

One of the best known and most persistently cited pieces of evidence for the supposed "Orphic" doctrine of original sin and the imagined "Orphic" anthropogonic myth of the Titans' murder of Dionysos Zagreus is the reference to the "Titanic nature" in Plato *Laws* 701bc. Taken out of the context of the Platonic argument, this reference has been read as an irrefutable indication that the whole myth of human's creation from the Titans who murdered Dionysos was known to Plato. However, by examining the reference, not as a fragment of Orphic doctrine, but as part of Plato's illustration of his speaker's point, I show that it is clearly a reference, not to the secret tale of the murder of Zagreus, but rather to the well-known story of the Titans' rebellion against the gods. The referent of Plato's allusion was recognized by Cicero (*de legibus* 3.2.5.), but Bernabé has recently revived arguments for reading this passage in the context of Olympiodorus' dual nature of mankind. Bernabé attempts to defend his rereading of *Laws* 701bc by pairing it with another passage from the *Laws*, 854ac, and claiming that the two passages can only be seen as referring to the same Orphic idea. However, despite his claim that these two passages from the *Laws* can only be understood in terms of a single mythic paradigm that stems from the Orphic myth of Zagreus, these two passages from the *Laws* are in fact easily explicable in terms of myths well-known in the Greek mythological tradition. The first belongs to the myths of the rebellion against the gods by the Titans and Giants, which resulted in pitched battles before the gods restored order to the cosmos by defeating their foes. The second evokes the familiar idea of the Erinyes driving to madness and new crimes someone whose inheritance includes crimes that have not yet been expiated. These tales of the Titanomachy and the Furies were recognizable in a variety of forms from a variety of sources to Plato's audience, and, in each passage, the well-known referent makes better sense in the context of Plato's argument than would the imagined reference to an esoteric Orphic doctrine. Both of these texts must be replaced in their proper contexts, and the strands of myth they employ must be seen in their proper place in the Greek mythic tradition. The threads of the punishment of the Titans and the problems of inherited guilt that scholars have tried to weave into the Zagreus myth belong instead to other aspects of the ancient Greek religious and mythological tradition. Rather than hunting for Orphic influences and excerpting fragments out of context to recreate a lost esoteric doctrine, we must consider Plato's references in the context of the arguments he is presenting to his audience. By such a method, we can gain a better appreciation of the ways in which Plato manipulates the mythic tradition of his society, reworking familiar and traditional tales and elements to suit his philosophic purposes.

Bernabé, A. (2002). "La toile de Pénélope: a-t-il existé un mythe orphique sur Dionysos et les Titans?" Revue de l'histoire des religions 219(4): 401-433.

Bernabé, A. (2003). Autour du mythe orphique sur Dionysos et les Titans. Quelques notes critiques. Des Géants à Dionysos. Mélanges offerts à F. Vian. D. A. P. Chuvin. Alessandria: 25-39.