Genesis 2–3 and Alcibiades's speech in Plato's *Symposium*: A cultural critical reading

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The purpose of this article is to discuss some basic problems and methodological steps concerning the encounter between Hebrews and Greeks in the Classical period and its impact on the Hellenistic era. The relationship between the Old Testament and Ancient Greek literature will be examined on the basis of Genesis 2–3 and Alcibiades's speech in Plato's *Symposium* (212c–223d). The following considerations and models of interpretation can arise from the analysis of Alcibiades's speech compared to M- and LXX-Genesis 2–3: (1) Ancient Greek writers were familiar with Old Testament oral or written traditions through improvised translations. They prepared the way for the LXX and, in their compositions, were in dispute with them although they do not make specific references to the Hebrews and their literature; (2) Hebrew authors knew the works of Ancient Greek authors and used Greek philosophical terminology which they creatively adapted to Semitic models; (3) Both models are possible. One should not rush to any decisions but examine each case individually, in the original language.

Introduction

Genesis 2–3 is of central importance for the anthropology of the Old Testament: It describes in dramatic fashion the creation and fall of humans, using selectively language and images with a range of references beyond themselves although they seemingly refer to physical processes (Dafni 2000:30–48, 2006:596–607, 2010:20–36). Apart from the predominating anthropomorphisms regarding all expressions of the Yahweh-human relationship, symbolic language and imagery are found in the context of humanity's fall, namely in Genesis 2:16 (the tree of knowledge of good and evil causing death), in Genesis 3:24 (the tree of life promising immortality and eternal life but guarded by the 'Cherub', a great winged creature [1 Ki 6–8; Ezek 10:28], and a 'fiery flashing sword') as well as in Genesis 3:1 (the talking serpent, 'the most subtle of all the wild animals, that Yahweh God had made').[1] MT-Gen 3:1 uses the words (a) נָחָשׁ, which etymologically also hints at 'copper, bronze' (נְחֹשֶׁת) (cf. 'bronze serpent'; Nm 29:9; 2 Ki 18:4)[2], and (b) [3]עָרוּם ('cunning/clever'), which may also allude to the nakedness of the first people.[4] According to the LXX, the serpent is φρονιμώτατος πάντων τῶν θηρίων (see also Mt 10:16), literally 'the wisest of all wild animals'. Pietersma and Wright (2007) translated it with 'the most sagacious'. Consequently, this animal shows good (or bad) judgement and understanding just like a human being. However, the text underlines that there was no helper for the humans amongst all living creatures in paradise (Gn 2:18), and therefore, there was no real communion between humans and animals. In this way, the temptation of the humans by the talking serpent is introduced, and the fall of the humans is prepared: After eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they realise their nakedness before God (Gn 3).

Genesis 2–3 is a text reflecting narratives from earlier than the monarchic period of Ancient Israel's history (Eissfeldt 1964:234–271; cf. Zenger & Frevel 2012:88), but they were reworked in a redaction process that continued down to perhaps the end of the 4th century BCE (Blenkinsopp 2002:49–61; Gertz, Schmid & Witte 2002; Levin 1993; Van Seters 1992; cf. Seebass 1987:441–451). This process could also have continued after the finishing of the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, a transitional phase at the boundary between the Classical and Hellenistic period. The question remains: What has Genesis 2–3 to do with Alcibiades's speech in Plato's (n.d.) *Symposium*, a work written not later than 385 BCE?

1.I quote the translation of the New Jerusalem Bible (n.d.).

2.נחשׁ, differently vocalized (נָחָשׁ, Nm 23:23; 24:1), refers to 'magic curse' or 'omen'. The verb נחשׁ (pi.) means 'to seek and give omens/to foretell' (HAL 690f.).

3.Only in Genesis 3:1, Job 5:12; 15:5 and Proverbs 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14: 8; 15:18; 22:3; 27:12.

4.See wordplay in Genesis 2:25, עֲרוּמִּים and 3:1 עָרוּם.7. עֵירֻמָּם.

Tempter and temptation

Alcibiades's speech (212c–223d; Bröcker 1967:162–166; Friedländer 1975:26f; Gauss 1958:111–117) is the last speech in Plato's *Symposium*. It is arranged after Socrates's speeches and devoted not to Eros as the previous speeches but to Socrates himself as the model of virtue par excellence and the philosophy in person (Kaiser 2010:283–286). In this platonic dialogue, Alcibiades, son of Cleinias and Deinomache,[5] a historical figure who was a prominent Athenian orator and a political as well as a military leader (450–404/3 BCE), appears to be in a great state of intoxication, erotically inclined toward Socrates and jealous of him. He challenges not only Socrates's tribute but also his accusation (222a): Socrates speaks differently than he thinks for his speeches are tragic and at the same time comic in comparison to Aristophanes' speech (189c–193d; Dafni 2006, 2010), and he deceives people. He is not really a worshiper of Eros because he is not Alcibiades's lover, and this is his hubris. After explaining the presuppositions of his speech, Alcibiades declares in images (215a–d cf. 216c), that is, in painted words as a communicative method, why he feels to be cheated by Socrates, how he himself unsuccessfully tried to seduce Socrates and how Socrates's virtue (Friedländer 1975:26)[6] becomes revealed in a seduction process as well as in battle, in cold, in hunger and in thirst. In his accusation and his defence, Alcibiades paints a caricature and simultaneously the real portrait of Socrates. He compares him to busts of Silenus which are full of divine images regarding his ugly exterior and his beautiful interior, to Marsyas the satyr regarding his performance to charm the souls as well as to good and bad flute-playing regarding the effect of his speeches on people who have need of gods and mysteries (215a–216e). At the end, Alcibiades, deeply humiliated, confesses his love and admiration for Socrates's unique and unrivalled position amongst all human beings.

Although Plato's *Symposium*, 'the only dialogue devoted to one of the recognized gods' (Strauss 2001:268), is about love, lover and beloved, Alcibiades's speech alludes to Genesis 3 by focusing on the motifs of temptation, tempter and tempted (215e–216e). In Alcibiades's speech – just like in serpent's speech (Gn 3:5) – the truth is distorted, and the tempted turns out to be the tempter (217a–e), who pretends to magnify and adorn the truth (214e). In Genesis 3, temptation takes place through eating the fruit of the tree of good and evil, for the sake of pleasure of the eyes and for the sake of wisdom. In Alcibiades's speech, temptation actually takes place by drinking wine for the sake of Eros and for the sake of truth. Also, the comparison of Socrates to busts of Silenus, Marsyas the satyr and the good and bad flute-playing (215a–216e) provides a standard against which both texts can be compared and opens new perspectives of interpretation.

5.See also the platonic dialogues Alcibiades I & II.

6.σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία, καρτερία and φρόνησις.

Beauty and wisdom

The idiosyncrasy, distinctiveness and significance of platonic criticism on the Bible seems to be this: It is neither a verbatim quote nor a commentary but a free development of considerations and beliefs with hidden allusions that comes to light as such only through detailed linguistic and thematic analysis and analysis of the deep structure in order to let texts speak for themselves.

Immediately upon his arrival, the platonic Alcibiades states his deep concern about the truth (213a): 'Ah, you would laugh at me because I am drunk? Well, for my part, laugh as you may, I am sure I am speaking the truth' (translation by Lamb 1925). Referring to Aristophanes' speech, who was warned by Eryximachus not to say anything funny (214d–e), Alcibiades is assured that he would not knowingly lie (214e–215a). By indicating the verifiability requirement of his statements, he allows himself, when drunk, to break the rules unknowingly. At the same time, he acknowledges that Socrates could drink any quantity of wine and 'never get tipsy with it' (214a), and, to put it plainly, in contrast to Alcibiades, Socrates's judgement remains constantly invariable.[7]

Besides, Alcibiades guaranteed that all his speeches will serve only the truth and not mockery even though, inevitably, he makes his companions laugh because of his drunkenness. They laugh because they know his actual motivation, namely, his infatuation with Socrates and his intention to crown τὴν τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ καλλίστου κεφαλήν [the head of the cleverest (literally: wisest), the handsomest] (212e). Alcibiades attributes the highest degree of wisdom and beauty to Socrates, but afterwards, he will claim that Socrates is to be considered his deceiver and tempter. It is worth mentioning that Genesis 3:1, according to the LXX, also specifies the main characteristic of the tempter's identity as follows: 'the wisest of all wild animals'. Beauty and wisdom are attributed to the tree of knowledge of good and evil by the woman as it is pleasing to her senses and her mind (Gn 3:6).

As Alcibiades came to realise that Socrates was present at the symposium, he expresses his feelings and opinion of him loudly:

> Save us, what a surprise! Socrates here! So it was to lie in wait for me again that you were sitting there – your old trick of turning up on a sudden where least I expected you! (213b–c)

He also challenges him to dispute his arguments:

> Well, what are you after now? Tell me, I say, why you took a seat here and not by Aristophanes or someone else who is absurd and means to be? Why did you intrigue to get a seat beside the handsomest person in the room? (213c)

An important discrepancy can be seen in Alcibiades's opinion of Socrates when the latter is absent and when he is present. When Socrates is absent, Alcibiades attributes to

7.This is a characteristic attributed also to the God of the Old Testament (see LXX–MI 3:6).

him the highest degree of wisdom and beauty, but when he is present, he accuses him of hypocrisy and mendacity, qualities regarded as inherent of politicians like himself. He also describes him as a joker or lover of jokes and therefore not really the fairest of men but, so to speak, a hunter of the fairest. Socrates asked Agathon to protect him from Alcibiades's passion and jealousy and admits that, since he became his admirer, he has:

> … not had a moment's liberty either to look upon or converse with a single handsome person, but the fellow flies into a spiteful jealousy which makes him treat Socrates in a monstrous fashion, girding at him and hardly keeping his hands to himself. (213c–d)

Socrates makes it clear that everything Alcibiades says in his presence is not the result of sobriety and honesty, but of Alcibiades's intention to make him seem ridiculous. In this sense, Socrates's comments signify that Alcibiades in his jealousy became a kind of διάβολος to him and not the opposite.

It is noteworthy that the word διάβολος is not found in Alcibiades's speech. His words and thoughts lead to this designation. The same is also the case for the talking serpent in the Yahwistic narratives. In Genesis 3, feelings and intentions of the tempter are not even mentioned. They result from the words that the serpent spoke to the woman against God. The serpent pretends not to know God's command (Gn 2:18: 'You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat') and innocently asks the woman (Gn 3:3) 'Did God really say you were *not* to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' By adding a 'not', it changes fundamentally the meaning of the divine command and bears malice toward Yahweh, God the Creator, by presenting God as deceiving and misleading the first created people for whom God provided everything that they needed for their eternal life in the garden of pleasure. After trying to correct the seemingly harmless wrong opinion of the serpent, the woman herself follows its method and adds words in excess that God did not pronounce (Gn 3:3: 'fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden' and 'nor touch it'). So the talking serpent as a devil articulates its most decisive argument (Gn 3:5): 'God knows in fact that the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil'. The serpent concealed and suppressed completely the possibility of death and makes God seem a liar and a fraud.[8] It does not claim to be closer to God than the first created people, the protoplasts (Wi 7:1 and 10:1). Although it pretends to know God's will and intension. In this way, the serpent is just like Alcibiades, who in fact attempts to seduce Socrates and his philosophy in person. However, he does not claim to be closer to him than the others although he pretends to know all about the thoughts behind his deeds. Therefore, the serpent appears to be the tempter of the woman for it wishes in fact the death of human beings. According to the interpretation of Genesis 3 in Wisdom 2:23–24:

> … God created human beings to be immortal, he made them as an image of his own nature; Death came into the world only through the Devil's envy …

The tempter's role is inextricably linked with death and its motive is envy.

Shame and repentance

Alcibiades always felt a pang of envy when he saw Socrates making him ashamed by admiring somebody else, and he wished him death. However, he confesses:

> Often I could wish he had vanished from this world; yet again, should this befall, I am sure I should be more distressed than ever; so I cannot tell what to do with the fellow at all. (216c)

Alcibiades attempts to reveal Socrates's hidden interior by exercising alone with him for a whole day without any attendant and by spending a night with him with no-one else in the room and sleeping beside him, under Alcibiades's garment (219b–d). The particular notion that all of this had nothing to do with erotic progress but that it was like one who sleeps beside a father or an older brother (219d) wounded Alcibiades's ego, made him ashamed and filled him with remorse for his alleged erotic attack.

Feelings of 'shame' and repentance caused by the eating from the fruits of the forbidden tree also lead the first man and woman to 'make themselves loin-cloths', protecting the one from the other's eyes (Gn 3:7). However, the voice of Yahweh, walking in the paradise and looking for them, caused fear and mutual accusations (Gn 3:8ff.). Finally, it caused God's judgement against the serpent (Gn 3:14f.) as well as against the woman (Gn 3:16) and the man (Gn 3:17ff.) regarding procreation, interpersonal relationships, clothing, nourishment and the God-human relationship (Gn 3:22).

After describing Socrates's normal behaviour in times of peace, Alcibiades creates his portrait in battle. In contrast to the lack of moderation and the fickleness of the first people, whose temptation could also be compared to a mental and emotional battle, Socrates shows prudence, manliness and steadfastness.

Knowledge of good and evil

The uniqueness and the utmost importance of Alcibiades's speech compared to previous speeches of the Symposium is the following: He wants to pay tribute in images not to Eros but to Socrates himself (215a), because in Socrates's presence he swore to praise nobody else, neither god nor man (214d). He claims simultaneously that Socrates is extremely jealous of him, like, so to say, the God of Old Testament, who commands, 'You shall have no other gods to rival me … For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God' (Ex 20:3.5), thereby claiming for God-self absolute exclusiveness.

8. Also Yahweh appears in Jeremiah 4:10 to be the seducer or tempter of his people. The LXX ascribes the seduction of Yahweh (ἀπατῶν ἠπάτησας) to the spirit of seduction (πνεῦμα πλανήσεως). The MT refers only to the 'wandering spirit' or the 'wind of wandering', that is, the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert.

In Gen 2–3, the difference between good and evil is demonstrated in the tree of knowledge and the decision of the first people to eat or not to eat of its fruit. In Alcibiades's speech, it is manifested in the similarity of Socrates to a bust of Silenus, the satyr Marsyas and a flute-player regarding his external shape and the internal shape of his speeches (215a–216e). Alcibiades claims that he himself combines external and internal beauty and that he is on the right track to pursue philosophy (218a). The similarity to a bust of Silenus with broad flat face and fat belly full of divine images points out the gap between the outer physical appearance and the internal spiritual content of Socrates. The examples of the flute, a good or a miserable flute-player and his flute-play, that is the instrument, the artist/interpreter and his interpretation, shows the given possibilities in man's nature to do good or bad. In this sense, Socrates, who does not tolerate the praise of gods and the admiration of other men in his presence, is not a god but a man full of divine images (215b), and this can be interpreted in a good or a bad way. Alcibiades, in contrast, recognises in Socrates such a magnificent inherent power comparable to that of Silenes and the Satyrs (215e–216a) that he admits that there is no other man more appropriate to be a helper for him than Socrates and that he would prefer to give himself to a single rational man rather than to a mass of unreasonable people (218d). For whoever hears Socrates's words (215d) or his '… discourses in the mouth of another – though such person be ever so poor a speaker, and whether the hearer be a woman or a man or a youngster – all are astounded and entranced'. They amaze and possess the souls such as the melodies of great masters 'revealing the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries'[9] or 'are apt recipients of the deities and their sanctifications' (215c). Also, the words of the talking serpent affected the souls of the first created people, the protoplasts.

Serpent imagery

The serpent imagery is found twice in Alcibiades's speech: (a) in the viper simile (217e) and in (b) the quotation from Iliad 6.234cc 'to give gold for copper' in 219a. The latter is an unfavourable exchange, reflecting, in my opinion, also the Hebrew designation נְחֹשׁ that hints at 'copper/brazen / bronze'. It does not characterise the tempter as in Genesis 3, but the effect of the temptation.

1. Alcibiades uses the serpent as a simile for his blind passion for Socrates (217e). He confesses that his experience of Socrates is just like the experience of one bitten by a viper:

> Now I have been bitten by a more painful creature, in the most painful way that one can be bitten: in my heart, or my soul, or whatever one is to call it, I am stricken and stung by his philosophic discourses, which adhere more fiercely than any adder when once they lay hold of a young and not ungifted soul, and force it to do or say whatever they will; …
>
> … every one of you has had his share of philosophic frenzy and transport, so all of you shall hear. You shall stand up alike for what then was done and for what now is spoken.[10] (218a; 2018b)

In this sense, the first created people experienced the temptation as the bite of a serpent, and – if we read the biblical text from the perspective of the *Symposium* – that is why the author of Genesis 3 symbolically uses the name 'serpent' for the tempter. It was madness and frenzy to ignore the voice of the Creator and follow the void promises of a creature. However, Socrates's consciousness remains constantly awake in order to master emotions and instincts. The first people failed in an absurd way, but Socrates's demand is as follows: It is better to look closely whether what is promised is of value or worthless and deceptive.

2. In Iliad 6.234ff., Diomides and Glaucus exchange their gold and bronze armour for the sake of friendship. Homer explains that Glaucus himself was responsible for this unfavourable exchange because Zeus has confused his mind (Zehnpfennig 2000:162). In the platonic *Symposium*, Alcibiades's mind is confused by Eros:

> My dear Alcibiades, I dare say you are not really a dolt, if what you say of me is the actual truth, and there is a certain power in me that could help you to be better; for then what a stupendous beauty you must see in me, vastly superior to your comeliness! And if on espying this you are trying for a mutual exchange of beauty for beauty, it is no slight advantage you are counting on—you are trying to get genuine in return for reputed beauties, and in fact are designing to fetch off the old bargain of gold for bronze. But be more wary, my gifted friend: you may be deceived and I may be worthless. (218c–219a)

The metaphor is clear: Gold stands also for truth and copper for falsehood (cf. κίβδηλος). Gold is the most valuable and copper is less valuable, and therefore, gold is worth striving for. Alcibiades wants to swap the spiritual with the physical. He wants to exchange his exterior beauty with Socrates's magnificent power of mind. A similar unfavourable exchange is also found in Genesis 3. At first glance, the first people are exchanging carelessly the fruits of all trees in paradise with the fruit of one tree. The talking serpent persuades them to do so, but this one tree happens to be in the middle of paradise, namely in the centre of their interest, and therefore of central importance for their lives although it eventually will bring them the reality of death. What is remarkable is that the Semites and Greeks, at the time of Homer or during the formation of the Homeric Epics,[11] had the above-mentioned metaphor in common, and this is reflected in Genesis 3, in the Homeric Epic and also in its adaptation by Plato in Alcibiades's speech.

9.Translation by Jowett (n.d.)

10.Strauss (2001:270) translates πάντες γὰρ κεκοινωνήκατε τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βακχείας aptly as 'all of you have partaken of philosophic madness and bacchic frenzy'.

11.For discussions about J and Homer (e.g. Ellis 1969:viii, 23; Pfeiffer 1941:156), see Ska (2002:17), who notes: 'English-speaking authors frequently underline the analogies between the two writers, whereas it is rarer to find anything similar in works written in German. It is possible that Karl Barth's dialectic theology prevented many exegetes from establishing bridges between Hebrew and classical culture, and favored on the contrary the opposition between 'supernatural' and 'natural' revelations. In addition, for von Rad and his disciples J is a theologian, and it would be difficult to compare this theologian with Homer.'

'To exchange gold for copper'

According to the so-called Yahwistic account, God created man to live not in isolation but in personal relationships. Amongst the living creatures in paradise, there was no suitable helper for him, so God created also the woman from his rib. Thus, the first man-woman relationship was founded. However, Alcibiades's speech dealt with homosexual relationships between men[12] under the auspices of Eros. According to Aristophanes's comic evaluation of the performance which places the homosexual relationships between men over all human relations and inverts the given social order (Dafni 2006:618, 2010:52), heterosexual human relationships are unworthy of mentioning. Alcibiades, in contrast, is not interested in general moral rules but in Socrates himself.

Socrates greets Alcibiades's sexual advances with scorn, thereby fuelling Alcibiades's feelings of inferiority. He also makes him realise that he is not yet good enough to meet his ideal self-portrait and needs support. Whilst in Genesis 2 the woman plays the role of a supporter to the lonely man who turns out to be in need of completion, Alcibiades is looking for a counterpart amongst people to complete his passionate enthusiasm for intellectual and physical communication and comes to the conclusion that no other man, other than Socrates himself, is worth taking on this role (218d). LXX-Genesis 2:20 translates the Hebrew עֵזֶר as βοηθός [helper]. The platonic Alcibiades speaks of συλλήμπτωρ [assistant/helper], ennobled in soul and spirit. Through χαρίζομαι [to give myself as a gift], he makes it obvious that he was unable to succumb to physical temptations. Socrates however rebukes him and gores him by the Homeric motto, 'you want to exchange gold for copper', thereby pointing out the line between passionate enthusiasms for mental communication and succumbing to physical passions and putting him to shame. Thus, against the biblical statement 'to be not good', the platonic Alcibiades states his intention 'to become the best' by striving towards the Socratic 'καλόν κἀγαθόν' [the good and virtuous] and not the diabolic intention of 'becoming as gods knowing good and evil'. Καλόν signifies not the external beauty but the ethical and moral quality of goodness, which is the basis for the prosperity of individual virtues, a foundation of the biblical as well as of the platonic value system. The effect of Socrates's speeches on his audience is totally different from the effect of the tempter on the protoplasts who can well be described as 'inexperienced and fools'. Words of truth from the mouth of Socrates make inexperienced and foolish people laugh. However, the mendacious words of the serpent bring the protoplasts, who certainly are inexperienced, to act stupidly. Socrates's statement (219a) that 'the intellectual sight begins to be keen when the visual is entering on its wane' is to be considered as an implicit criticism on Genesis 3:6. For the protoplasts saw and ate without worrying about the motivations of the talking serpent and the actual consequences of their disobedience.

12.In Aristophanes' and Alciviades' speech, it is definitely not about pederasty (erotic relationship between adult and child). Modern inventions of the Greek term 'pederasty' (against homosexuality) should be aware of Greek etymology and semantics.

Analogies between Genesis 2–3 and Alcibiades's speech (*Symposium* 212c–223d)

We could summarise the analogies (similarities and differences) between Genesis 2–3 and the platonic speech of Alcibiades as follows:

1. The biblical narratives of man's creation and fall seek to explain human existence and essence. Plato focuses on the likeness: Human beings should be like Socrates. The platonic Alcibiades remains unconsidered. Self-control and self-mastery are exemplified due to motifs and imagery of the basic needs of the people. The same is also true in Genesis 3 and in almost identical sequence with hints at the given possibilities in human nature and how human beings deal with them.
2. The central motif of Genesis 2–3 is the process of acquiring knowledge and wisdom which becomes exaggerated in Genesis 2:16 (God's word) and in Genesis 3:5 (serpent's/diabolos' apparently contradictory statements). The central figure in Alcibiades's speech is Socrates as a personification of knowledge and wisdom.
3. In both texts, there is an effort to demonstrate how knowledge is acquired by temptation: the serpent and the protoplasts (Gn 3), and Alcibiades and Socrates (Plato's *Symposium*). The protoplasts will be tempted and gain knowledge of death. Socrates becomes a standard example of abstinence, moderation and wisdom. It could be assumed that Plato receives and modifies Old Testament language and motifs in order to prove that any knowledge separated from virtue is wickedness and, ultimately, that knowledge is not worth anything unless accompanied by wisdom.
4. Both texts use figurative language, but the contextualisation is different. This has not only to do with the fact that the biblical text, as opposed to the platonic dialogue, may have been revised by various hands until it acquired its final form, but also with the fact that the authors may have followed a different goal.
5. In Genesis 3, the temptation refers to the consumption of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Alcibiades's speech, it has to do with the issue of homosexuality and pederasty in Ancient Athens. The temptation has two faces. It relates to the spiritual and the corporeal aspects of people and their interaction.[13] For Socrates, the soul or the mind dominates the body and its emotions through abstinence and moderation. Socrates's abstinence and moderation are manifested mainly in the following areas: sexual intercourse (219b–d), money (219d), eating (219e), drinking (220a) and clothing (220b). The same areas are directly or indirectly reflected in Genesis 3.
6. It remains inexplicable why the protoplasts hear the words of the tempter as light-hearted or even frivolous (Gn 3). What could have caused this? Was it a conscious exercise, or were they confused? With Alcibiades, says Plato, the following play the biggest role: (1) the drunkenness, (2) Eros and (3) his inexperienced or irrational nature.

13.Cf. the Ancient Near-Eastern Epic of Gilgamesh.

7. In both texts, the confusion between the real tempter and the tempted is present: (1) The serpent presents Yahweh as tempter. (2) Alcibiades presents Socrates as his seducer although he himself seeks to seduce Socrates. The objectives however are different. The serpent wants to incite the protoplasts to rebel against God. Alcibiades wants to ridicule and, at the same time, to praise Socrates as virtue and philosophy in person.

Conclusions

Both texts, Genesis 2–3 and Alcibiades's speech in Plato's *Symposium*, deal basically with similar existential quests and comparable linguistic and thematic patterns. Symbols and discourses need explanation, but although they are embedded in a different historical, literal and ideological or theological context, analogies are definitely not by accident. They presuppose pre-Hellenistic cultural exchange, possibly by means of pre-Septuagintal improvised oral or written biblical translations circulated in Egypt or Ionia. There are echoes of lively discussions, which were not fixed in writing probes but transmitted orally and forgotten with time. Criticism, various interpretations and even wrong conclusions were ventured, but eventually, a rough consensus about the basic features of Greek self-consciousness was reached.

Plato wrote his *Symposium* about a century before the LXX translation of the Pentateuch into Greek. Therefore, he finds himself in the transitional phase at the boundary between the Classical and Hellenistic era, and it cannot be excluded that he, also in discussions with the Pythagoreans, might have heard in advance about the faith of the Hebrews.[14]

Greek thought and language were not fertile in themselves, but took shape from the abundant impulses that the Greeks received during their voyages from the Ancient Orient and the Levant. Why did they not write anything about it? If they have said something, their words are lost, and we can no longer know. We can only speculate. All we have is their literary legacy that offers multiple linguistic and conceptual evidences, the basis for a study that is sensitive to the texts in their original language.

14. Especially Pythagoras, and the various religious views of his own teachings that he bequeathed to his students, became familiar in Egypt and Babylonia. We do not know what exactly was taught because the members were sworn to secrecy. What we really have are Greek words with pre-embossed meaning and importance. These words, which are used in the Septuagint as standard equivalents, allow the reader to step back into Ancient Greek literary compositions and the comparison in order to determine whether Greek terms are newly minted in the Septuagint or whether they retain their old meaning. There are, however, cases where not only single words but also word combinations and patterns of argumentation and schemes were undergoing changes.

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