Myth and philosophy on stage in Platonic dialogues

Tofighian, O.

3.3 *Myth and the regulation of argument* – Phaedo

3.3.1 *Theme introduction, setting and narrative mode*

The *Phaedo* is one of only a few dialogues that are introduced with a scene where the narrator recounts a dialogue after the death of Socrates. It is also one of the only one where the narrator, Phaedo, is a character in the story. The introductory prelude to the events of Socrates' last hours contains a number of significant details crucial for understanding the dialogue. The conversation is between Phaedo and Echecrates in the town of Phlius. I will discuss the importance of the two characters in detail in the section on 'Character selection' but it is worth mentioning at this point that both are devoted admirers of Socrates, one of which, Echecrates, was also known to be a Pythagorean – at 88d Plato informs us of his commitment to Pythagorean philosophy.[1] Also, Echecrates is reported to have been the student of Philolaus.[2] In contrast, Phaedo had no connections with Pythagoreanism and had been Socrates' student and companion since Socrates freed him from the bonds of slavery.[3] There are interesting parallels between the characters in the opening scene and the main interlocutors in the dialogue which I want to explore in this section. Phaedo's trip to Phlius and his conversation with Echecrates has an amicable tone and Echecrates' Pythagorean views are quickly and easily replaced without resistance. From the very first passages the reader recognizes that a character known to be a Pythagorean, but who also has immense respect for Socrates,[4] will be receiving an account from not only someone who was intellectually enlightened by Socrates, but also

[1] A. Hartle notes that the feeling of anger that is present in many other dialogues, particularly those related to Socrates' trial, is completely missing from the *Phaedo*. Instead, an amicable and cooperative tone is expressed in the interaction between Echecrates and Phaedo and Socrates and Cebes and Simmias ([1986] pp. 14-15). As I will explain, the friendly communication between interlocutors reflects a constructive breakthrough or development in terms of the texts literary structure and its point regarding theoretical clarification.

[2] Huffman (1993) pp. 4 and 326. See 327 for comments on the problems with ascribing views to Philolaus based on the Pythagorean characters in the *Phaedo*.

[3] I will also elaborate on the theme of incarceration and liberation and their connection with certain elements of the dialogue (the myth, the arguments and specific symbols), particularly the character of Phaedo.

[4] He refers to Socrates as "Master" (57a).

an individual who was literally freed by Socrates. I will explain how this Platonic/Pythagorean dynamic pervades other parts of the dialogue; the motif is an important device used by Plato in conveying the meanings behind certain passages and the placement of those passages in specific parts of the text. And, it is a profoundly significant feature to consider when analyzing the myth at the end of the text.

The lead-in conversation takes place in the Peloponnesian town of Phlius. I believe Plato's choice of location for the introductory setting was not arbitrary and I want to argue that it corresponds to the salient Pythagorean factor in the dialogue[5] – the function of which I will describe later. Pausanias tells us that Pythagoras' great-grandfather was Hippasus from Phlius who fled to Samos after encountering political problems.[6] Also, it was well known that a number of Pythagoreans were exiled to Phlius.[7] The fact that Phaedo is describing Socrates' last conversation with two Pythagoreans, with a Pythagorean, in a town well known to have links with Pythagoreans supports the idea that the Presocratic tradition has an important role in the structure of the dialogue on many different levels. In addition, Phliasian territory was the origin of Phliasian Asopus, a river which flows through Sicyonian territory into the Corinthian Gulf. Supposedly, the river runs underground until it reaches the Peloponnese. This fact will be extremely important to consider when understanding the place of the myth and the symbols Plato used to write it.[8]

---

[5] Dorter (1982) pp. 9-10.
[6] Pausanias (1979) p. 160.
[7] Burnet (2003) p. 523. .Also see R. Hackforth in Plato (1955) p. 29.
[8] Pausanius (1979):

[2.5.1] On the summit of the Acrocorinthus is a temple of Aphrodite. The images are Aphrodite armed, Helius, and Eros with a bow. The spring, which is behind the temple, they say was the gift of Asopus to Sisyphus. The latter knew, so runs the legend, that Zeus had ravished Aegina, the daughter of Asopus, but refused to give information to the seeker before he had a spring given him on the Acrocorinthus. When Asopus granted this request Sisyphus turned informer, and on this account he receives--if anyone believes the story--punishment in Hades. I have heard people say that this spring and Peirene are the same, the water in the city flowing hence under-ground.[2.5.2] This Asopus rises in the Phliasian territory, flows through the Sicyonian, and empties itself into the sea here. His daughters, say the Phliasians, were Corcyra, Aegina,

In relation to Phaedo's account, the main dialogue, Plato's choice of setting and the circumstances of the moment need to be given serious attention in order to understand many of the text's structural and semantic factors. The dialogue takes place in the prison where Socrates is going to leave the world,[9] and the story is being narrated by an individual who was released from the confines of slavery. These aspects are important on a number of levels. One of the most prominent themes in the text is 'deliverance' or 'release' – a major motif of the plot that operates in many ways. The most obvious indications of the use of this theme are the arguments for the philosopher's attitude towards death, afterlife and the prescriptions Socrates gives for the liberation of reason from the senses. On a more theoretical level one also notices that Plato is distinguishing – somewhat emancipating – his own philosophical positions from the major tenets and theories of Presocratic philosophy, particularly Pythagoreanism. The theme of deliverance or release, understood symbolically for structural purposes, are also manifested in the way Plato organizes the dialogue to explain how his philosophy has a foundation in prior theories – both philosophical and religious – but is essentially a clear breakthrough in terms of method and theory. The first mention of Ideas and the use of unambiguous and detailed arguments (fundamentally anti-corporal in nature) that can be interpreted as proofs for a particular version of the 'theory of Forms' is appropriate in this dialogue because of the overarching themes that Plato implements. Throughout my

---

and Thebe. Corcyra and Aegina gave new names to the islands called Scheria and Oenone, while from Thebe is named the city below the Cadmea. The Thebans do not agree, but say that Thebe was the daughter of the Boeotian, and not of the Phliasian, Asopus.[2.5.3] The other stories about the river are current among both the Phliasians and the Sicyonians, for instance that its water is foreign and not native, in that the Maeander, descending from Celaenae through Phrygia and Caria, and emptying itself into the sea at Miletus, goes to the Peloponnesus and forms the Asopus. I remember hearing a similar story from the Delians, that the stream which they call Inopus comes to them from the Nile. Further, there is a story that the Nile itself is the Euphrates, which disappears into a marsh, rises again beyond Aethiopia and becomes the Nile.[2.5.4] Such is the account I heard of the Asopus. When you have turned from the Acrocorinthus into the mountain road you see the Teneatic gate and a sanctuary of Eilethyia. The town called Tenea is just about sixty stades distant. The inhabitants say that they are Trojans who were taken prisoners in Tenedos by the Greeks, and were permitted by Agamemnon to dwell in their present home. For this reason they honor Apollo more than any other god.

[9] Edmonds (2004) pp. 176-178. Edmonds draws interesting connections between this feature of the setting and certain aspects of the arguments and the myth. When I deal with the arguments in the *Phaedo* and the plot structure below, in their respective sections, I refer to the use of the Orphic and Pythagorean idea of the body as a prison – an idea that has a profound structural connection to the location of the dialogue.

analysis and in the section on 'Plot structure' I will explain how the dialogue's plot consists of three major themes: deliverance, dualism and a Platonic/Pythagorean dynamic.[10] Also, in the section on 'Character selection' I will explain how the character of Phaedo, as a liberated slave, suits the two themes and Echecrates, as both a Pythagorean philosopher and devotee of Socrates, represents the point of departure that Plato's own theory develops from.

The second important factor in relation to the setting is the delay of Socrates' execution due to a religious festival. I have already discussed the literary use of liminal figures (trickster and slave boy) and in the next chapter I will analyze liminal space (setting of the *Phaedrus*). In the *Phaedo* Plato presents us with the dynamics of liminal time. Scholars of myth and ritual have undertaken important studies on the sacred and existentially unique quality of the temporal moment during which one performs a ritual or is in the process of undertaking a rite of passage.[11] Plato stages the dialogue during the long delay between the announcement of the verdict and the execution itself. In this case, one can interpret the time frame within which Socrates argues his point as liminal time, i.e. a moment in limbo or liminal period where "the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state".[12] In limial time – for instance, during rites of passage or the moments leading up to the performance of a ceremony – traditional boundaries are broken down, conventional criteria are disrupted, accepted categories are problematized, and new hypotheses emerge. The liminal phase of a ritual or ceremony is also associated with purification which is related to the plot and its major themes,

[10] R.G. Edmonds connects what he calls the "traditional mythic pattern" in the myth to the 'Orphic' Gold tablets and Aristophanes' *Frogs*. However, he is careful to point out that these shared patterns may not be of primary importance when trying to discover the essence of the story or the author's message. Edmonds wants to draw attention to the similar structures of certain ancient myths as a framework which will allow one to recognize the traditional elements of a myth and from there reveal the manipulated features of each individual text ([2004] pp. 20-21). Similar to Edmonds, my analysis of the three themes mentioned above acknowledges traditional influences on the plot, both religious and philosophical, and then moves toward exposing the modifications implemented by Plato.

[11] Examples: finishing study and awaiting to complete a graduation ceremony; accepted into a group and waiting initiation; imprisoned and awaiting court; trialed and awaiting punishment; 'illegal refugees' waiting to be legitimized;

[12] Turner (1969) p. 94.

particularly deliverance. The ceremony that delays Socrates' execution is a purification rite[13] and the dialogue which takes place simultaneous with it is, as I will explain in detail, a purification of Platonic philosophy from its roots. Also, it is significant to inquire into the reason for the festival. Instead of simply stating that a random religious festival was taking place Phaedo takes time to describe the origins of the tradition and its importance to Athenian identity.[14]

3.3.2. *The myth*[15]

> There are many wonderful regions in the earth; and the earth itself is neither of the kind nor of the size that the experts suppose it to be; or so I'm led to believe. (108c)

By making this statement, prior to explaining the dimensions of our world and the real world, Socrates prepares his listeners for what he is about to describe; an account that is going to be in conflict with some of the basic tenets of Presocratic thought. By the way Plato portrays Simmias' response to Socrates' assertion, as disconcerted and curious, indicates, at least in the context of the dialogue, that the account that follows is novel. Socrates begins by postulating that the earth is spherical and situated in the middle of the heavens for logical reasons of uniformity and equilibrium. He indirectly criticizes Presocratic theories that hold that some physical entity is the reason why the earth is suspended and does not fall (109a). Next, Socrates focuses on the surface of the true earth after he determines the fact that we only live in one of the earths hollows, which we think is the true surface (109b-110a). The true earth's surface is a dodecahedron and is in many ways the origin of all the things in our world and the standard by which things are gauged. For instance, Socrates tells us that the colors of the true surface; flora and fauna; geology; and the appearance of gods are only imitated on our earth. Our earth, being one

[13] Burger (1984) pp. 8-9. Burger also suggests a possible political message associated with Plato's mention of this particular ceremony – a critique of the Athenian judicial system's treatment of Socrates.
[14] Burger (1984) p. 23. For details concerning the myth associated with the ritual, the character of Socrates in the dialogue and the company he shared on his last day see Dorter (1982) p. 5.
[15] R. Hackforth states that the myth supports Plato's bare doctrine of immortality. His view is one interpretation of the myth that my approach is opposed to. (Plato [1955] p. 171).

of the hollows, contains air, mist and water while the true earth is positioned among 'ether', which is the source of these elements (called dregs) occupying the hollows (109b-c). The details concerning the true earth and our earth support fundamental dichotomies characteristic of many elements in the dialogue, i.e. the distinction between superior and inferior/original and copy. Read literally, Plato establishes between a sublime, pure and original surface and an inferior and degraded underground cavern. Dualism is one of the most prominent themes in the myth along with the theme of deliverance, and all of the motifs and ideas constituting the tale are regulated by the combination of both.

The idea of a true dodecahedron shaped earth is an important symbolic element in the myth. For Pythagoras, the solid sphere represented harmony and therefore it was logical to postulate that the shape of the earth was round. This concept influenced Greek thought to such an extent that from the fifth century on practically all important Greek thinkers shared the view. The sphere represented perfection, harmony and equilibrium. But there is an important distinction between the Pythagorean view and Plato's use of it in the myth. For adherents of the Pythagorean view our world was the true earth because it was spherical. For Plato our world is merely a cavity and the true earth, over and beyond our world, is privileged with the dimensions of a dodecahedron (not a sphere) – a shape that has come to be termed a 'Platonic Solid'.[16] (Philolaus links the dodecahedron to aether but considers the shape merely a representation of an element like the others). This factor in the myth, the Platonic/Pythagorean contrast, is significant when I analyze the plot, its concomitant themes and their relationship to the arguments.[17]

[16] Some ancient sources credit Pythagoras with the discovery of the 'Platonic Solids' while others say Theaetetus was the first to described all five while Pythagoras only mentions the tetrahedron, cube and dodecahedron (Ferguson [2008] pp. 155-157).

[17] I want to argue that details in the myth such as the geometrical contours of the true earth – a dodecahedron as opposed to a sphere – are Plato's attempts to construct his myth as non-Pythagorean as possible without breaking ties with the tradition completely. In the case of the world in which we live the Pythagoreans believed it to be the only earth, displaying the perfection of numbers, and therefore spherical while for Plato our world was an inferior hollow within the true dodecahedron shaped earth. "The Pythagoreans, Aristotle argues, differ from Plato only in denying any separation between the first principles – which they identify with numbers rather than "ideas" – and the things said to be their imitations; the Pythagorean teaching on reincarnation, on the other hand, presupposes the separability of the psyche from the body. The attempt to reinterpret the meaning of "separation," and in so doing to reverse the Pythagorean position, is, one might say, the fundamental intention of the *Phaedo*." (Burger [1984] p. 7)

After Socrates describes some brief details pertaining to the appearance and inhabitants of the true earth he gives an account of the places within the earth – the "hollow regions" (111c). These regions, we are told, consist of hollows of different depths but are connected by underground rivers. The rivers are of different kinds: hot and cold water, fire, and mud and lava. These rivers oscillate as a result of flowing into a pumping central chasm called Tartarus – the earth's deepest chasm. Socrates mentions the four main streams which are Oceanus, Acheron, Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus. He also refers to two lakes and the region that contains one of the lakes. From 113d to 114b Socrates tells of the fate of souls that have committed certain kinds of sins. Their conduct determines the journey they must make through the four river system, past the Acherusian Lake and, if necessary, thrown into Tartarus. The crimes that determine one's afterlife fate are described by Plato in very general categories and he does not feel it is necessary to illuminate, or differentiate between, the nuances associated with the variety of types of immoral acts or consider the contextual elements which may have influenced the perpetrator. For this reason I think it is fair to assume that he wanted to infer the basic idea that injustice deserves punishment and to indicate that different crimes require different forms of punishment.[18] Due to the brevity of his illustration I believe Plato wanted to make a simple point about the punishment of sins and the real significance of these passages in the myth are Plato's use of the peculiar symbolism of an underground river system – motifs that connect the myth and the corresponding arguments to Pythagorean beliefs and concepts. The underworld typology is a deliberate attempt by Plato to symbolically represent Phlius, the location of the opening scene of the dialogue, in the myth. And, as I indicated earlier and as I will continue to prove, the significance of Phlius in the text was to emphasize the pivotal place Pythagoreanism occupies in the overall plot and meaning of the *Phaedo*.

In the passage that follows the myth Plato makes reference to the deliverance motif that characterizes the dialogue. The righteous individual is liberated from the lower

[18] Edmonds (2004) pp. 197-198.

regions of the earth and if one was committed to philosophy then one remains eternally on the true surface of the earth without a body – also reaffirming the dualism theme. The dualism trope is exemplified at 114e after Socrates has concluded the myth. The pleasures associated with the body are represented as a hindrance to ones acquisition of knowledge, which he confirms is a prerequisite for a desirable fate. And, in accordance with the theme of release, Socrates says: "But those who are judged to have lived a life of surpassing holiness – these are they who are released and set free from imprisonment in these regions of the earth, and passing upward to their pure abode, make their dwelling upon the earth's surface" (114b-c).

3.3.3 *The philosophical arguments*

In my analysis of Plato's arguments in the *Phaedo* I propose that there are two major goals he is trying to achieve. Before I engage in a close study of the text I want to outline my view concerning the aim of the arguments since I believe it will guide the reader through my account and it will illuminate the place of the two main themes: deliverance and dualism. First, in the *Phaedo*, Plato wants to distinguish his philosophy from Presocratic philosophy in general and Pythagorean thought in particular (possibly the philosophy of Philolaus). Second, in doing this it is incumbent that he accounts for the existence and nature of Forms in a comprehensive manner and explain how it is implied in the idea that learning is recollection.

At 62b-c Socrates offers an explanation to Cebes for why suicide is immoral. What he offers is an argument mainly premised on a belief. Before Socrates discusses his view Cebes anticipates that he has heard explanations for the same conclusion from Philolaus and others (a point that Socrates himself acknowledged). What Plato does in these passages is very important for two reasons, 1) for understanding the proceeding arguments and 2) for characterizing the stage of the narrative or plot. First, Plato has

Socrates elaborate on the Orphic concept of the physically imprisoned soul[19] by explaining the idea that the incarceration was divinely ordained and concludes that it is unethical for the soul to escape from the body before the gods decide to liberate it. Plato asks Cebes to put himself in the place of the gods and asks: "Then take your own case; if one of your possessions were to destroy itself without intimation from you that you wanted it to die, wouldn't you be angry with it and punish it, if you had any means of doing so?" (62c). Socrates' commitment to the anti-suicide view acts as an element in a general hypothesis for the arguments that follow.[20] The arguments can all be interpreted as prescriptions to risk everything in living life to the end with the aim of philosophical perfection and, as a consequence, not to be afraid when death arrives. The hypothesis, which can also be extrapolated from the myth, is that it is ideal to pursue a philosophical life if one wants to gain true freedom, i.e. philosophy (in the form described by Socrates) and liberation are interdependent. The arguments that follow, or, more precisely, the combination of arguments, can be interpreted as the consequences of this hypothesis. However, I will clarify later that the plot of the myth, and its concomitant themes, override the importance and influence of the hypothesis in this text. In other words, the hypothesis is in the service of the plot which was designed to enforce a particular ideological distinction (Platonism against Pythagoreanism). Secondly, the style in which Plato expresses the above general hypothesis also connects his philosophy with the Pythagorean School, particularly the form taught by Philolaus. The argument for opposites that follows is closely affiliated with his school of thought.[21] However, the way the hypothesis is introduced by Plato – using the Orphic theme of the body as imprisonment mentioned above – characterizes the initial part of the discursive section as Pythagorean in character.[22] The plot, as I will explain in detail later, is created with the intention of preparing the dialogue, at a specific point, for a later release or a form of breakthrough, and this early philosophical part of the dialogue (the basic hypothesis that

[19] Hackforth in Plato (1955) p. 4.
[20] At 63c, in support of his hypothesis, Socrates adds to his belief that he will "find there divine masters who are supremely good".
[21] Huffman (1993) pp. 133, 140 and 325.
[22] Hackforth in Plato (1955) p. 38.

philosophy and freedom are essentially intertwined) clearly confirms the nature of the position that will later be deconstructed.

In an interesting use of a literary trope (antithesis or litotes) Plato has Cebes try to counter Socrates with a hypothesis of his own that contains the idea that the wise man must be upset at the prospect of leaving a good life and the stupid man will think it is to his advantage to escape; therefore it is natural for the wise to grieve when they are about to die. What follows is Plato's attempt to show how his working hypothesis has more beneficial consequences than Cebes' or other propositions. The contrast with another, opposite, perspective is a persuasive device and usually demands more rhetorically extreme supporting arguments in favor of the author's desired hypothesis.[23] By using this literary technique Plato allows himself a degree of freedom in argumentation. The argument from opposites may otherwise be seen as unnecessary and rhetorical but in this context it is a fitting starting point. For one, the foundational or preliminary, Pythagorean, stage of the narrative is made clear and the use of an antithetical proposition (in opposition to the main protagonist) in a literary scene indicates that the arguments for the protagonist's position can and, most likely, will be rhetorically extreme.[24]

The passages dealing with the prohibition of suicide illuminate some salient characteristics of the dialogue worthy of closer attention. At 62b Socrates presents his argument against suicide and he makes reference to the Orphic belief that interprets physical existence as imprisonment of the soul and indicates that he shares this view. This belief was adopted by Pythagoreans who also held that taking ones own life was immoral. However, Socrates and the two Pythagorean interlocutors disagree when it comes to how one should feel about dying. Socrates renders a defense of his conviction that his death will be advantageous and therefore desirable. In the arguments that follow the reader is

[23] Refer back to my analysis of the *Meno* and *Protagoras* for the use of this technique.
[24] A. Hartle makes a number of interesting comments regarding Socrates' method in the dialogue which involves juxtaposition and separation ([1986] p. 64). She argues that arguments are not objects and infers that juxtaposition and separation of arguments "generates" truth and falsehood. Her observations will be important to keep in mind especially in respect to the Platonic/Pythagorean dynamics and for understanding the details associated with distinguishing ones own theory from another.

exposed to a worldview consisting of the strictest form of dualism and at 65d Plato presents an argument with a premise that has been interpreted as the first subtle indication of the theory of Forms – the argument for which is yet to come.[25] The dualist based arguments follow and Socrates emphasizes the fact that the philosopher finds salvation in death; the ultimate release from physical embodiment. At this point (69e) there is no serious diversion from Pythagorean philosophy.

The dialogue prior to the myth consists of four main lines of argument: the logic of opposites in the recycling of life; recollection; argument for affinity; and the immortality of the soul. In the presentation of all these arguments Plato uses an accepted Pythagorean idea as his gambit and then reinterprets it later to introduce his own theory that philosophically surpasses the limits of his predecessors. By beginning with the argument supporting the theory that life comes from death and death comes from life, Plato provides a form of 'background information' set up which assists us in understanding where his arguments are developing from. In the proceeding arguments we become aware that the first line of argument was the ideological mold that the later arguments are breaking out of. At 70c-d Socrates mentions the religious idea that souls exist in another realm before re-entering the physical world. In the *Meno* Plato makes the same reference and uses the theory of recollection and the slave boy experiment to support the belief. Here, in the *Phaedo*, one finds a multi-dimensional use of the idea which includes the attitude towards death as a pretext for introducing a theory involving Forms, i.e. the indispensability of accepting the existence of Forms. After the belief is stated Socrates indicates that more arguments are required if it is to be accepted and an actual myth is presented in the same dialogue that illustrates a form of afterlife/prenatal experience implied by the belief – something that was missing from the *Meno* for reasons I have already addressed (the detailed account of the *Phaedo* myth imports many of the features I have been analyzing in relation to other dialogues, i.e. plot structure, character selection and the themes and motifs, which differ dramatically in form content and function from other writings).

[25] Hackforth in Plato (1955) pp. 50-51.

The logic of opposites featured in different ways in almost all Presocratic philosophy and especially characterized Pythagorean philosophy. Philolaus who was connected with the Pythagorean exiles at Phlius and the teacher of Simmias and Cebes, was well known for his concern regarding the place of opposites in his philosophy.[26] Plato's reasons for beginning the discursive part of the dialogue by addressing some of the philosophical issues about opposites is worthy of special consideration. The argument from opposites is not a central concern of the dialogue as a whole (it is significant to note that the three more important arguments are not dependent on it) but it does function as a foundation for the following arguments: recollection; affinity; immortality of the soul. The recollection argument makes use of it but the validity of the recollection argument is not contingent on the principle of opposites. By situating a discussion of the logic of opposites at the beginning of the argumentative order Plato is indicating the origins and basic influences on his philosophy.[27] Even in terms of the dramatic lead-in to the arguments, Plato has Phaedo express his own mixed feelings on a set of opposites, pleasure and pain, to Echecrates when beginning his account and setting the mood for the scene (59a). It is relevant to point out how Plato's theory of opposites in the *Phaedo* differs from the description of pleasure and pain in the *Gorgias.* I believe that this is another indication that the arguments presented here are determined by and strictly designed for the theoretical concerns and plot of this particular dialogue. The theory of opposites in the *Phaedo* is closer to the Pythagorean view (it may be more accurate to say it is closer to Philolaus' view) confirming the Platonic/Pythagorean comparison and contrast running throughout the dialogue. To reiterate, at this point in the text, i.e. this stage in the narrative, Plato is displaying the foundations of his philosophy and therefore trying to show his affinity with the Pythagoreans. It is for this reason that he can render his understanding of the relation between opposites in a way that is distinctly different to

[26] See fn. 21.
[27] In the section on 'mutual scaffolding' I will explain how Plato acknowledges his influences early so he can then challenge them and express his more advanced position. I will describe how the plot and the themes of the myth determine this course.

the view presented in the *Gorgias* (493a-500a) (Also, consider the idea of punishment in both dialogues).

In the next topic of discussion Plato inserts a characteristically Platonic position, i.e. recollection, and connects it to the earlier conclusions. The passages containing the argument for recollection begin at 73a and function in two ways. First, the theory accepts the conclusion from the opposites argument, which coincides with Pythagorean or Presocratic philosophy. But the theory of recollection, as mentioned, is not contingent upon any kind of argument that uses opposites and it is from this scene in the dialogue that Plato begins to clearly distinguish himself from his predecessors. The theory of recollection was dealt with in the *Meno* and in the *Phaedo* Plato does not challenge the view in any significant manner but readdresses the idea using a different argument. The aspect of the new argument I wish to focus on is the use of the concept of Form (equality). The place of the recollection argument seems to be a set-up for the description of the concept of Form and its place in Platonic philosophy rather than another attempt to prove the validity of the recollection theory. Plato's reason for bringing up the issue again in connection with other theories indicates that further proof for the theory itself was not Plato's intention. By presenting the argument for recollection in the way that he did Plato placed the burden of proof on his own philosophical approach to provide an argument for the Forms.

Plato moves on from the argument for recollection to concentrate on explaining the significance of Forms.[28] He provides an argument that both supports his use of the concept of Form in the last line of argument and renders further elaboration on how Forms are to be interpreted in relation to the soul. In order to make this connection Plato offers the affinity argument. This argument clarifies the indivisible and eternal nature of the Forms and, as a result, the epistemological attraction of the soul to the Forms. Because of this shared essence the nature of soul is therefore interpreted in the same way

[28] K. Dorter identifies the relevance of the purification theme in Plato's recollection argument in the *Phaedo* ([1982] pp. 65-69).

that Forms are. Until this point Plato has made reference to ethics and covered epistemology in combination with the Ideas. However, the metaphysical consequences of these views are lacking. Plato explores the consequences of using the concept of Form when dealing with the soul's intentionality and completes the explanation of his epistemological and metaphysical theory. But this last stage comes as a response to the objections of Simmias and Cebes to Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul and the presentation of the Pythagorean attunement theory.

The attunement theory was a popular Pythagorean view of the soul elaborated on by Philolaus and also held by Parmenides. The position is used by Cebes and seems to have convinced those present during the dialogue. After Cebes completes his critique Plato employs a very interesting literary tactic. At 89b the narrator, Phaedo, refers to himself in the dialogue and the main character in the narrative, Socrates, interacts with Phaedo. Once Pheado enters the dialogue a shift occurs in the topic and theme of the arguments followed by an elaborate account of what may be termed the theory of Forms.[29] The shift I am referring to is first represented by Socrates' focus on meta-philosophical concerns such as misology, elaboration on the place of hypothesis, the problems with basing knowledge on likelihood and the importance of the consideration of theoretical consequences. The fact that Socrates raises these topics in response to a theoretical challenge to his philosophical position must be taken seriously and the literary dynamics deserve special attention.[30]

> While Socrates' conduct may provide the most effective weapon against the fear of death, the only defense against misology that is capable of protecting the psyche from blinding itself is an art of argumentation. This techne of logos Socrates identifies as a "second sailing": it abandons the attempt to investigate the beings themselves in order to

[29] K. Dorter links the theme of liberation with the scene in which Phaedo enters and the new subjects that Plato introduces into the dialogue ([1982] pp. 89-97).
[30] A. Hartle also highlights, amongst other changes in the course of the dialogue, the changes that Echecrates goes through as a result of Phaedo's interlude and the shifts in the arguments that it triggers ([1986] pp. 79-80).

> investigate their truth through logoi and is illustrated by the turn from the first to the second half of the dialogue.[31]

These issues are both important and perplexing. Why does Plato decide to mention them at this point in the dialogue? First, he warns against mistrusting argument and criticizes those who do not take responsibility for providing convincing support for a proposition and blame the arguments themselves or the value of argumentation (90d).[32] Then, Simmias states an important feature of the hypothesis that the theory of recollection is derived from. "But I realize that theories which rest their proof upon likelihood are imposters…. On the other hand, the theory of recollection and learning derives from a hypothesis which is worthy of acceptance." (92d). Simmias then reiterates that the soul has the same status as Forms – a view based on the acceptance of the theory of Forms. And since 'learning as recollection' is developed from the same sophisticated metaphysical theory he cannot accept the alternative attunement theory. Following Simmias' agreement Socrates renders further arguments against the view that the soul is attunement and it becomes clear at 93c that while recollection accounts for the place of goodness and badness the attunement view is not consistent with a cogent moral theory. In addition, the explanatory value of the attunement theory in terms of the soul's governing power is limited. Socrates exposes this at 94b-e. Therefore, on the basis of desirable consequences, the hypothesis that the soul is immortal and has affinities with the Forms is more acceptable.[33]

Socrates' response to Cebes beginning at 96a, like his response to Simmias, has a number of different dimensions. Plato chooses to extrapolate his metaphysical theory through an analysis of generation and destruction. He has Socrates describe his early interest in natural science, which then led him to focus on philosophy. Socrates expresses his dissatisfaction with Presocratic causation but finds potential in Anaxagoras' view that

[31] Burger (1984) p. 10.
[32] For further details see Hackforth in Plato (1955) pp. 109-111.
[33] Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul and his conception of soul in the *Phaedo* are to a certain extent determined by the contextual network of the text. For accounts of the soul in other dialogues in contrast to the *Phaedo* see Hackforth in Plato (1955) pp. 19-24.

intelligence rules everything. Ultimately, Socrates distinguishes between the cause and the conditions surrounding the cause. He recognizes that the physical conditions of generation and that which was generated could have been otherwise, whereas he was looking for an explanation that was necessary and which gave rise to an outcome that could not have been otherwise. Socrates also draws a connection between the cause and the highest good – things come to be because it is best for them to be that way according to an order. Next, Socrates acknowledges the use of hypotheses in investigation and refers to the procedure as "employing images" (100a). At this moment it is clear that the hypothesis he is using to inquire into reality is indispensably linked to the notion, referred to earlier in this section, that individuals must live a life devoted to philosophy without compromise even if faced with death – therefore happiness at the thought of death develops special meaning. As a consequence, a metaphysical theory must be constructed as a necessary consequence of accepting this hypothesis. I will deal with the relationship between the myth and the arguments in the next section, particularly this last argument, but it is important to note that the hypothesis and the moral of the myth correlate.

In the rest of the argumentative part of the text Plato submits some of the most important details concerning his metaphysical theory. Socrates points out that what he is now describing is nothing new and has been directly referred to or indirectly implied from the beginning. "I do not go so far as to insist upon the precise detail; only upon the fact that it is by Beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. This, I feel, is the safest answer for me or for anyone else to give, and I believe that while I hold fast to this I cannot fall" (100d-e). In this passage Socrates is stating the reason why he holds on to his philosophical position. It achieves impenetrability and infallibility because the conclusions coincide with the highest good. And it is because this theory, more than any other, has the potential to lead to consequences that correspond with the highest good that Plato believes it deserves full commitment.

In addition, at 103 Plato clearly distinguishes Platonic metaphysics from any philosophical position that uses a form of Presocratic theory of opposites as its basis. This

section of the dialogue is in reference to the earlier line of argument that Plato passes through to concentrate on explicating the Forms.[34] At this later stage of the dialogue Plato acknowledges that the logic of opposites is relevant, however only on the level of particulars. His theory of reality goes beyond looking at the physical world in order to determine a metaphysical position and, as he goes on to explain, cannot accept the consequences derived from the earlier view without transcending it to account for the Forms. On this point Plato marks one of the most distinctive ideological differences between his views and those of the Presocratics – particularly Pythagorean philosophy.

3.3.4 *Mutual scaffolding*

a. *Preface*

The myth at the end of the *Phaedo* was created especially for the dialogue and, like the other myths I analyzed, has a structural role in the text. The myth's structural influence is manifested in the plot, character selection, themes and motifs and, particularly in this dialogue, the arrangement and style of the different arguments. As I will explain, the myth and the arguments operate through mutual scaffolding. The importance of this particular myth rests more on the plot and its themes. This means that the role of myth in postulating a hypothesis features very loosely (as I explained in the prior section) and has minor significance (unlike the previous dialogues I studied) in comparison to the peculiar Platonic/Pythagorean framework underlying the narrative. In fact, there is no need for a hypothesis for the overall design of the dialogue since the *Phaedo* acts more as a clarification of doctrine and a preparation for a more advanced metaphysics. There is no doubt the dialogue had other functions in addition to the ones I am focusing on here (for instance, the dialogue aims to give hope and encouragement to the others to go on with their philosophical lives). But reasons without a compelling and

[34] Dorter (1982) pp. 74-75.

intimate connection to the narrative structure are simple in comparison and can be considered emotive, illustrative or allegorical at best. They are additions which can be extrapolated from the scenes and situations; these interpretations are part of the richness of myth. However, the plot, characters, themes and motifs that Plato wanted to use to mould his literary creation – particularly in order to make his point to Pythagorean thinkers or to those confused about the differences with his predecessors – are the pivotal features of the myth which contribute to the most salient philosophical elements of the text.[35]

In the myth Plato is addressing Presocratic and Pythagorean ideas directly by using identifiable cosmological symbols. The way these symbols are portrayed in the narrative, their status, arrangement and relation with each other, correspond with the arguments in a number of interesting ways. In one of the major themes of the myth, Plato represents a dualism between the true earth and our inferior world hidden within it. The standard interpretation has been that he is illustrating the difference between the world of the intellect and the world of the senses and how the latter receives its characteristics from the pure reality of the former.[36] The arguments in the dialogue are created within the strict dualist structure or worldview that the myth projects. But if we interpret certain features of the myth deeper it becomes clear that the distinction between the two realms need not be accepted literally as a cosmic dichotomy but a distinction between a Pythagorean worldview and a Platonic one. And it is this ideological or theoretical contrast that also features in the arguments. Plato's true earth is the shape of a Platonic solid, the dodecahedron, and not a sphere.[37] The notion of a spherical earth was, as I have

[35] I think there are many similar examples of texts which are addressed to a specific community with the intention of clarifying or distinguishing a position or establishing an identity in a philosophical or theological context. See the letters of St. Paul or St. John's *Revelation*.

C.J. Rowe argues for an integrated view of the philosophical and non-philosophical parts of the text. However, for Rowe, integration simply means to what extent arguments can convince us to live a Good life and reduce the fear of death which are connected to the vision of the soul's afterlife fate (Plato [1993] pp. 2-3).

[36] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2007).

[37] Philolaus also discussed the importance of geometrical shapes such as those now termed as Platonic solids however Plato attributes an intellectual dimension to them while Philolaus only identified them with elements or, in addition to the element aether, the dodecahedron was also associated with the universe.

mentioned, an accepted idea amongst Presocratic thinkers and particularly important to Pythagoreans. By inserting this detail into the myth Plato is marking a Platonic theory of reality from a Pythagorean one.

The dualism theme in respect to Pythagorean and Platonic worldviews has a strong presence in the arguments. The arguments begin with the prohibition of suicide and the principle of opposites, both of which are strongly characterized by Pythagorean concepts. These initial arguments occupy the foundation and the gambit for the distinctly Platonic arguments, particularly the account of the Forms. A dichotomy can be interpreted by comparing the different arguments in the sequence; between the suicide and opposites arguments, on the one hand, and the following arguments that use Forms in their inferences. This contrast is obvious in many other aspects of the text. It is represented by the characters of Echecrates and Phaedo in the opening scene and by the interlocutors in the dialogue itself; all consistent with the theme in the myth and the development of the arguments. "What we are presented with at this level of the dialogue is a change that takes place in Echecrates, a change brought about by Phaedo's narration and which mirrors the change in Simmias and Cebes brought about by Socrates."[38] The arguments follow a course which begins with the logic of opposites and moves on to become a full-fledged explanation of the Forms. The intention of the argumentative section as a whole was the explication of the Platonic theory. However, it grew out of, but was not dependent on, the first line of argument which uses a common Pythagorean theme.

In preparation for describing the fate of souls the myth uses the imagery of an underground river system and a central fire. It is important to note that this geography exists under our 'cavern' world and has no influence on the true surface. I believe the significance of this symbolism lies mainly in its connection to the town of Phlius where Phaedo is transmitting the story to Echecrates. The town, which has numerous links to Pythagorean figures, was supposed to have had a unique underground river system. Also,

[38] Hartle (1986) p. 79.

the idea of a central fire is common in the theories of the Presocratics and Philolaus in particular. The relevance of painting this picture of the two worlds and their dimensions correlates with the arguments. One the one hand, we have a Pythagorean image of the world which uses natural icons of regions familiar to Pythagoreans and arguments and ideas recognizably Pythagorean. On the other hand, we have a Platonic image of the world which uses geometry and concepts characteristically Platonic, and arguments that are unmistakably Plato's.

In the next part of the myth Plato uses the themes of release or deliverance in explaining the judgment of the soul – the other major theme in the myth (in conjunction with the theme of dualism and the Platonic/Pythagorean dynamic). In the account that follows we are told that different degrees of unjust souls must journey through the river system and Tartarus and suffer different forms of punishment. Virtuous souls are released from being reincarnated into the physical world and dwell in the intellectual world of perfect entities. Once again there is a correlation between these themes and the course of argumentation. In the arguments, basic philosophical views generally shared by the Presocatics and Plato are reinterpreted and transcended. The argumentative discourse breaks through earlier thought and arrives at a completely Platonic position. The dualist theme that plays a strong role in many parts of the dialogue is fitting for literary reasons because it accommodates the theme of deliverance that Plato wants to stress both on a literary and theoretical level. Therefore, one of the most important aspects of the eschatological myth is the dichotomy between the lower-world and the upper-world. The tale could be reduced to being simply Orphic or Pythagorean except for the fact that it draws an essential connection between reason and freedom. The myth gives priority to rational endeavors over empirical experience and is an upper-world (intellectually) centered myth – something that is not as clear or does not exist in earlier philosophical and religious traditions.[39] In the context of a dualist worldview the lower-world had to be characterized accordingly. Consistent with the motifs in the myth (dualism and

[39] Pythagoreans saw the physical world as manifesting number and therefore worthy of serious contemplation. The fact that Plato's philosophy infiltrates and shapes an otherwise Pythagorean style story re-enforces the Platonic/Pythagorean motif.

deliverance from physical imprisonment), the arguments are Plato's attempt to define his position which he does within the framework of a strict physical/intellectual dichotomy. In the *Phaedo* Plato is using the language and imagery familiar to Pythagoreans. This also explains why he uses numerous Pythagorean characters and begins his arguments with a theory close to that used by Pythagoreans. However, Plato improves on many aspects of the initial theory to accommodate for his own metaphysics and epistemology. It becomes increasingly clearer that Plato is distinguishing his view from Pythagorean philosophy for those interested in his thoughts, namely his students and other philosophers.

The interpretation I presented above is supported further when the relationship between *mythos* and *logos* is understood using mutual scaffolding. In contrast to other modes of comparison which view the philosophical sections and the narrative part in terms of moral allegory or illustration – both of which use other tropes and both of which base their interpretations on the dichotomy paradigm – mutual scaffolding explains why the arguments have taken the course that they do and why the story follows the rhythm that it does.[40] When the plot of the myth is understood as an indispensable part of a unit one can explain many features of the dialogue's different scenes and, more importantly, account for the regulating influence of the myth on Plato's arguments in the *Phaedo*. The regulating authority of the plot illuminates the main theoretical point Plato wants to make concerning his philosophy and its relationship to Pythagoreanism. This perspective towards the myth and the arguments appreciates both the literary and intellectual peculiarities which pervade the *Phaedo*. Also, sensitivity towards the literary intricacies of *mythos* enables the themes of dualism, deliverance and the Platonic/Pythagorean dynamic – important elements in the plot – to project their value for understanding the argumentative structure and the framework of the dialogue as a whole. The arguments

[40] Edmond attempts to interweave *mythos* and *logos* in his analysis of the *Phaedo* but because he uses a form of metaphor or metonymy to combine them he does not move beyond the model of myth as an addition to argumentation or simply illustrative: "… Plato carefully crafts the myth Socrates tells of the soul's journey after death to highlight important ideas raised in the earlier arguments, shaping the traditional tale to expand and reinforce these arguments." ([2004] p. 160. Also see pp. 166-167 and 170)

and the myth exemplify these significant themes; themes that set the tempo for the dialogue as a whole.

The myth describes the possible afterlife existence that souls may have depending on the virtuous quality of their earthly existence. It promotes a life dedicated to philosophy with the aim of achieving complete release from reincarnation back into the physical world or eternal punishment. Reality is dichotomized into two distinct realms with the inferior world acquiring its qualities from the superior and the lower world needing to be transcended in a form of escape. However, eternal salvation is just that; one must achieve deliverance as a result of first existing in a body. Therefore, a particular interpretation of dualism, a 'two-worlds' theory, is utilized as part of the literary framework which determines the rhetorical style of the discourse. The ordering system arranging the different arguments and the inferential logic derive many structural and thematic elements from the myth. The dialogue begins with Socrates and the Pythagoreans agreeing to some basic principles (release from the body, opposites) but disagreeing about some metaphysical consequences that can be developed from it. The Pythagoreans use the theory of opposites but do not attempt to connect it to their beliefs regarding the afterlife and, more importantly, to their views on living a moral life. For Pythagoreans, the principle of opposites is restricted to cosmology. What Socrates does is take the general hypothesis, that a philosopher should welcome death, and manipulates the principle of opposites to support it and to coincide with parts of his ethical theory. In what follows the reader witnesses a theoretical release from some of the standard tenets of Presocratic thought and the explication of idiosyncratic Platonic views. The theme of deliverance is exemplified in the discursive section by Plato to emphasize to his intended audience (possibly Pythagoreans and his own students) where he stands and possibly to clarify understandable confusions. His choice of plot ties in with the many salient motifs in the text, particularly imprisonment – a motif that was recognizable to the contemporary philosophical and religious community. The dialectical unity that the arguments and the myth are parts of is defined by these literary and ideological characteristics.

b. *Regulation*

> 'Why, really, Simmias, I don't think that it calls for the skill of a Glaucus to explain what my belief is; but to prove that it is true seems to me to be too difficult even for a Glaucus. In the first place I should probably be unable to do it; and in the second, even if I knew how, it seems to me, Simmias, that my life is too short for an explanation of the required length. However, there is no reason why I should not tell you what I believe about the appearance of the earth and the regions in it.' (108d-e)

The term 'true' is used in a specific sense in the above passage. Truth is too difficult to prove discursively but can be represented if a story about "appearance of the earth and the regions in it" is told. If truth is defined as coherence within an organized and operational literary system, and not simply in terms of correspondence with a physical reality, then the myth of the *Phaedo* has the possibility to be 'true' even if it is too difficult to prove: "the 'truth' of entities would seem most naturally to refer to their teleological reason for being, for this is the truth that Socrates is pursuing. In this case, the 'things', or entities in their true being (99e3), would indeed refer to physical things conceived, however, not in terms of their physical operations (efficient and material causality) but in so far as they are manifestations of the teleological principle, the good."[41] Once the function of the narrative plot structure, invited by the myth and characterizing the structure of the arguments, is successfully recognized then the effort of creating and presenting the myth becomes worthwhile.

However, the question remains pending: why is the myth needed when the arguments are running the same course and according to the same themes anyway? I believe I can answer this question by explaining three main reasons. First, to highlight the method that needs to be implemented in interpreting the arguments. The myth reveals the themes of dualism and deliverance as just that: themes that control the literary character of the dialogue. These themes instruct the reader once in practice rather than being prescribed out of context. Second, the myth indicates the intention of the dialogue by

[41] Dorter (1982) p. 122.

illustrating the dynamic dichotomy connecting two prominent views of reality (Platonic and Pythagorean). Plato achieves this by representing the relation both aesthetically (*mythos* and certain literary devices and techniques) and conceptually (arguments, counter-arguments and rhetorical tactics) and slots them into relevant parts of the overall plot (the direction of the dialogue or its predetermined course). Finally, the narrative section confesses who the dialogue was written for. The typology practiced by Plato in writing the myth is a clear message to Pythagoreans and well-informed contemporary philosophers because it provokes consideration of a novel hermeneutics of established concepts and pressures them to seriously acknowledge Plato's views in light of it. This necessarily involves identifying the Pythagorean and other Presocratic themes and motifs and understanding their status and function in both the narrative and discursive components. Plato deliberately includes the myth so that the arguments, in the manner they are presented in the *Phaedo* itself, can be interpreted as being consequences of the literary world invented by Plato, i.e. a dualist universe where the soul is imprisoned and must save itself.

> 'Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future inhabitations – since there is certainly evidence that the soul is deathless – this, I think, is both a fitting contention and a belief worth risking; for the risk is a noble one.' (114d)

3.3.5 *Plot structure*

> Not only can an extrapolation of the various ways in which authors use a common set of elements uncover the different agendas of these authors and provide a deeper understanding of the individual texts, but it can also shed light on the ways in which myth was used by the Greeks in the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE – not as sacred scripture, not purely as entertainment, but as a device for communication, a mode of speaking in which they could convey meaning densely through the manipulation of mythic motifs and patterns that each had its resonance for the audience.[42]

Like the other dialogues that I have analyzed, the myth of the *Phaedo* consists of a plot structure consisting of a number of dominant themes. However, in this dialogue Plato's plot is more artificial than the plots in the previous dialogues I analyzed which are more standard or traditional. In the *Phaedo* Plato specifically fabricated the plot with a particular academic or institutional intention and produced the myth accordingly. Expressed more explicitly through the myth the plot controls the order of the arguments and together they convey a philosophical message about his position in contrast to another while cleverly indicating the connections between them. The controlling quality inherent in the myth must cooperate with the arguments in a mutual scaffolding function in order to be successful. The plot structure driving the myth, the arguments and the direction of the *Phaedo* is designed by Plato using some major mythic motifs.

> [Phaedo's] life was characterized by liberation from bondage both in the literal sense and in the figurative sense of conversion to philosophy (82e ff) and the dialogue is pre-eminently about the theme of bondage and liberation: Socrates' literal imprisonment, the imprisonment of the soul within the body and its liberation by death, the imprisonment of reason by corporeal pleasure and pain and its liberation by philosophy, the subterranean rivers, as well as Socrates' account of his ascent to philosophy, which parallels the Republic's account of the liberation from the cave. Our constant awareness of Phaedo,

[42] Edmonds (2004) p. 4.

> like the references to Theseus' liberation of the fourteen, helps make us sensitive to the theme of liberation that runs as an undercurrent throughout the work.[43]

First of all, Plato imports a strict form of the Orphic and Pythagorean theme of cosmic dualism into his plot. This is consistent with the idea of the soul as imprisoned and the Platonic form of rationalism and idealism exemplified in many of the arguments of the *Phaedo*. I do not want to argue that the epistemology and metaphysics presented in every dialogue is completely contingent on the plot of *that* dialogue; Plato is not some kind of capricious ad hoc theorist. But I think it is important to be aware of the nuances of the plot and how they affect the delivery of the discursive sections and the perspectives these sections aim to isolate for consideration and highlight for critical attention.

Secondly, Plato uses the motif of deliverance to coincide with the dualism theme. Throughout the myth, the scenarios and the arguments we are reminded that every individual included in, or engaging with the text, be it Socrates, the interlocutors, the intended audience or the reader, is encouraged to engage in a 'ritual' of release.[44] Deliverance is represented in many ways: the soul's afterlife liberty, the detachment of reason from the senses, Platonic philosophy from Pythagorean bases, etc.

3.3.6 *Character selection*

Character selection in the *Phaedo* is extremely complex since the dialogue has an opening scene before the actual dialogue. The characters in the opening and the actual dialogue reflect each other, which in turn are both under the patronage of the myth. The relationships become clearer when we understand the plot exemplified in the myth.

---

[43] Dorter (1982) p. 10.

[44] Examples I have detailed are the release of the soul from the body, prisoner from the prison, Platonic philosophy from Pythagorean philosophy, real world from physical world, etc.

a. *Phaedo*

The character of Phaedo is a fascinating choice for narrator for many reasons. As I have already mentioned, he was a slave that was freed by Socrates and became a keen student of the philosopher. This makes him a liminal figure but unlike the slave boy in the *Meno* Phaedo has gone beyond the stage of limbo that defines the slave boy character. Phaedo's personality and the stage of his life at the moment of the dialogue correspond with the themes in the plot in an interesting way. The Phaedo character is a living example of the liberated soul venerated in the myth. In addition, the fact that the events of the dialogue are occurring during liminal time ties the narrator's recollection with the story on a qualitative level, i.e. Phaedo's liminal past and the liminal moment of Socrates last hours both indicate that preconceived notions will be challenged, hypotheses will be questioned, and traditional views will be subject to reinterpretation. And, it is interesting to note that every time Phaedo appears in the dialogue, whether as narrator or in the one instance as character, a significant shift occurs theoretically or methodologically.[45]

b. *Echecrates*

Echecrates was a Pythagorean from the Peloponnesian town of Phlius where the opening scene of the text is set. His role in the text is symbolically significant not only because he was a Pythagorean but because he was a supporter of Socrates, a student of Philolaus and linked with the exiles in Plius.[46] According to my interpretation of the myth and the arguments, Echecrates is equivalent to the figures of Simmias and Cebes, thus fulfilling the Pythagorean dimension of the dialogue. Also, the Pythagoreans represent, in character form, the views which Plato's philosophy needs to be delivered from (deliverance being exemplified through the characters of Phaedo and Socrates). Echecrates' role is made even more necessary once we realize what he symbolizes and

[45] This is particularly the case when Socrates presents his most convincing final arguments after Phaedo intervenes in the text with additional narration and as a character at 88-89 and 102.
[46] Echecrates' association with Philolaus may clarify doubts that he was a Pythagorean because of his unorthodox ideas (Rowe [1993] pp. 6-7).

recognize the theoretical parallels: the concepts and beliefs behind the suicide prohibition and opposites principle, and the underground river system.

c. *Socrates*

In the dialogue, as a consequence of the deliverance theme, Socrates' role is presented as heroic; he gave up his life because he refused to compromise his philosophical ideals.[47] He is a hero in a particular sense because of the deliverance trope which has similarities with myths portraying the death and resurrection of a god or hero.[48] In the context of the literary style, heavily influenced by the themes of dualism and deliverance, Socrates is the hero that will ultimately be resurrected as divine. I think it is appropriate to draw parallels between the tales of Dionysius, Heracles, the Egyptian god Horus or Osiris, and possibly even Christ.[49] One of the major factors distinguishing Plato's *Phaedo* from other narratives based on a deliverance plot is the specific context the text was written in and the audience it was written for. The ideological clarification influencing the dialogue reduces the moral of the *Phaedo* from a universal message to a very idiosyncratic community announcement. Therefore, the character of Socrates in the dialogue needs to be seen as a representation of the 'word': a manifestation of the way Plato's thought needs to be understood.

d. *Simmias and Cebes*

Like Echecrates, the two interlocutors function as the Pythagorean contrast in the plot – the point of departure for release. I think their roles are also symbolic and they resemble Echecrates by being both students of Philoaus and devotees of Socrates. Consequently, their function corresponds with the Pythagorean symbolism in the myth.

[47] Edmonds (2004) pp. 159 and 202-205.
[48] For a different interpretation of Socrates fulfilling the role of hero in the *Phaedo* see Hartle (1986) p. 24. Also, see the chapter 15 "Socrates: The New Aesop" in Compton (2006) pp. 154-165.
[49] Compton (2006).

3.3.7 *Index of themes and motifs*

a. ***Deliverance theme***

- Phaedo – a freed slave
- Socrates – seeking freedom from corporeal existence
- Platonic thought distinguished from Pythagorean/Presocratic thought (Pythagorean theories: suicide argument, argument from opposites, soul as attunement; Platonic thought: theory of Forms, recollection, immortality of the soul, affinity)
- Freedom through philosophy (82c-84b)
- Deliverance in the myth (113e-114c)

b. ***Strict dualism theme***

- Soul/body (64c-65a-d,66b-67d,71e,72a,73a,76c,76e,79c-80e,81c-d,81e-84b,105d, 106e,107c-d)
- Sense/intellect (64d, 65b-d, 66a, 66d, 67b, 79c-80b, 81b-c, 81e-84b, 114e)

c. ***Pythagorean/ Platonic dynamics***

- Echecrates/Phaedo
- Events taking place in Phlius/events taking place in Athens
- Simmias and Cebes/Socrates
- Prohibition of suicide leads to theory of Forms and prescription for philosophical life, i.e. preparation for death (64a-69e)
- Argument from opposites leads to argument for the immortality of the soul and uses theory of Forms and recollection
- The hollows and the real earth
- Dodecahedron (Platonic solid) as opposed to a sphere

d. ***Philosophical life as a preparation for death (general hypothesis)***

- 64a-e
- 81a
- 95b-c

The *Phaedo* myth dichotomizes two levels of reality and uses two different habitats to represent them. The lower world, or hollow, exhibits many unmistakably Pythagorean elements and a number of other Presocratic features. It contains an underground river system that has parallels with that which exists beneath Phlius and connected to other regions in the Peloponnese. The rivers run into a central fire, a prominent concept in Presocratic thought and a symbol of eternal damnation. In addition, it acquires its characteristics from the true earth and contains certain elements which are passed down as "dregs" from above. The dregs are the traditional elements well known to many ancient Greek cosmologists and natural scientists and crucial constituents of their natural philosophies.[50]

In contrast, the true earth is illustrated as pure and its features resemble the characteristics of the Forms. Its shape is a dodecahedron, a shape that has become categorized as a Platonic solid, and the only element that exists in its environment is aether. The true earth is the region that souls dwell once released from the bonds of the lower regions and it is significant that in the myth salvation involves not having a body.

e. ***Two realities – the Pythagorean earth and the Platonic dodecahedron***

- 108c
- 108e-113c

Another important motif prominent in the text is the incarceration image. It is used in numerous places throughout the dialogue and assists as an auxiliary to the

[50] On the influence of Empedocles' systematization of the four elements and his influence see Furley (1987) pp. 79-83.

dualism/deliverance themes in the plot. The imprisonment picture is also used literally, of course, since the setting of the dialogue is in jail and in this instance, as in the theoretical and mythical, it is contrasted with freedom through intellectual endeavor of the kind that involves Plato's philosophical innovations.

f. ***The prison***

- Suicide prohibition – hidden message of mystics (62b, 67d)
- 81e-84b

g. ***Liminal time***

- Mention of the interval, the event that caused it and the cultural significance of the event (58a-c)
- Socrates deciding to write poetry during the interval (61a-b)