



## Myth Made Fact with Dr. Louis Markos

### Lesson 17: The Myths of Plato

#### Outline:

##### The Myths of Plato

- Plato decides he has to kick the poets out of his perfect republic.
- Aristotle wrote The Poetics to show how tragedy presents a more perfected view of the world.
- Plato is actually the greatest of all poets.
- He wrote in prose, in dialogues.
- He used his imagination to make philosophy come alive.
- As we watch political decay, we are watching the decay of a great family.
- In his greatest dialogues, middle dialogues, all contain myths or allegories.
- He turns from the dialectic and tells a myth.
- Aristotle wrote very dryly.
- He uses them to draw us closer to goodness, truth, and beauty.

##### The Allegory of the Cave

- Behold we are like prisoners trapped deep in a cave, we are chained to chairs and our chairs are permanently locked and facing the back wall of a cave.
- Behind us is a roaring fire.
- Between us and the fire are puppeteers.
- The light from the fire cast the shadows of the puppets onto the walls. All of us have grown up thinking that is reality.
- We have looked at the wall and thought it was reality, even though they are an imitation of an imitation.
- What if a man broke from his chains, he was able to turn around and saw the puppets and the fire. After he adjusted he came to realize he was looking at shadows of puppets.
- If he is courageous enough he will make his way out of the cave to see reality. Eventually he can look up at the sun itself.
- This is a myth about the journey of the philosopher. We don't see the True, and the Good, and the Beautiful. The philosopher has to turn away from the imitation and the shadow and seek after the Truth that is behind that.
- The sun is the form of the Good.
- For Plato, that journey is a journey toward the blessed vision of the forms.
- The early Church fathers from Augustine to Aquinas adopted and embraced the beatific vision.
  - The beatific good we're seeking is the personal triune God.



## The Symposium

- The journey of the lover:
  - You begin by loving one individual, love all people, love nations, love ideas, loving love itself. You are going on a journey toward greater and greater beauty.
  - Moving from a transitory beauty to an eternal beauty.

## The Phaedrus

- Why, when we fall in love to we get gooseflesh?
- Before we were born, our soul had wings and we soared in this celestial flight outside of the universe. As we did so, we communed with the forms of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.
- The gravitational force of earth pulled us down into a body. After a while we forgot what happened in the preexistence of the soul.
  - It suggests that our soul existed in heaven before coming to this world.
- Sometimes, when you fall in love and you gaze into the eyes of your beloved and you are reminded of the form of beauty that you once saw in your preexistent state. Your soul puts forth feathers that prick your skin, causing gooseflesh.
- We are on a journey moving from the less real to the more real.
- Heaven is not less real, it is more real.

## The Timaeus

- It has a craftsmen god, who creates things of beauty and makes the angels so strong that they don't decay.
- The Timaeus comes closest to Genesis.
- Myths are about helping us understand how the world is how it is.
- Almost a third of the Bible is written in poetry. In poetry, in myth we have an imaginative connection that makes the glory of God's truth and love become real.
- The myths and poetry can be like the flesh that gives us distinction.

## The very last part of the Republic

- Er has a near death experience.
- Er gets a glimpse of the afterlife.
- Those that are truly evil are punished.
- Others get to choose the lot of your next life. An evil person chose the lot of a tyrant. Odysseus chooses the life of a regular common man, and he chooses well.
- Plato spends a lot of time talking about origins and endings helping us to understand our lives.

## The Symposium, the Soulmate

- This idea comes from Plato.



- The men come together to celebrate love.
- In the beginning we were two people put together. The original person who was double became prideful and arrogant and tried to overthrow the gods (Tower of Babel story).
- Zeus sent a thunderbolt in punishment and cut us in half. That is why we are ever seeking our soulmate.
- Sometimes there are truths that can only be conveyed through the imagination, a story, through a myth.