

## Abstract

The dissertation argues that allegory as a literary mode plays a role in early Greek poetics as a counterpart to the much better known poetics and aesthetics of mimesis. The main parts of the dissertation focus on early epic (Homer and Hesiod), pre-Socratic philosophers (Heraclitus and Parmenides) and Plato.

The first part of the dissertation argues that epic representations of gods involve a tension between concrete deity and abstract force which casts doubt on the exact nature of the gods themselves, and thus the faithfulness and credibility of the representation of them. On this view, the Homeric gods can be seen both as mimetic, faithful representations and, more sceptically, as allegorical representations of abstract and incomprehensible metaphysical reality.

This tension between literal and allegorical is then seen as fundamental to the philosophical approaches to myth, especially Plato's. While most scholarship has focused on philosophical critiques of poetry and myth, this dissertation argues that the critique of mimetic poetry should be seen against a different, allegorical poetics, theorized especially in Plato's *Republic*. While criticizing mimetic poetry, Plato counters mimesis with a different poetics, according to which correctly crafted poetry is fundamentally connected to philosophy. On this picture, poetry and myth not only serve as illustrations of philosophical truths, but also provide the necessary framework for philosophical thinking. The dissertation thus attributes to Plato a subtler and more profound view of poetry than has traditionally been done, a view based on thorough reflection on the nature and traditional function of myth and poetry in Greek society.