* a *Faidros*. Každé zo spomenutých diel obsahuje mýtus o posmrtnom živote, ktorý hovorí Sokrates.

Po predstavení a bližšom popise týchto jednotlivých mýtov a posmrtnom živote sa práca presúva ku skúmaniu samotnej výskumnej otázky. Hovorí Sokrates mýty o posmrtnom živote s plnou vážnosťou? Ak nie, aký je jeho zámer? Sú tieto mýty o posmrtnom živote iba metafory pre spravodlivý spôsob života? Ako prvé práca uvádza fakt, že nikto nie je schopný hovoriť o posmrtnom živote ako o fakte, pretože nikto o ňom nemá dostatočné vedomosti. Na druhej strane, práca niekoľkokrát zdôrazňuje, že nikto nemôže posmrtný život dokázať, ale zároveň ho nikto ani nedokáže vyvrátiť, práve z tých istých dôvodov. V prvej časti tejto kapitoly práca predstavuje niekoľko prác s podobnou témou, aby ukázala že pracuje aj s už vypracovanými názormi. V druhej časti tejto kapitoly práca predstavuje niekoľko pasáží z Platónových diel, kde Sokrates sám buď pripúšťa, alebo nepriamo sám naznačuje, že jeho mýty nie sú tak úplne pravdivé. Avšak, keď práca ukazuje, že je len veľmi málo pravdepodobné, že Sokrates hovorí mýty o posmrtnom živote s plnou vážnosťou, je potrebné taktiež ich tým pádom aj vysvetliť nejakým iným spôsobom. Pri tejto otázke sa práca taktiež odráža od slov samotného Sokrata, kde vyberá jednotlivé pasáže, ktoré zrejme poukazujú na skutočný význam týchto mýtov o posmrtnom živote. Sokrates kladie veľký dôraz na spravodlivosť a snaží sa ľudí učiť a navádzať práve na tento spôsob života, pretože ten sa zdá byť jemu najvzácnejší.

Ďalšia kapitola sa zaoberá fenoménom nesmrteľnosti duše, v ktorej prospech Sokrates taktiež v niekoľkých dielach argumentuje. Avšak, ako sa zdá po podrobnom skúmaní jeho argumentov, Sokrates nepodáva jednoznačný

argument v prospech nesmrteľnosti duše a tak práca usudzuje, že je naozaj veľmi málo pravdepodobné, že Sokrates hovorí mýty o posmrtnom živote s plnou vážnosťou a serióznosťou.

Práca sa dostáva do bodu, kedy je zrejme len ťažko uveriteľné, že by Sokrates myslel mýty o posmrtnom živote vážne, a tak mýty znova predstavuje, ale tento raz sa ich snaží vysvetliť tak, ako ich zrejme Sokrates naozaj myslel.

Na záver práca rekapituluje poznatky, ku ktorým dospela skúmaním a dáva návrhy na ďalšie skúmanie v rámci tejto otázky, ktoré určite stoja za to, aby boli preskúmané. Po niekoľkýkrát taktiež práca uvádza fakt, že tak ako nikto nemôže posmrtný život dokázať, nikto ho nemôže ani vyvrátiť z dôvodu, že nikto o ňom nemá dostatočné vedomosti. Práve preto sú závery tejto práce iba možnosťami ako možno Sokrates tieto mýty o posmrtnom živote myslel. Pravdu vie len on sám, čo avšak nevyvracia možnosť, že jeho názor na posmrtný život bol práve taký ako nám ho v Platónových dielach predstavuje. Každopádne nemal o ňom dostatočné vedomosti, čo by zrejme pripustil aj on sám a preto práca nemôže brať vážne takéto slová od Sokrata, ktorý bol tak múdry človek a tak veľký dôraz kládol práve na rozum.

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