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A Sticky (γλίσχρος) Affaire (Plato, *Crat*. 435c): Platonists versus Stoics on How (Not) To Do Etymology and Allegoresis

This paper discusses the use of the word γλίσχρος (*'sticky'*)*, which Platonists use to disqualify certain, mostly Stoic, etymologies. I argue that the expression derives from Plato* Crat. *435c, a passage in which Socrates sets out a theory of word formation that informs Stoic etymologies. I furthermore suggest that when Neoplatonists use* γλίσχρος *to reject certain interpretations of Plato's texts as misguided, this is because these interpretations are reminiscent of Stoic exegetical practices.*

L'articolo discute l'uso del termine γλίσχρος (*'appiccicoso'*)*, con cui i Platonici squalificano alcune etimologie, soprattutto stoiche. In questa sede si sostiene che l'espressione derivi da Plat.* Crat. *435c, dove Socrate espone una teoria della formazione delle parole che sarà alla base delle etimologie stoiche; ma quando i neoplatonici useranno* γλίσχρος *per rifiutare alcune letture fuorvianti dei testi di Platone, lo faranno proprio per discostarsi da interpretazioni fondate sul ricordo di pratiche esegetiche proprie dello Stoicismo.*

Platonists and Stoics, more than any other ancient philosophical school, were drawn to etymology as a means to disclose the philosophical intuitions of the ancients. To an impartial modern reader, it may seem that there were virtually no limits to their fanciful etymologies of divine names in particular. Yet Platonists will at times disqualify a certain etymology as γλίσχρος, a word that is usually rendered as 'sticky' in English. In this paper I shall discuss the origins of this term and the reasons why Platonists reject some etymologies and some allegorical interpretations, as 'sticky'. More in particular, I shall argue that they derive the word γλίσχρος from Plato's dialogue on etymology, the *Cratylus,* and that, initially at least, it is used to distinguish between correct ways of etymologizing as practiced by the Platonists themselves and incorrect ways as practiced by the Stoics. This distinction reflects Socrates' ambiguous attitude towards etymology in the *Cratylus*: whereas he appears to accept etymologies as a valid tool of philosophical research in the first part of the dialogue, he develops second thoughts in the second part, branding etymological research as γλίσχρος. Long after the Stoics had faded into the background, the Neoplatonists continued to use the expression γλίσχρος to criticize certain interpretations of Platonic passages that are reminiscent of the Stoic approach to divine names and ancient mythology.

In this paper, I shall first briefly discuss the ambiguous attitude of the *Cratylus* towards etymology and in particular the passages in which etymologies are called γλίσχρος in the second part of the dialogue. I shall then turn to the Stoic reception of the *Cratylus*. Stoic etymological practices are in particular informed by a theory about word-formation that Socrates had developed in the second part of the *Cratylus*. This theory holds that words are constituted of so-called primary names, which are themselves meaningful. Since Socrates uses this theory of first

names to discredit certain etymologies as γλίσχρος, Stoic etymological practices too are vulnerable to this criticism of being sticky. I will next provide two examples of Platonists criticizing Stoic etymology for being γλίσχρος: the Academic Cotta in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* and the Middle Platonist Plutarch in *How to Listen to Poetry*. In the final part of the paper, I shall turn to examples of the term γλίσχρος in Neoplatonic commentaries on Plato's dialogues. While the Stoics don't play a role in these debates, one could argue that Neoplatonic commentators apply the term γλίσχρος to interpretations that have a thing or two in common with Stoic exegetical practices. In particular I shall focus on the case of Hermias' commentary on the prooemium of *Phaedrus*, in which the reader is offered both an example of 'sticky', i.e. Stoicizing, etymology and allegoresis and correct, i.e. Platonizing, etymology and allegoresis.

1. *Plato's* Cratylus*: Socrates' ambiguous attitude towards etymology*

Let us start by taking a brief look at Socrates' ambiguous appraisal of etymologies in the *Cratylus*. The dialogue begins with Socrates' examination of Hermogenes' position that the correctness of names is a matter of convention. According to Hermogenes, whatever we agree upon to call a thing will be its name. 'Horse' is the correct name of horses and 'donkey' that of donkeys for no other reason than that we have agreed to call horses and donkeys thus. If tomorrow we agree to call a horse 'donkey' and the other way around, these will from then on be their correct names. There is, according to this theory, no natural connection between names and things[1]. Socrates rejects this theory. He argues that there exists something like the natural correctness of names. As he points out, Hermogenes' theory implies that name-giving does not require any special knowledge or skill. Everybody could be a name-giver. According to Socrates, this is not the case. The function of names is to divide up the world in a natural way. Names are the instruments of the Platonic dialectician who, in his attempts to define each type of thing, carves up reality «at its joints» (cf. Plato, *Phaedr*. 265e). The skilled name-giver, at the instruction of the dialectician, next coins appropriate names that somehow reflect the dialectician's definitions. Hence the correctness of names is by nature, not by convention: names follow the natural divisions of reality and reflect the essential definition of their objects[2]. It is here that etymology comes in. Socrates claims that etymological analysis reveals the mind of the ancients. It is thus that we arrive at

[1] Cf. Plato, *Crat*. 383a-385a.
[2] Cf. Plato, *Crat*. 389d-390c.

the next part of the *Cratylus* (390e-427d), which consist of a long list of etymologies. Socrates produces these etymologies in order to demonstrate his previous point, i.e. that names are the product of a skilled name-giver and based on a careful philosophical analysis of the world. In the past, this seemingly endless series of etymologies was often seen as a sort of tedious joke on Plato's part. David Sedley (2003), however, has convincingly argued that Plato appears to have taken these etymologies perfectly seriously, as did subsequent Platonists. One need only think of the commentary of the *Cratylus* by the Neoplatonist Proclus, which focusses almost exclusively on the etymological section.

Whereas Platonists thus read the first part of the *Cratylus* as supportive of their own etymological activities, they turn to the last part of the dialogue when they wish to criticize Stoic etymology. In the last part of the dialogue, Socrates examines the position of Cratylus, according to which names have a natural correctness. On the basis of the discussion so far, one would assume that Cratylus' claim that names have a natural correctness would meet with Socrates' approval. This is not the case though. In the etymological section, Socrates had operated on the assumption that names consist of constitutive parts that are themselves condensed versions of words. When combined, these condensed words produce a definition of the object to which a name refers. In this way names may be said to be like their objects. But how about the constitutive elements of these meaningful parts of a name? Socrates now argues that these too have mimetic qualities. The sounds that we produce when we pronounce certain letters mimics certain qualities of the objects to which names refer. Socrates calls these primary names[3]:

> **T.1** ΣΩ. Ἃ μὲν τοίνυν ἐγὼ ᾔσθημαι **περὶ τῶν πρώτων ὀνομάτων** πάνυ μοι δοκεῖ ὑβριστικὰ εἶναι καὶ γελοῖα. τούτων οὖν σοι μεταδώσω, ἂν βούλῃ· σὺ δ' ἄν τι ἔχῃς βέλτιόν ποθεν λαβεῖν, πειρᾶσθαι καὶ ἐμοὶ μεταδιδόναι.
> ΕΡΜ. Ποιήσω ταῦτα. ἀλλὰ θαρρῶν λέγε.
> ΣΩ. Πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν τὸ ῥῶ ἔμοιγε φαίνεται ὥσπερ ὄργανον εἶναι πάσης τῆς κινήσεως, [...] πρῶτον μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ "ῥεῖν" καὶ "ῥοῇ" διὰ τούτου τοῦ γράμματος τὴν φορὰν μιμεῖται, εἶτα ἐν τῷ "τρόμῳ", εἶτα ἐν τῷ "τρέχειν", ἔτι δὲ ἐν τοῖς τοιοῖσδε ῥήμασιν οἷον "κρούειν", "θραύειν", "ἐρείκειν", "θρύπτειν", "κερματίζειν", "ῥυμβεῖν", πάντα ταῦτα τὸ πολὺ ἀπεικάζει διὰ τοῦ ῥῶ.
>
> Socrates Well, my impression about **primary names** seem to me to be entirely outrageous and absurd. Nonetheless, I'll share them with you, if you like. But if you have something better to offer, I hope you will share it with me.
> Hermogenes Have no fear, I will.
> Socrates First off, 'r' seems to me to be a tool for copying every sort of

[3] Plato, *Cratylus* 426b5-e4; tr. Reeve 1998

> motion (*kinesis*). [...] In any case, as I was saying, the letter 'r' seemed to the name-giver to be a beautiful tool for copying motion, at any rate he often uses it for this purpose. He first uses this letter to imitate motion in the names '*rhein*' ('flowing') and '*rhoe*' ('flow') themselves. Then in '*tromos*' ('trembling') and '*trechein*' ('running'), and in such verbs as '*krouein*' ('*striking*'), '*thrauein*' ('crushing'), '*ereikein*' ('rendering'), '*thruptein*' ('breaking'), *kermatizein* ('crumbling'), '*rhumbein*' ('whirling'), it is mostly 'r' he uses to imitate these motions.

As we will find below, it is precisely this theory of primary names that underlies the Stoic theory of word-composition and hence of etymology. In a somewhat unexpected move, Socrates now makes problems for Cratylus' position, and hence for that of the Stoics. As Socrates observes (*Crat*. 435a), in some cases words contain letters that are out of place. The Greek word for 'hardness', *sklêrotês*, for example, has as one of its first names the '*l*'-sound, which is said to imitate softness. If, notwithstanding the occurrence of such letters in certain names, we still understand what names refer to, we have to conclude that we do so on the basis of convention. It now follows that the correctness of names is both a matter of nature and convention[4]:

> **T.2** ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ ἀρέσκει μὲν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅμοια εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν· ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, **γλίσχρα** ᾖ ἡ ὁλκὴ αὕτη τῆς ὁμοιότητος, ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ᾖ καὶ τῷ φορτικῷ τούτῳ προσχρῆσθαι, τῇ συνθήκῃ, εἰς ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητα.
>
> I myself too prefer the view that names should be as much like the things as possible, but I fear that that defending this view is like hauling a ship up a **sticky** ramp, as Hermogenes suggested, and that we have to make use of this worthless thing, convention, in the correctness of names.

As, we will find below, later Platonists will use the word γλίσχρος to condemn certain instances of etymology and allegoresis as wrong-headed. I take it that this pejorative use of the word γλίσχρος in such contexts goes back on this passage. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear what exactly Socrates means when he uses the word γλίσχρος. As Socrates indicates, Hermogenes had been the first to use the expression in response to Socrates' contorted etymology of the word τέχνη, from which it would follow that art is «the possession of understanding»[5]:

> **T.3** ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν τοῦτό γε ἕξιν νοῦ σημαίνει, τὸ μὲν ταῦ ἀφελόντι, ἐμβαλόντι δὲ οὖ μεταξὺ τοῦ χεῖ καὶ τοῦ νῦ καὶ <τοῦ νῦ καὶ> τοῦ ἦτα;

[4] Plato, *Cratylus* 435c2-7, tr. Reeve 1998.

[5] Plato, *Cratylus* 414b-c; tr. Reeve 1998.

EPM. **Καὶ μάλα γε γλίσχρως**, ὦ Σώκρατες.

Socrates: If you remove the 't' and insert an 'o' between the 'ch' and the 'n' and the 'ê', doesn't it signify the possession of understanding (*hexis nou*).
Hermogenes: Yes, Socrates, but getting it to do so is like trying to haul a boat up **a very sticky ramp**!

From this passage, it is clear that γλίσχρος here indicates Hermogenes' reservations about the suggested etymology of τέχνη. One of the primary meanings of γλίσχρος is 'sticky', both in the literal sense of the word and in the informal meaning of 'problematic'[6]. The quite wordy rendering by C. D. C. Reeve of Hermogenes' brief reply καὶ μάλα γε γλίσχρως as «getting it to do so is like trying to haul a boat up a very sticky ramp» takes its inspiration from the interpretation of the phrase γλίσχρα ὁλκή in **T.2** by Bernard Williams: «'sticky haul', like getting a ship to move over a gummy slip-way: one has to work hard to try to keep the resemblance theory moving»[7].

Ademollo, in his commentary on this passage, however, suggests that γλίσχρος and ὁλκή may have a figurative meaning independent of each other[8]. After all, as he rightly notes, Socrates borrows the expression γλίσχρος from Hermogenes and the latter uses it without any reference to a ramp or ὁλκή. Ademollo translates the phrase as follows: «But I fear that this power of similarity is actually 'poor', to use Hermogenes' expression»[9].

As we will find, the use of the term γλίσχρος in later authors in relation to etymology and allegoresis corroborates Ademollo's suggestion: whenever γλίσχρος is used to question the likelihood of an etymology or allegorical interpretation, it is used as Hermogenes does, i.e. without the addition of the noun ὁλκή. I do not, however, completely agree with Ademollo about the interpretation of γλίσχρος and ὁλκή. Ademollo claims that Hermogens does not use γλίσχρος in its literal meaning of 'viscous' or 'sticky'. Yet, when Socrates discusses the etymologies of the words γλίσχρον, γλυκύ, and γλοιῶδες in *Crat*. 427b, he calls attention to the 'power' of the first name gamma. The gamma stops the tongue and is hence an appropriate letter to use in the case of sticky things. As such it is the opposite of the primary name lambda: when the tongue pronounces this sound it glides. Lambda is thus an appropriate first name in the case of a word such as λεῖον, smooth. I thus take it that when Hermogenes (**T.3**) describes Socrates' convoluted etymology of τέχνη as «very sticky» (μάλα γλίσχρως), he means that Socrates' explanation of

[6] Ademollo 201, 416; Cf. Taillardat 1962, 168 for the French rendering «collant».
[7] Williams 1982, 93; cf. Sedley 2003, 141 n.26.
[8] Ademollo 2011, 415-417.
[9] Ademollo 2011, 413.

τέχνη as «the possession of understanding» does not flow smoothly from the actual word τέχνη, and hence is not very convincing. It is in this sense of 'sticky', i.e. problematic, unconvincing, that the word will be used by Platonists in relation to certain cases of etymology and allegory.

As for ὁλκή, Ademollo, following *LSJ*, takes it that ὁλκὴ τῆς ὁμοιότητος refers to the power of likenesses that joins names to their objects. To my mind it refers rather to Socrates' rather forced attempts to demonstrate how, because of their constitutive first names, names are like the objects they refer to. It is precisely such attempts that were disqualified by Hermogenes as «very sticky», i.e. unconvincing. Socrates' point, then, in **T.2**, would be that while he has demonstrated in the first part of the dialogue that names resemble their objects, the sticky (γλίσχρος) attempts to forcefully «draw out» the likeness of words (ὁλκὴ τῆς ὁμοιότητος) by means of etymologies based on primary names have made it sufficiently clear that the likeness-thesis should not be pushed too hard[10]. Names have many elements (first names) that do not contribute towards the likeness of a name to its object. Even so, such names perform their function of picking out their objects. From this, Socrates concludes that the correctness of names is as much a matter of nature (i.e. likeness) as of convention.

2. *The Stoic reception of the* Cratylus*: first names and etymology*

As has been observed, e.g. by A.A. Long, this theory, according to which names are the products of expert name-givers and which holds that names are made up of primary names that have mimetic qualities, strongly recalls the Stoic theory about the origin of language. See, for example the following passage[11]:

> **T.4** Λεκτέον δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο ὅτι ⸀ἐμπίπτει εἰς τὸ προκείμενον λόγος βαθὺς καὶ ἀπόρρητος, ὁ περὶ φύσεως ὀνομάτων· πότερον, ὡς οἴεται Ἀριστοτέλης, θέσει εἰσὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἤ, ὡς νομίζουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει, μιμουμένων τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν τὰ πράγματα, καθ' ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα, καθὸ καὶ στοιχεῖά τινα τῆς ἐτυμολογίας εἰσάγουσιν, […].

[10] Cf. Dalimier 1998, 178: «this fishing for resemblance» («Moi aussi, je me plais à penser que les noms sont, autant que possible, semblables aux choses: mais, à vrai dire, cette pêche à la resemblance risqué d'être laborieuse - pour prendre le mot d'Hermogène»). For ὁλκή in the sense of a forced attempt to demonstrate the likeness of names, cf. *LSJ s.v.* ὁλκή A «drawing, trailing, dragging ... metaph. τοῖς δεινοῖς περὶ λόγων ὁλκήν skilled in *drawing* words *to a false meaning*, Plat. *Phlb*. 57d».

[11] Long-Sedley 1987, 32J (their translation) = Origen, *Against Celsus* I 24 (*SVF* 2.146).

> The foregoing matter is beset by the profound and mysterious issue of the nature of names. Are names, as Aristotle [*De Interpretatione* I] holds, the product of convention? Or, as the Stoics believe, of nature, the primary sounds being imitations of the things of which the names are said? This is the basis on which they introduce some elements of etymology.

We know that the *Cratylus* was an important text for the Stoics, and hence it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that this passage informs, at least in part, the Stoic theory about the formation of words and their etymological practices[12]. In keeping with the discussion of etymology on the basis of first names in the *Cratylus*, the Stoics assume that the names of the gods in particular are made up of meaningful first names to which other letters have been added that are of no consequence for the etymological explanation of the word. Stoic etymology focusses on divine names, rather than *onomata* (words/names) in general, because the Stoics assume that these divine names had been designed by the very first wise name-givers. These names corroborate the Stoic world-view. Since this is a physical one (the divine permeates the physical world), Stoic etymologies of divine names relate the divine to physical phenomena. Moreover, the Stoics assume that the wise men who coined the names of the gods predate the poets such as Homer and Hesiod who use the names in their mythical stories. The Stoics think little of the philosophical qualities of these later poets. This explains why Stoic readers of these poets tend to etymologize the divine names without paying too much attention to the poetical context in which these names occur, even though they may occasionally provide an allegorical interpretation of the mythical story in which a divine name appears[13].

In short, then, there are three particularities about Stoic etymology: (1.) Stoic etymology of divine names focusses on the so-called 'primary names', while disregarding the other letters and vowels that make up a name; (2.) Stoic etymology of divine names tends to disregard the context in which these names occur; (3.) Stoic etymology of divine names explains these names in physical terms. Platonists will

[12] Cf., e.g., Long-Sedley 1987, I, 195. On Stoic attempts to improve upon the Cratylean theory of first names, see Long 2005. On the influence of the *Cratylus* on Stoic theology, see also Ademollo 2012.

[13] Steinmetz 1986 and Long 1996 have gone so far as to argue that what we call Stoic allegoresis of poetical texts is nothing but etymology. They, however, appear to have overstated their case. As other scholars (e.g. Boys-Stones 2001, 54-59) have pointed out, the Stoics do not exclude the possibility that some of the mythical material in Homer and Hesiod goes back on the primeval sages who also coined the names of the gods. Hence, in those cases in which an allegorical reading of a passage from Homer or Hesiod is in concord with the etymologies of the divine names that occur in that passage, the Stoics assume that the passage goes back on the ancient sages and that, therefore, allegoresis is in order.

attack as γλίσχρος all three particularities of Stoic etymology, though not necessarily all three at the same time.

3. *Cicero,* De Natura Deorum *III.24, §§ 62-63: A Platonist critique of Stoic allegoresis and etymology*

It has sometimes been suggested that the early Stoa, precisely because they took up the theory of the primary names from the *Cratylus*, were aware of the sticky nature of etymology. Unlike later Stoics like, for example, Cornutus, the early Stoics would, for this reason, have been hesitant to practice etymological analysis[14]. Against this suggestion, it has been pointed out that we have solid evidence for the fact that even the founding fathers of Stoicism were given to etymologizing[15]. One of the passages comes from Cicero, who in *On the Nature of the Gods* I 36 has the Epicurean Velleius criticize Zeno's comments on Hesiod's *Theogony* and in particular on the names of Hesiod's gods[16]. Later on in the dialogue, the Academic skeptic Cotta joins forces with Velleius, when he pokes fun of the etymological enterprise of Zeno and other Stoics[17]:

> **T.5** Iam vero quid vos illa delectat explicatio fabularum et enodatio nominum? Exsectum a filio Caelum, vinctum itidem a filio Saturnum, haec et alia generis eiusdem ita defenditis ut ii qui ista finxerunt non modo non insani sed etiam fuisse sapientes videantur. In enodandis autem nominibus quod miserandum sit laboratis: "Saturnus quia se saturat annis, Mavors quia magna vertit, Minerva quia minuit aut quia minatur, Venus quia venit ad omnia, Ceres a gerendo". Quam periculosa consuetudo; in multis enim nominibus **haerebitis**: quid Veiovi facies, quid Volcano? quamquam quoniam Neptunum a nando appellatum putas, **nullum erit nomen quod non possis una littera explicare unde ductum sit**; in quo quidem magis tu mihi natare visus es quam ipse Neptunus.
>
> Another issue: why do you Stoics take such pleasure in explaining myths, and in pursuing the unpicking of names? You defend the castration of Caelus by his son, and the shackling of Saturn also by his son, and stories of this kind, so enthusiastically that those who originated them are regarded

[14] Cf., e.g., Long-Sedley 1987, I, 195.

[15] See, e.g., Tieleman 1996, 197 n. 6.

[16] On Zeno's etymologies of the names of Hesiod's gods (rather than his allegoresis of Hesiod's poem), see the seminal article by Steinmetz; cf. Algra 2001, who dispels the idea that Cicero here refers to a line-by-line commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* by Zeno.

[17] Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* III 24, §§ 62-63; tr. Walsh 1997 (adapted).

> not merely as sound in mind, but even as wise! As for your unpicking of names, you have to strain yourselves in such ways that one can only feel sorry for you. "Saturn is so called because he is sated with years; Mars, because he overturns might (*magna vertit*); Minerva, because she diminishes (*minuit*), or alternatively, threatens (*minatur*); Venus, because she visits (*venit*) all things; Ceres, because she bears fruit (*gerere*)". What a hazardous procedure this is! In the case of many names, **you will get stuck**: what can you make of Veiovis, or of Vulcan? Mind you, bearing in mind that you think that Neptune gets his name from *nando*, swimming, **there will be no name for which you cannot offer a derivation based on a single letter**! You seem to me to be more at sea in this pursuit than is Neptune himself.

This passage provides a good illustration of the three particular characteristics of Stoic etymology and allegoresis: (1.) Stoic allegoresis («explaining myths») tends to focus on the etymology of names («the unpicking of names»); (2.) these etymologies are about uncovering the so-called 'first names' («there will be no name for which you cannot offer a derivation based on a single letter!»); (3) these etymologies equate the gods with physical entities (e.g. Ceres with fruits, Neptune with water). The Academic Cotta here attacks two of these characteristics, i.e. the dependence of Stoic etymology on the theory of first names and the physical nature of Stoic etymology. As befits a philosophical school which takes its name from Plato's Academy, these two attacks on Stoic etymology are informed by two of Plato's writings, the *Phaedrus* and the *Cratylus*.

Let us start with the physical nature of Stoic etymology. Already J.B.Mayor and J.H.Swainson in their edition of *De Natura Deorum* refer readers to a passage from the beginning of the *Phaedrus* (229c4-230a7)[18]. There, Socrates appears to have little sympathy for attempts to interpret myths in physical terms. When asked by Phaedrus what he thinks of the myth of how the god Boreas abducted Orithyia, the daughter of the mythological Athenian king Erechtheus, Socrates responds that «wise men» (Plato, *Phdr*. 229c6: οἱ σοφοί) try to rationalize such myths by equating the gods with physical powers: the myth would refer to the fact that a gust of the North Wind had one day blown poor Orithyia over the rocks. Socrates himself considers such attempts to rationalize myths as a waste of precious time[19]:

> **T.6** ἐγὼ δέ, ὦ Φαῖδρε, ἄλλως μὲν τὰ τοιαῦτα χαρίεντα ἡγοῦμαι, λίαν δὲ δεινοῦ καὶ ἐπιπόνου καὶ οὐ πάνυ εὐτυχοῦς ἀνδρός, κατ' ἄλλο μὲν οὐδέν, ὅτι δ' αὐτῷ ἀνάγκη μετὰ τοῦτο τὸ τῶν Ἱπποκενταύρων εἶδος ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, καὶ αὖθις τὸ τῆς Χιμαίρας, καὶ ἐπιρρεῖ δὲ ὄχλος τοιούτων Γοργόνων καὶ Πηγάσων καὶ

[18] Mayor - Swainson 1880-1885, III, 140.

[19] Plato, *Phdr*. 229d2-e4; tr. Nehamas-Woodruff 1997 (slightly adapted).

> ἄλλων ἀμηχάνων πλήθη τε καὶ ἀτοπίαι τερατολόγων τινῶν φύσεων· αἷς εἴ τις ἀπιστῶν προσβιβᾷ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἕκαστον, ἅτε ἀγροίκῳ τινὶ σοφίᾳ χρώμενος, πολλῆς αὐτῷ σχολῆς δεήσει. ἐμοὶ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὰ οὐδαμῶς ἐστι σχολή.
>
> Now, Phaedrus, such explanations are amusing enough, but they are a job for a man I cannot envy at all. He'd have to be far too ingenious and work too hard – mainly because after that he will have to go on and give a rational account of the form of the Hippocentaurs, and then of the Chimera; and a whole flood of Gorgons and Pegasusses and other monsters, in large numbers and absurd forms, will overwhelm him. Anyone who does not believe in them, who wants to explain them away and make them plausible by means of some sort of rough wisdom, will need a great deal of time.

The passage from Cicero echoes Socrates' condemnation of such rationalizations. The observation that the Stoics consider those who engage in these activities as wise (*sapientes*) rather than as insane picks up Socrates' qualification of the wisdom of those in the business of producing rationalizing accounts of myths as wise persons, be it «some sort of rough wisdom». Cotta's ironical commiseration with the Stoic allegorists («As for your unpicking of names, you have to strain yourselves in such ways that one can only feel sorry for you») recalls Socrates' remark that he "cannot envy at all" those people who set out to rationalize myths.

Note, however, that Cotta in his attack on Stoic allegoresis not only draws on Plato's *Phaedrus* but also on the *Cratylus*. The rationalizers from the *Phaedrus*-passage, after all, did not necessarily resort to etymology of the Stoic kind which consist in an 'unpicking' of names in smaller elements, while it is especially the etymological nature of Stoic allegoresis that attracts the ridicule of Cotta. In many cases, he warns, it will be very difficult to come up with a proper explanation of the name. One risks to get stuck *in multis enim nominibus haerebitis*. While most translators gloss this phrase over, I suggest that we should take *haerebitis* as a reference to the qualification of etymologies as sticky, i.e. as γλίσχρος, in the *Cratylus*. All the more so, because Cotta's connects his point about how difficult the Stoics may find it to etymologize certain divine names such as Veiovis or Vulcan to the theory of primary names («there will be no name for which you cannot offer a derivation based on a single letter!»). As such, this recalls Socrates' reason for calling attempts to etymologize on the basis of first names as «sticky» in **T.2**.

4. *Plutarch,* On How to Study Poetry*: the rejection of Stoic etymology as sticky*

Corroboration for my claim that Cotta's criticism of Stoic etymological practices goes back on the sticky passage from the *Cratylus* is provided by Plutarch of

Chaironeia. In his treatise *On How to Study Poetry* Plutarch adopts Plato's critical attitude towards Homer and Hesiod. Plato had insisted in the *Republic* that Homer and Hesiod should not be mistaken for teachers. Their aim is to entertain their public, not to educate it. For this reason, their poems contain a lot of elements that may please their non-philosophical audiences, but that are offensive to the philosophically inclined. One may think for example of the blasphemous stories about gods behaving badly. Plato admonishes educators to purge existing poetry from such elements. He rejects the suggestion that such passages may be neutralized by means of allegoresis. Plutarch takes a similar approach to poetry. For this reason, he is critical of Stoic allegoresis, which, as we saw above, tries to give philosophical sense to such a blasphemous story as that of the castration of Ouranos/Caelus. Since Stoic allegoresis centers around etymology, Plutarch, not unlike Cicero's Cotta, targets in particular the Stoic fondness for strained explanations of divine names[20]:

> **T.7** Δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμελῶς ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν Κλεάνθους παιδιὰν παραιτεῖσθαι· κατειρωνεύεται γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτε προσποιούμενος ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὸ
>
> Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰδηθεν μεδέων
>
> καὶ τὸ
>
> Ζεῦ ἄνα Δωδωναῖε
>
> κελεύων ἀναγιγνώσκειν ὑφ᾽ ἕν, ὡς τὸν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀναθυμιώμενον ἀέρα διὰ τὴν ἀνάδοσιν ἀναδωδωναῖον ὄντα. **καὶ Χρύσιππος δὲ πολλαχοῦ γλίσχρος ἐστίν**, οὐ παίζων ἀλλ᾽ εὑρησιλογῶν ἀπιθάνως, καὶ παραβιαζόμενος εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην εἶναι τὸν δεινὸν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ διαβεβηκότα τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ λόγου.
>
> While it is also necessary not to pass over the words carelessly, yet one should eschew the puerility of Cleanthes; for there are times when he uses a mock seriousness in pretending to interpret the words,
>
> Father Zeus, enthroned on Ida,
>
> And
>
> Zeus, lord of Dodona,
>
> bidding us in the latter case to read the last two words as one [taking the word 'lord' as the preposition 'up'] as though the air exhaled from the earth were 'updonative' because of its being rendered up! **And Chrysippus also is often quite petty/sticky**[21], although he does not indulge in jesting, but wrests the words ingeniously, yet without carrying conviction, as when he

[20] Plutarch, *How to Study Poetry* 31E; tr. Babbitt 1927 (slightly adapted).

[21] Cf. Hunter - Russell 2011, 178: «**γλίσχρος** 'sticky', 'difficult', of someone given to pedantic problems, cf. 43a μικρὰ καὶ γλίσχρα προβλήματα».

> would force the phrase 'wide-seeing' son of Cronos to signify 'clever in conversation', that is to say, with a widespread power of speech.

Plutarch here opposes Cleanthes' supposedly youthful playfulness to Chrysippus' seriousness. If Cleanthes is just playing about, there is no reason to take his explanations of divine names, which apparently include both proper names and epithets, seriously. Interestingly, Cleanthes explains the phrase Ζεῦ ἄνα Δωδωναῖε in a physical manner that recalls the rationalizing account of the Boreas-myth from the *Phaedrus*. In both cases, the rationalizing accounts seeks to explain the myth or the divine name from physical causes, in particular from streams of air. We will come back to this type of physical explanation when we will discuss the relevant passage from Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus* below (**T.11**).

If Cleanthes at least had the good sense to treat the convoluted Stoic etymologies as some sort of game, Chrysippus took them completely seriously. He is said to be γλίσχρος. As in the case with the forced attempts of Socrates to prove the likeness between names and their objects (the ὁλκὴ τῆς ὁμοιότητος), Plutarch here accuses Chrysippus of a forced reading of the text (cf. παραβιαζόμενος). It is because of the forced nature of Stoic allegoresis and etymology, that it comes across as sticky, i.e. «unconvincing» (ἀπιθάνως).

Plutarch is not alone in his critique of Chrysippus' etymologies as forced. Even the card-carrying Stoic Seneca complains about Chrysippus that he «twists around» (*deflectit*) the names of mythological characters such as the Graces[22]:

> **T.8** Horum nominum interpretationem, prout cuique visum est, deflectit et ad rationem aliquam conatur perducere, cum Hesiodus puellis suis, quod voluit, nomen imposuerit. […] Chrysippus quoque, penes quem subtile illud acumen est et in imam penetrans veritatem, qui rei agendae causa loquitur et verbis non ultra, quam ad intellectum satis est, utitur, totum librum suum his ineptiis replet, ita ut de ipso officio dandi, accipiendi, reddendi beneficii pauca admodum dicat.
>
> Each authority twists the interpretation of these names as it suits him, trying to reduce them to some orderly plan; in fact, though, Hesiod just assigned to the girls the names that he felt like giving them. … Chrysippus, who is famous for his sophisticated intellectual analysis that gets to the heart of the truth, and who only says what is needed to get the job done and never uses more words than he needs in order to be understood – Chrysippus, too, filled his entire book with this nonsense, leaving himself only a little bit of room to discuss the actual process of giving, receiving, and returning benefits.

[22] Seneca, *On Benefits* I 3,7-8; tr. Griffin and Inwood 2011.

All of this is not to say that Plutarch rejects allegoresis and etymology as such, nor the Stoic assumption that some myths may contain remnants of very ancient philosophical speculations. In this context, Plutarch makes a distinction between poetical myths, such as those of Homer and Hesiod, and religious ones. Unlike the former, religious myths are meant to be read allegorically. One example is Plutarch's discussion of the myth of Isis and Osiris, in which he happily combines allegoresis with etymology of divine names in a way reminiscent of the Stoics[23]. But even in this case, Plutarch discards some allegorical interpretations as too fanciful[24]:

> **T.9** καὶ μέντοι Ἡρακλείτου τοῦ φυσικοῦ λέγοντος, " Ἅιδης καὶ Διόνυσος ωὐτὸς ὅτεῳ μαίνονται καὶ ληναΐζουσιν," εἰς ταύτην ὑπάγουσι τὴν δόξαν. οἱ γὰρ ἀξιοῦντες Ἅιδην λέγεσθαι τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς οἷον παραφρονούσης καὶ μεθυούσης ἐν αὐτῷ, **γλίσχρως ἀλληγοροῦσι**.
>
> Moreover, since Heraclitus the physical philosopher says, "The same are Hades and Dionysus, to honour whom they rage and rave," people are inclined to come to this opinion. In fact, those who insist that the body is called Hades, since the soul is, as it were, deranged and inebriate when it is in the body, **allegorize in an unconvincing manner**.

Once again, the word γλίσχρος is used as a negative qualification. It signals that the proposed allegorical interpretation lacks credibility. It may be no coincidence that Plutarch uses it in connection with «Heraclitus the physical philosopher», i.e. the early Greek philosopher by that name, who had been hailed by the Stoics as one of their intellectual ancestors[25].

5. *Hermias Commentary on the* Phaedrus*: sticky versus proper etymology*

Glenn Most has recently argued that even though there exist manifest affinities between ancient etymology and allegoresis, they do not seem to be correlated systematically in antiquity, except in the case of the Stoics (Most 2016, 70):

> Allegoresis is largely absent among most of the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus and is found prominently only in the Stoa and in Neo-

[23] On Plutarch's interpretation of this myth and its affinity with Stoic readings of myths, cf. Heath 2012, 125-127.

[24] Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 362A-B, tr. Babbitt 1936 (adapted).

[25] Cf. Heraclitus D16 ed. Laks-Most (= DK 22B15); for the authority that Heraclitus enjoyed among the Stoics, cf. Long 2005, 39.

> platonism; etymology is lacking for the most part among the Pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Neoplatonism and is attested above all only in Plato and the Stoa.

This claim needs to be modified. There are sufficient examples of Platonists, and in particular Neoplatonists, engaging in etymology. Above, we have already come across the example of the Middle Platonist Plutarch, who in his *On Isis and Osiris* enthusiastically etymologizes the names of Egyptian gods in order to demonstrate that the ancient Egyptians already subscribed to a Platonic world-view. Porphyry wrote a treatise *On Divine Names*, while Proclus, in his commentary on the *Cratylus*, focusses in particular on Socrates' interpretations of divine names and tries to square these with his own Neoplatonic theology[26]. However, whereas Neoplatonists were happy to continue the Stoic tradition of etymologizing divine and other names, they took a different view to the relation between those names and the context in which these names occur. As we have seen, the Stoics had accorded pride of place to etymology as an exegetical tool when reading Homer and Hesiod, while they paid far less attention to the context in which these divine names occurred. For the Platonists, the context matters as much as the etymologies of divine (and other) names. Most, then, is right to claim that the Neoplatonists did no longer put as much emphasis on etymology as an exegetical tool as the Stoics had done, yet this does not mean that etymology disappears all together from Neoplatonic hermeneutical toolbox.

One reason behind this downgrading of etymology is, I suggest, the fact that the Neoplatonists did not only focus their exegetical efforts on the myths of Homer and Hesiod, whom, unlike the Stoics, they considered as true sages, but also on the myths and the prooemia of Plato's dialogues. To Platonists, Plato is a perfect sage and we thus have to assume that all elements of his dialogues are of significance and in harmony with each other[27]. Thus, whereas the Stoics had been happy to focus their attention on divine names and to disregard the immediate context, Neoplatonists hold that the exegesis of one element of a Platonic text, e.g. the etymology of a name, should be in keeping with other elements, such as the context in which a given name occurs. Moreover, whereas the Stoics had maintained that god is in the physical cosmos, Plato had firmly located the divine in his intelligible realm. Hence, the Neoplatonists interpret Plato's myths and prooemia

[26] I discuss Porphyry's interest in etymologies in Van den Berg 2008, 73-76; on Proclus' commentary on the etymologies of divine names from the *Cratylus*, see Van den Berg 2008, 161-197.

[27] On the Neoplatonic conception of the Platonic dialogue as a unity in which all elements contribute to one single goal (σκοπός), see, e.g., Coulter 1976, 77-94.

metaphysically, not physically. It is in this vein, for example, that Plotinus, when discussing Plato's myth about the birth of Eros from the *Symposium*, rejects a rather physical interpretation of Eros as the cosmos as γλίσχρος, i.e. forced, and «being out of tune» (ἀπᾳδόντως) with the fact that Plato elsewhere refers to Eros as being «the guardian of beautiful boys» (*Phaedr*. 265c2–3) and being «without bed, without shoes, without a roof» (*Symp*. 203d1-2)[28]. The great French scholar Pierre Hadot renders γλίσχρος here as «subtilités forcées», citing both Plato *Crat*. 414c (**T.3**) and Plutarch, *On How to Listen to Poetry* 31e (**T.7**) as parallels for this use of the word in this sense[29].

In the final part of this paper, I will study the exegesis of the Neoplatonist Hermias of the prooemium of the *Phaedrus* as an illustration of this difference between Neoplatonic and Stoic approaches to etymology. Part of this prooemium is the myth about the rape of Orithyia by Boreas that played a role in the attack on Stoic etymological practices by Cotta in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*. At the beginning of the *Phaedrus* (227b4-5), when Socrates runs into Phaedrus the latter informs Socrates that he had just encountered Lysias who, together with Epicrates, was staying at the house of one Morychus. Hermias comments[30]:

> **T.10** Τινὲς μὲν οὖν ἐπεχείρησαν καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀναπτύξεως Ἐπικράτους καὶ Μορύχου καὶ Φαίδρου λέγειν τι, ὡς κρατουμένου τοῦ σκοτεινοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἐνύλου ὑπὸ τοῦ λαμπροῦ τοῦ Φαίδρου· ἐπειδὴ δὲ **γλίσχρον** εἶναι δοκεῖ, τό γε προσφυὲς μᾶλλον πᾶσι τοῖς λεγομένοις τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς ἱστορίας λάβωμεν. Ἱστορεῖται τοίνυν ὁ μὲν Λυσίας καλλιεπείᾳ τῶν καθ' αὑτὸν ὑπερενεγκεῖν, ἐρᾶν δὲ τῶν παίδων τὸν ἀκόλαστον ἔρωτα, Φαῖδρος δὲ εὐειδὴς μὲν τὸ φαινόμενον, ἐπτοημένος δὲ περὶ τὸν ἔξω ῥέοντα λόγον· ὁ δὲ Μόρυχος γάστρις τις ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία αὐτὸν ὡς γαστρίμαργον διαβάλλει· τὸ οὖν τὸν ἀκόλαστον Λυσίαν ἐν τῇ τοῦ γαστριμάργου οἰκίᾳ παραδοῦναι μένοντα, πολλὴν ἔχει τὴν ἀκολουθίαν.
>
> Some people have attempted to base something on an interpretation of the names Epikrates, Morychus and Phaedrus - along the lines that the dark (*to skoteinon*) and enmattered is overcome (*kratoumenos*) by the brightness (*to lampron*) of Phaedrus - but since this seems dubious (**sticky**), let us deal with what is anyway more germane to all that is said [here], the historical facts. Lysias, then, is reported to have surpassed his contemporaries in beauty of language and to have had a licentious passion for boys, and Phaedrus to have been beautiful in outward appearance and passionate about the spoken

[28] Plotinus, *Enn*. III 5 [50] 5, 18-21.

[29] Hadot 1990, 123.

[30] Hermias, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus* 19, 17-20, 2, tr. Baltzly - Share 2019.

> word. Morychus, for this part, was a certain gluttonous person and comedy denigrates him as a glutton. To have represented the licentious Lysias, then, as staying in the glutton's house is appropriate.

As for the proposed etymologies of these names: the name of Morychus is derived, not implausibly, from the adjective μόρυχος, which means something like 'dark' or 'obscure'. The name of Phaedrus means something like 'the shining one' (φαιδρός = bright, beaming). The name of Epikrates is derived from κρατέω, 'to overcome', 'to master'. Morychus thus represents matter, which the Neoplatonists standardly associated with darkness, that is overcome (Epikrates) by the divine intelligible (Phaedrus). The anonymous 'some' who have proposed this interpretation are evidently (Neo-)Platonists, not Stoics. Even so, Hermias lays the same criticism at their doorstep as Cotta and Plutarch did at that of the Stoics: their interpretations are 'sticky' in the sense that they are far-fetched and rather arbitrary (hence «dubious», as Baltzly and Share translate γλίσχρος). Hermias himself offers an alternative commonsensical interpretation that takes into account the historical facts and that thus is all the more convincing. Lysias was a renowned orator attracted to beautiful boys, Phaedrus a such a beautiful boy who was attracted to displays of rhetoric, and Morychos was a glutton, so it need not surprise us that the hedonistic Lysias ends up staying with the equally hedonistic Morychos, nor that there is some sort of attraction between Phaedrus and Lysias.

Above, we noted that Stoic allegories are physical in nature. Cleanthes, for example, had explained the epithet Dôdônaios, from the air that at Dodona exhales from the earth (**T.7**). Hermias rejects such physical interpretations as γλίσχρος. Discussing Socrates' reservations about the rationalizing interpretation of the myth of the rape of Orithyia by Boreas, according to which a gush of wind would have blown the girl from the rocks, Hermias writes[31]:

> **T.11** Αὕτη γὰρ ἡ ἀνάπτυξις ὡς ἀναπτύσσουσιν οἱ σοφοί, τουτέστιν οἱ περὶ τὰ φυσικὰ διατρίψαντες, **γλίσχρος** ἐστὶ καὶ **εἰκοτολογία**· οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ τὰ ὄντως ὄντα ἀνατρέχουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ φύσεις καὶ πνεύματα καὶ ἀέρας καὶ δίνας, ὡς ἐν Φαίδωνι ἔφη. Τούτους οὖν τοὺς φυσικοὺς καὶ οὕτως ἀναπτύσσοντας διαβάλλει ὡς εἰς ἀοριστίαν καὶ ἀπειρίαν ἐκπίπτοντας, καὶ μὴ ἐπὶ ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν καὶ θεοὺς ἀνατρέχοντας.
>
> For this interpretation – the kind of interpretation the scientists (*sophoi*), that is, those who waste their time on natural phenomena, produce – is **sticky** and

[31] Hermias, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus* 32, 25-33, 3 (Lucarini - Moreschini), tr. Baltzly - Share 2019 (adapted).

> **mere conjecture** (*eikotologia*). They do not have recourse to the truly real things but to natural phenomena (*physeis*) and winds and exhalations and vortices as Plato said in the *Phaedo*. So he reproaches these natural scientists and people who interpret [myths] along these lines for tumbling into the boundless and unlimited and for failing to have recourse to soul and intellect and gods.

Hermias here picks up on Socrates' remark that the rationalizers aim at producing plausible accounts (**T.6**: κατὰ τὸ εἰκός). Such accounts may be sticky in the sense that they are arbitrary, as was the case with the interpretations based solely on etymologies. Moreover, they are «mere conjectures» (εἰκοτολογία), since they take the physical world as their point of reference. For a Platonist the physical world, because of its instable nature, is not the object of knowledge and certainty, but of *doxa* and probability (*eikos*). Hence Plato in the *Timaeus* (29d, 59c, 68d) refers to the account of the creation of the material cosmos as a «likely myth» (εἰκὼς μῦθος) and not as a true account (ἀληθὴς λόγος).

Since Hermias holds that each element of a Platonic dialogue should be interpreted so as to be in line with the over-arching theme of that dialogue, he rejects a physical interpretation of the Boreas-myth as being inconsistent with the central message of the dialogue, i.e. that we ascend towards the contemplation of the intelligible. Hence Hermias provides his readers with the following alternative interpretation of the myth[32]:

> **T.12** Ὠρείθυια γὰρ εἴη ἂν ψυχὴ ἐφιεμένη τῶν ἄνω (ἀπὸ τοῦ 'ὀρούω' καὶ τοῦ 'θύω' κατὰ ἐπέκτασιν Ἀττικήν)· ἁρπάζεται τοίνυν ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ παρὰ τοῦ ἄνωθεν καταπνέοντος Βορρᾶ· εἰ δὲ καὶ κατὰ κρημνοῦ φέρεται, καὶ τοῦτο ἁρμόδιον· τελευτᾷ γὰρ τὸν προαιρετικὸν θάνατον, τὸν φυσικὸν μὴ δεχομένη, καὶ ἀφίησι τὴν προαιρετικὴν ζωήν, τὴν φυσικὴν ζῶσα· καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἀλλ' ἢ μελέτη θανάτου. Ἔστω οὖν Ὠρείθυια καὶ ἡ τοῦ Φαίδρου ψυχή, ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης Βορρᾶς, ἁρπάζων αὐτὸν καὶ καταφέρων εἰς τὸν προαιρετικὸν θάνατον.
>
> For 'Orithyia' (Ôreithuia) would be a soul desiring the things from on high—[the name is] from *orouô* ['rush towards'] and *thuô* ['desire eagerly'] with Attic lengthening. Now such a soul is snatched up by Boreas blowing from on high. And if it is also carried down from a cliff, that too is appropriate. For it dies the voluntary death, not undergoing a natural one, and puts aside the voluntary life, living the natural one; and philosophy is nothing other than training for death. So let Orithyia also be the soul of Phaedrus, and Socrates be Boreas, snatching him and carrying him down to the voluntary death.

[32] Hermias, *Commentary on the Phaedrus* 31, 21-28; tr. Baltzly - Share 2019.

This passages nicely illustrates the integral approach of the Neoplatonists to allegoresis. Both the central event of the story and the etymology of the name Orithyia are taken into account. The name Orithyia is here etymologized in keeping with the fact that she died because she was thrown from a cliff. This event is next interpreted in Neoplatonic metaphysical terms: Orithyia represents the soul that wishes to ascend towards the intelligible realm and hence dies «a voluntary death», i.e. a soul that already in this life-time denounces the body through an ascetic way of life as recommended by Socrates in the *Phaedo*[33]. Next, Hermias even connects this story and its allegorical interpretation to the larger context of the *Phaedrus* as such. Orithyia is now associated with Phaedrus, and Socrates with Boreas. This is in line with the guiding heuristic principal of the Neoplatonic commentators that Plato's dialogues have one central aim (σκοπός), towards which all elements of that dialogue are directed, including the characters of the dialogue (in this case Phaedrus and Socrates) and seemingly less relevant passages, such as Socrates' brief discussion of the myth of Orithyia and Boreas.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have studied the use of the term γλίσχρος in the context of ancient etymology and allegoresis. I have argued that the use of this word in such contexts originates from a specific passage from Plato's *Cratylus*. There, Socrates claims that words consist of meaningful primary elements, yet rejects attempts to systematically etymologize words by dissolving them into these primary names as 'sticky' (γλίσχρος). It is for this reason, so I suggested, that this term later on became associated with Stoic etymology, because the Stoics sought to explain divine names from such primary elements. A first passage in which the sticky nature of Stoic etymology was criticized was provided by Cicero. We found that the critique of Stoic allegoresis and etymology by the Academic Cotta took its inspiration not just from the *Cratylus*, but also from Socrates' condemnation of attempts to rationalize myths in the *Phaedrus*. This combination of two Platonic passages suggests that this line of criticism was developed by the Platonic Academy – it may be relevant that the argument is put forward by the Academic Cotta – perhaps in an attempt to distinguish between Platonist and Stoic allegoresis and etymology. We

[33] According to the *Phaedo* 63e-64b, pure souls await a better destiny after death than impure ones after one's natural death. In order to become pure, a philosopher needs to distance himself as far as possible from the body and its pleasures, thus leading a life that other people may consider as some sort of premature, voluntary death.

do not know whether earlier Platonists combined a critique of the Stoics with a positive account of legitimate, i.e. Platonic, allegoresis and etymology. The Neoplatonists Hermias offers us a glimpse what such an account, if it existed, may have looked like. First of all, names should not be etymologized in isolation from the stories in which they occur, as the Stoic tended to do. Instead the etymological explanation of a name should somehow fit with in the allegorical reading of a myth as a whole. Moreover, these myths should not be interpreted in physical terms, as the Stoics had done, but in metaphysical ones. The reason for this is that if we assume that myths contain some hidden truth, they must refer to the intelligible, since one cannot have true knowledge and certainty about the physical world. Of the physical world, one can at best have *doxa* and probability (*eikos*).

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