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Myth, Image, *Dianoia:*
Situating the Myth of Er on the Divided Line

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For Wojciech,

and for Melani

"Knowledge granted by fictional things is not fictional knowledge."
– Alberto Manguel

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ABSTRACT

Perennially, investigations into Plato's use of myths have hinged on a distinction between *muthos* and *logos*, from which *logos* is privileged as philosophical discourse, while *muthoi* are relegated to tools of persuasion for the non-philosophical. Focussing exclusively on the *Republic*, this thesis argues that Plato's myths can constitute a necessary, although not a sufficient component of Plato's philosophical discourse. In his discussion of the section of *dianoia* in the Divided Line, Plato writes: "the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion." (510b4-6) Elaborating on this passage, I shall demonstrate how dianoetic understandings rely on the collaboration of both images and argument. I argue that Plato presents the Myth of Er as a dianoetic image, on which Plato's arguments concerning the justice rely.

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INTRODUCTION:

That the *Republic* is an echo to Homer's *Odyssey* has been observed by many[1]. Appreciating the affinities between the Socrates of the *Republic* and the character of not only Odysseus, but of Achilles and Tiresias also, help illuminate the nature of the struggle Socrates is engaged in. Although in some way the *Odyssey* provides a backbone to the narrative development of the *Republic,* Plato's allusions are not limited to Homer's poem, but reach farther into Greek mythology. Consider also the allusions to the Myth of Perseus. Recall that it was Perseus who slew the Medusa, the monster who turns to stone whoever should look at her. Hers is a vicious power, which preys on our most basic sense – our sight, and is wielded with no apparent purpose. How is her paralysing force propagated? It is thought to be on account of her ugliness, so hideous, that her victims are literally petrified. That ugliness, far from being simply banal, uncomfortable, or obnoxious, is actually destructive is an unnerving realisation[2]. For, neither is it possible to guarantee the beauty of all one sees, nor is it possible to pass one's life with eyes shut. Perseus, however, gives us another option. Perseus also sees Medusa's horrible face, yet he is free from her paralysing power, for he sees her through her reflection on his shield. If her ugliness is the source of her power, why is it not transmitted through a mirror reflection? That Perseus observes Medusa through her reflection symbolises a way of seeing her face which differs from the direct gaze her petrified victims adopted. The

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[1] See, e.g. Howland (1993), O'Connor (2007).

[2] Socrates' most serious charge against imitative poetry is based on grounds similar to the destructive effects of ugliness: "However, we haven't yet brought the most serious charge against imitation, namely, that with a few rare exceptions it is able to corrupt even decent people, for that's surely an altogether terrible thing." (605c6-8)

Myth of Perseus tells us that it is not simply what is seen that marks an effect on us, but how it is seen.

This story of Medusa and Perseus is indeed a strange one. Socrates himself is not opposed to telling us strange stories either:

> Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. (514a2-b2)

These prisoners of the cave see only the dim shadows of artefacts projected onto the wall before of them. The fate of these prisoners is little different from Medusa's victims, for these prisoners too are inert, transfixed, and as nearly petrified as any human could become. We reflect on Socrates' Allegory of the Cave and wonder what monster has fettered these prisoner, and what utility or pleasure he draws from such absurd incarcerations? Is this the work of a tyrant, or perhaps a vain and frustrated playwright? Plato denies us this detail of the story, but its affinities with the Myth of Perseus can lend insight. Just like how the Myth of Perseus shows us that it isn't simply the object beheld that has influence over the viewer but also the disposition the viewer himself adopts, one can see that the cave dwellers are themselves responsible for their imprisonment, for they have become obsessed with images and remain fettered by their own perversions for them. Although it might be a tyrant or poet orchestrating this subterranean theatre, we can see that it is the prisoners themselves who refuse to turn away, just like Medusa's victims who become paralysed by giving into her hideousness.

The Myth of Perseus is about images and how images are to be looked at. It is for this reason that the myth has inspired reflections by many artists, like Caravaggio, Da Vinci, Bruegel, and Plato also. Plato's *Republic*, unlike Homer's *Odyssey*, is not an

odyssey through myriad natural wonders, but a philosophical odyssey through depths of appearances seeking a fundamental reality beneath the palimpsest of illusions. To be sure, the *Republic* invites a variety of readings, but situating it within the relationship between appearances and realities is helpful for negotiating a central difficulty in approaching the text. For Plato's presentation of philosophy is not methodologically monolithic. Rather, he adopts a variety of methods to develop his thought, including such devices as elenchus, method of hypothesis, collection and division, analogy, and even the use of myths. This multiplicity of methods is especially clear in the *Republic*, and it raises the question as to what philosophical considerations inform these varied modes of presentation. All of Plato's choices of method encourage us to question their philosophical significance, but in the case of Plato's use of myths, the question is most insistent. Across Plato's entire corpus from the *Apology* to the *Laws,* the status and benefit of poetry, in which genre myth is included, is a recurrent theme, extended investigations of which resurface in a number of dialogues, including the *Republic,* which ultimately finds Socrates banishing the poets[3].

Plato's criticism of poetry and myths, however, is clearly at odds with Plato's own philosophical presentation, which includes numerous passages even he himself describes as myths[4]. This inconsistency exerts itself more forcefully once one appreciates that these myths are neither after-thoughts, nor ironic, but clearly products of serious reflection, combining prodigious originality with subtle appropriations of themes, styles and motifs from Greek literary history. Moreover, these myths are not independent narratives, arbitrarily grafted to his philosophy, but are intimately allied to the particular

[3] *Rep.* 607a4. Among other terms for poetry, e.g. *mousikê, poêsis,* Plato includes *muthoi* (*Rep.* 377a3).
[4] e.g. *Gorgias* 523a2-3, *Phaedo* 110b1 and 114d7, *Phaedrus* 253c7, *Republic* 415a2 and 621b8, *Timaeus* 26e4, *etc.*

content of the dialogue in which they are included[5]. For these reasons, it is far from obvious what role in the dialogues Plato's myths play, and to what audience they are directed.

Remaining sensitive to the nuanced relationship between appearances and realities will prove useful in understanding what role Plato's myths are playing in his dialogues. As myths can be considered as a kind of image, it will be argued that they can play a number of roles that are based not only on the content of the myth, but also on the way the reader considers it. I will develop this argument with attention given exclusively to the *Republic* in order to determine what role the Myth of Er plays in this dialogue. I shall defend the thesis that the Myth of Er, although alone insufficient to engender knowledge, yet constitutes a necessary component in the process of developing understanding. Important consequences follow from establishing this thesis. For one, it will explain why we must consider the myth as an essential component of the philosophical discourse, which will elucidate an aspect of Plato's methodology in the *Republic*. Moreover, this thesis will show us how this philosophical use of the Myth of Er has been applied, which will suggest a method by which we can read the *Republic*.

Effectively, such an interpretation of the role of the Myth of Er in the *Republic* negotiates a new position from the two main interpretations of Plato's use of myth: the 'honeyed-cup' interpretation and the revelatory interpretation[6]. The 'honeyed-cup' reading claims that Plato's myths, which are directed at the intellectually immature or incompetent, are merely stylised summaries of his argumentatively established theories.

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[5] That Plato's several myths cannot be interchanged among the dialogues despite many myths treating common themes is rightly observed by Smith (1986), p. 33.

[6] Morgan, K. (2000), p. 3-4. Morgan actually makes this observation with respect to the philosophical use of myth across the pre-Socratic period through Plato, however, it is especially relevant to interpretations of Plato's use of myth.

The revelatory reading claims that Plato's myths illuminate that which exceeds the grasp of argument. Both these classes of interpretation are limited in certain respects, due in part to their reluctance to entertain any intersection between the roles of myth and argument. A more fruitful means of interpreting Plato's use of myth may lie in understanding the relationship of myth and argument as one of mutual dependence, at least in part, rather than as one of mutual exclusion. What's gained by such an interpretation is that it convinces us to read Plato's myths seriously as an essential part of his philosophy without granting myths a status of autonomy independent of the arguments.

I shall pursue this thesis that the Myth of Er acts as a necessary component in the *Republic* in collaboration with the argument guided by the assumption that there is a correspondence between Plato's epistemology and method. Thus, Plato's discussion of myth with respect to his epistemology will be the basis of my argument. As the *Republic* offers but a few considerations of myth vis-à-vis his epistemology, this may appear a limited approach. The analysis becomes productive, however, if the myth is considered as an image, since the *Republic* includes significant discussion of the roles images play in developing beliefs and understandings.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In chapter 1, the problems challenging relating the Myth of Er to the arguments of the *Republic* are analysed. I shall advance this discussion by considering the positions of three commentators whose respective views map out several of the difficulties that underlie relating the myth to the dialogue. Such positions are representative of three general interpretations regarding Plato's use of myth. The first disregards any philosophical use of images and myths. Because images are full

of ambiguities and subject to polysemia, they cannot maintain their coherence when scrutinised by arguments. The second position argues that Plato's myths communicate the conclusions drawn from philosophical arguments to those unable or unwilling to pursue philosophical study. According to this view, it is argument alone, and not myth, which is the proper and sole discourse of philosophy. The final position conceives myth as possessing some capacity to reveal that which exceeds the grasp of reason, and thus, can deliver truths independent of argument. Each of these interpretations of the role of Platonic myth makes important insights, however, following from an analysis of both the content and the structure of the myth itself, problems with each of these positions will be revealed. Regarding the first position, I shall argue that although the Myth of Er, as an image, is polysemous and contains ambiguities, Plato appears to intentionally manipulate these multiple meanings and ambiguities for some philosophical purpose. Regarding the second, although the myth does have a meaning that is directed at a non-philosophical audience, there is yet another meaning that is directed at a philosophical audience. Regarding the third, this philosophical meaning, rather than revealing truths beyond the argument, is dependent on the arguments themselves.

Chapter 2 seeks to determine how images, which are polysemic, can support arguments that purport to be univocal. The Divided Line is analysed, as it envision such a particular philosophical role for images, among a number of roles images play in developing beliefs and understanding. I argue that these separate roles for images are dictated less by the content of the image itself, and more by how the viewer observes the image, and to what purpose he directs his viewing. That is, the cognitive value of the image is a product of the viewer's mode of reception. The viewer's mode of reception

distinguishes four roles of images. Through an analysis of the epistemic level of *eikasia*, I consider two roles of images which develop beliefs based on a reception of images considered as referring to sensible objects. These two roles of images provide a model for interpreting the role of images in the state of *dianoia*, wherein images are considered as referring to intelligible objects. *Dianoia*, which engenders dianoetic understanding, does not rely on images alone, but uses them in conjunction with hypotheses. Based on two different interpretations of the nature of hypotheses, one as axioms, the second as assumptions, two interpretations of the role of images in *dianoia* follow. On the one hand, when hypotheses are treated as axioms, images support the arguments founded on hypotheses by reflecting the content of the arguments. According to this interpretation, images provide propaideutic support to arguments, however, they play no necessary role in philosophical discourse. On the other hand, when hypotheses are treated as assumptions, even if such hypotheses are the basis of a valid deductive argument, the conclusions that follow can only be treated as provisional. Images are used in support of such provisional conclusions to provide evidence for the soundness of the argument. As the image can illuminate a wider context in which the soundness of the argument can be gauged, it plays a necessary role in collaboration with the arguments in the philosophical process.

This philosophically significant role for images is applied to the Myth of Er in chapter 3 in order to demonstrate how the myth plays a necessary role in the dialogue in conjunction with the arguments. The *Republic* is composed of many arguments which answer three interrelated questions: what is justice, is justice a virtue or not, and is justice more advantageous than injustice. The Myth of Er is most clearly illustrative of the

arguments addressing the third question. One of these arguments, which concludes that justice is more advantageous than injustice, is subject to a detailed analysis, from which its soundness is put into question. The Myth of Er is then analysed in light of this argument to demonstrate how it can provide evidence to assess the soundness of the argument. It is in this way that the myth satisfies a necessary role in the philosophical discourse of the *Republic*.

A consequence of my interpretation of Plato's use of myth, and the Divided Line in general, is that not only is one's philosophical formation dependent on the development of one's competence in using arguments, but moreover, in one's fluency in reading images. Such an observation was just as important in Plato's era, where images from Homer and Hesiod shaped the minds of the Greeks, as it is today in our own image-laden media culture, where beliefs are exchanged more and more on images alone. Plato is clearly sensitive to the uses of images, for on account of their polysemia, they pose a direct threat to the stability and clarity of knowledge. Rather than seek a haven uncontaminated by images, Plato instead embraces them in his philosophical discourse. As we envision in our mind Socrates' images of ships, cities, caves and the world-beyond, we can also develop our own dianoetic understandings based on these images by following his deductive argument. Plato thus blazes a middle-course between agnosticism in the face of the polysemia of images, and dogmatism in the face of uncertain premises in deductive arguments, which course balances the interaction between image and argument that render understandings justified.

CHAPTER 1: THE STATUS OF THE MYTH OF ER WITHIN THE *REPUBLIC*

Before the *Republic* draws to a close, Socrates offers his listeners a story, or myth[7], of the experience of Er, a Pamphylian soldier, who, killed in battle, witnessed the events that souls experience following death. Er is wounded on the battlefield, and his corpse, along with many others, remains on the field to rot while the battle continues. Only after ten days do the Pamphylians have a chance to collect the dead, whose bodies had begun to decompose, and offer them proper burial. Er's corpse, however, remained unmarked by decay. Two days later, his body arranged on the pyre, Er wakes, and describes his experience in the world beyond.

Along with other souls, Er journeyed to the seat of divine judgement, situated at the chiastic intersection of four gaping passages. One passage, upwards and to the right, led to a heavenly realm, another, downwards and to the left, led into the earth to a hellish region. According to their judgement, souls were sent to one of the realms for a duration of a thousand years to receive either rewards or retributions tenfold for the just and unjust acts they committed during their incarnate life. As the souls of the recently deceased were departing to the heavenly and hellish regions, descending from the left, and ascending from the right were souls returning from these other regions, having fulfilled their thousand year tenure. Er was instructed that he was to serve as a messenger to the human world, and was to "listen and observe everything in that place." (614d3). The souls who had returned from their respective realms congregated on a meadow for seven days, during which time they shared their experiences above and below the earth. As one would expect, the heavenly realm was a place of happiness filled with beauty, while those

[7] At 614b2, Socrates describes his narrative as an *apologon*, but at 621b8 he calls it a *muthos*.

from purgatory wept while describing what they had suffered. Most terrifying from these reports was the account of a former tyrant of Pamphylia, Ardiaeus, who, because of the heinous deeds he committed during his incarnate life, was denied escape. Instead, he was bound, flogged, and lacerated before being dragged to Tartarus for eternity. On the eighth day, the souls began a four days' journey to the centre of the cosmos. Along the way, they see a column of light which binds the heavens together, from which the Spindle of Necessity hangs. This spindle is the central axis of the cosmos, whose whorl is composed of eight concentric spheres, representing the orbs of the fixed stars, and the planets. Here are seated the three Fates – Lachesis, Klotho, and Atropos, who each share the responsibilities of turning the spheres. The details of the structure of the cosmos is in some ways precise, but in other ways obscure; nevertheless, the spindle of necessity suggests that the order of the cosmos is conceptually necessary[8].

Once the souls have arrived before the Fates, lots are distributed, based on which the souls are ordered in their choice of a subsequent life. A prophet, who speaks on behalf of Lachesis, informs the souls that they are free to choose their own subsequent life, and their *arete* (virtue) is dictated only by how much or little they honour it – "the responsibility lies with the one who makes the choice; the god has none." (617e4-5). Er describes choices made by various souls, which stir a range of emotions in him, from pity, to laughter and wonder. For the most part, he observes great changes in the lives chosen by the souls. Most tragic was the choice of the first soul, who in haste and imprudence chose the life of a great tyrant only to realise later that he is destined to eat his children. He had spent the previous thousand years in heaven, having led a just life

[8] For a thorough discussion of the cosmic structure and the analogy of the spindle and whorls, see Schils (1993).

due to his upbringing in a well-ordered city. It becomes clear, however, that he had no knowledge of justice, as he blamed not himself for his new destiny, but chance and the gods. Others, perhaps seeking to escape the difficulties out of which human life is forged, chose the lives of animals. Odysseus, who has the final lot, chose the life of a private man, and claimed his choice would have been the same had he been first to choose. After each soul is bound to their life by necessity, the congregation proceeded to the plain of Forgetting (*Lethe*). Each drinks from the river of Carelessness (*Ameleta*), after which the souls fall asleep and eventually ascend like shooting stars to be reborn anew.

Such is the main line of Er's story. Yet simple as the story is, it is difficult to evaluate for several reasons. First, as a myth, it is a fantastic tale that has no factual basis. The events are located in a timeless past and a divine place between heaven and earth. Moreover, its narration is presented as a repetition of what may have been innumerable previous repetitions. Thus, although the story is grounded on certain details, there is much under-defined that renders the tale unclear, which seems to be a by-product of its fantastic subject-matter and innumerable retellings. Finally, Socrates' retelling of the myth blends inconspicuously into his periodic reflections on the myth, and these reflections often prove inconsistent with the content of the story. The total effect of Socrates' narration is a general description of the events that await each soul following death, but the particulars of this other world, and its coherent continuity with our own remain clouded.

Following the retelling of the myth, Socrates offers a few final sentences before the dialogue ends, in which he encourages us to be persuaded by the myth, and "believe that the soul is immortal and able to endure every evil and every good, [so that] we'll

always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with reason in every way." (621c3-6). This final statement about what we should draw from the myth reflects the conclusions of the main argument of the *Republic* as a whole, which sought to demonstrate that the happiest life is a just life led according to reason. Socrates states that the myth shows what the arguments of the *Republic* demonstrates, but this raises an important question: why is Socrates appealing to a myth to reiterate what he has already argued? If it were the case that Plato included the Myth of Er to clarify the understandings that the argument had already established, why does he do so through a myth whose meaning is obscured by many ambiguities? This question is important because the myth, which can be classified as an image, would seem to be an object of *eikasia*. In Book VI and VII of the dialogue, the cognitive state of *eikasia*, which is the lowest level of the Divided Line, was described as epistemologically impoverished. Socrates' use of myth, then, is not only confusing in its presentation, but seems to conclude the work using the epistemologically weakest means of presentation.

It is with respect to these two issues that I wish to examine the role the Myth of Er plays in the *Republic*. I will defend the thesis that the Myth of Er, considered as an image, can function as a component of dianoetic thought. The cognitive state of *dianoia*, which is the third level of the Divided Line, relies on both arguments and images to engender understanding. I shall argue that the myth can act as such a dianoetic image, and thus support the arguments in order to engender a justified, albeit qualified understanding. As a result of this interpretation, the Myth of Er will be seen to have an epistemic value greater than that offered by the objects of *eikasia*. As such, it will be shown that the myth functions as a necessary component in the philosophical discourse of the *Republic*. I shall

argue that the ambiguities latent in the myth are on the one hand a by-product of imagistic presentation, however, these ambiguities are manipulated by Plato to facilitate developing a more general, and more accurate understanding of justice.

This thesis is in conflict with much of the commentary about the role of the myth in the dialogue, which considers the myth as simply an eikastic image, and thus, incapable of supporting philosophical reflection. Following from such an interpretation, although Socrates encourages us to consider the myth in light of the arguments, the myth cannot sustain rigorous examination, and the host of ambiguities within the myth are simply a testament to its low epistemic value. I shall examine this view through two interpretations by Annas, based on which examination I shall suggest that the myth, by its very nature as an image, cannot be reduced to a single meaning. A principal intention of my thesis is to demonstrate that images (and thus myths) are by their nature polysemic, yet despite this polysemia, images are capable of a philosophically constructive use. I shall suggest the plausibility of this claim in light of Annas' interpretation by arguing that certain ambiguities in the myth, rather than merely being a side-effect of the mythic presentation itself, seem to be intentionally introduced by Plato. Consequently, although the myth is patently polysemic, Plato's manipulation of its polysemia suggests that the relationship between the myth and the dialogue demands an analysis more sensitive than Annas has offered. In order to facilitate such an analysis, a broader understanding of the roles the myth play in the dialogue is required.

I shall open up a wider perspective on the relationship between the Myth of Er and the main argument of the dialogue by considering two prominent interpretations of

the role of myth in Plato's dialogues championed by Brisson and Elias respectively[9]. Brisson argues that myth presents the truths established by philosophical argument in a fashion palatable for consumption by a non-philosophic audience. Contrary to Brisson's position, Elias argues that myth plays an essential role in philosophy, as it reveals that which exceeds argument's touch. It will be recognised that according to both these views, myth and argument are held in opposition. Whereas Brisson claims that myth merely shows what argument has already proven, Elias argues that myth shows what argument can't prove. Both these interpretations will be seen to suffer from significant limitations. My own thesis, which relies on a collaboration between myth and argument, will be shown to address these specific limitations.

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Julia Annas' commentary on the Myth of Er in her introduction to the *Republic* is representative of a general view that the myth is merely an imagistic depiction of the main argument of the dialogue. Given its imagistic form, which she claims cannot sustain detailed analysis, she concludes that the myth lacks philosophical utility. Despite her dismissal of the myth, her commentary is useful since she considers the myth seriously[10]. Although I shall argue against this interpretation of the myth, it is one that is widely accepted as it is predicated on the general view that images are granted only minimal epistemic value. Moreover, Annas is an especially interesting critic to consider since she revisits her interpretation of the Myth of Er in a subsequent paper, in which she strives to interpret the myth in a way consistent with the main argument of the dialogue. Through

[9] Brisson (1982), Elias (1984)

[10] More seriously, at least, than the readings of the Myth of Er by Blackburn (2007), pp. 158-160, Reeve (1988), pp. 263-4, N.P. White (1979), pp. 263-266, who share Annas' view that images have little if any philosophical density, and simply give the myth a cursory interpretation and then move on.

an analysis of both of her interpretations it will be evident that the Myth of Er is subject to more than one interpretation. I shall argue, however, that the myth's polysemia, rather than being just a by-product of its imagistic form, is seemingly used by Plato in ways that invite careful consideration.

In her initial commentary on the *Republic*, Annas has little patience for Book X, which she considers tacked onto the dialogue. She complains that it "appears gratuitous and clumsy, and it is full of oddities."[11] Her impatient reception of Book X in general contributes to her hasty consideration of the myth in particular, which she judges as painfully shocking, not only on account of its "childishness" and "vulgarity"[12], but also because it seems to present a contradictory image of the main argument in the *Republic*. She reminds us that the arguments concerning justice between Books II and IX establish its inherent goodness. That is, the arguments conclude that one ought to practice justice for the happiness justice alone provides rather than for the external gains justice might render. However, Annas interprets the Myth of Er as espousing a consequentialist image of justice, for it seems that the myth warns us to practice justice in this life so that we avoid passing a millennium in purgatory, and instead are admitted into heaven. Annas is further frustrated by the myth on account of its fatalistic view. As one's future lives, and thus future post-mortem rewards and punishments, are governed by one's past character, which seems to be a product of previous incarnations, she reads that the possibility of freely choosing a just life seems strangely denied. Thus, rather than provide a hopeful image to practice justice in this life, the Myth of Er presents an absurd vision of souls being subjected to rewards and punishments without having control over their destiny.

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[11] Annas (1981), p. 335.
[12] Annas (1981), p. 349.

On account of these implausible consequences, Annas is unsatisfied with this literal interpretation of the myth. She thus presents a more metaphorical reading, whereby this post-mortem choice of lives is understood as symbolic of the actual choices one makes during one's incarnate life. Although this interpretation is seen to be easily amenable to the main argument of the dialogue, Annas asks: "[if the myth] is not threatening us with future punishments in a terrifyingly impersonal universe, but bringing home to us the importance of what we are doing to ourselves now, why is it cast in the most misleading possible form from the point of view of its message?"[13] Annas gives but a single sentence in reply to this, and then concludes her book by saying: "And so the *Republic*, a powerful and otherwise impressively unified book, acquired its lame and messy ending."[14] It is thus made clear that Annas has little interest in exploring different routes to understanding the myth beyond the literal interpretation.

Annas' disdain for imagery is a consistent feature of her study of the *Republic*. The *Republic* is a dialogue filled with images, many of which Annas can't avoid considering through her examination of the arguments. Continually, however, when she strives to give her interpretation of these images, she becomes irritated at their reluctance to conform to a single interpretation. Her irritation is evident in her interpretation of the Sun, Line and Cave:

> The insolubility of this problem is a good illustration of the difficulties that Plato runs into by using images to make a philosophical point. The imagery is apt to get overloaded ... . And the detail of the imagery tempts us to ask questions that cannot be satisfactorily answered within the terms of the imagery; if we treat it with philosophical seriousness the image turns out incoherent.[15]

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[13] Annas (1981), p. 353.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Annas (1981), p. 252. Consider also: "Once more he [Plato] has himself illustrated the dangers in the philosophical use of images, dangers which he warns against without seeming strikingly alive to." (p. 256)

The view that images are unfit for philosophically discourse is prevalent among some commentators, and seems to be informed by the position of images in the lowly region of *eikasia* in the Divided Line[16]. In the following chapter of this thesis, we shall consider in detail the epistemic statuses Plato lends images in *Republic*, in which analysis I shall argue that although the understanding of images as devoid of epistemic value is one of the epistemic statuses of images, it is not the only one. It is unsurprising, however, that Annas gives the Myth of Er little consideration, given she predicates her interpretation of the myth on this view of images.

In an article published the following year, Annas admits that this initial consideration of the Myth of Er was "too simple and in parts confused"[17]. This time, she takes more seriously the fact that the myth somehow complements the argument of the dialogue, and she seeks to expound this correlation. Annas again focuses her examination on dissolving the apparent contradiction that the argument promotes justice as intrinsically good, but the myth presents a consequentialist view of justice. She argues that the myth envisions a universal order whereby cosmic justice is maintained irrespective of the will and actions of individual souls. As the choice of subsequent lives is dictated by one's former life, and one's former life was dictated by the previous, one's destiny is dictated by an eternal chain of necessity. As such a chain of necessity seems to abolish each individual's free will, and hence, freedom to choose to live justly, one's post-mortem rewards and punishments are likewise beyond one's freedom of choice. It thus follows from this interpretation that one ought not to appeal to external

[16] 509d8-a3. The low epistemic status of images is also supported by the censure of paintings in Book X, which claims that paintings (and thus images) are a third remove from truth (602c1-2).
[17] Annas (1982), p. 141.

consequences and rewards as a reason to pursue justice, but to value justice as inherently good during one's incarnate existence.

Annas' dilation of the regressive chain of necessity and its impingement on freedom correctly exposes an apparent meaning of the myth that seems problematic. Nevertheless, her interpretation that souls seem to pass from just to unjust lives according to forces completely beyond the individual's control is contrary to Socrates' interjection, which states that the philosophic life is the only means by which one can maintain a just life and assure post-mortem rewards. Thus, Annas has clearly misread the text when she claims that not even the philosopher is protected from this absurdity of choosing lives in an arbitrary way according to necessity[18]. It might be possible to argue that the myth presents a view that philosophy is not a sufficient condition for assuring post-mortem rewards, since one might be dealt one of the last lots. Nevertheless, Socrates' remark assures that philosophy is indeed a necessary condition, and one that would render the sequence of one's lives and post-mortem conditions, although perhaps sporadically unhappy, far from arbitrarily dictated. In this second interpretation of the myth, Annas is dogged in her pursuit of a single interpretation that makes sense of both the myth on its own, and its integration into the dialogue. To realise such an objective, however, she appeals to an implausible reading of the text.

Annas' two interpretations show the difficulties in dealing with images in Plato's philosophy. In her first effort, Annas merely derides the myth for its incapacity to admit a single interpretation. In her second effort, she takes seriously the exercise of establishing an interpretation of the myth that conforms with the main argument of the dialogue. This

[18] Annas (1982), p. 135.

interpretation, however, depends upon an unfaithful reading of the text. In both her attempts, Annas is tenacious in seeking to clarify and concretise a coherent reading of the myth. Annas' failure to produce such a coherent reading, however, should not surprise us, as myths and images are by their nature polysemic. It is thus on account of their polysemia that Plato puts their philosophic status into question. I shall argue, however, that Plato yet observes philosophic utility in myths and images despite their polysemia. By establishing such a view of Plato's manipulation of the polysemic nature of the myth, we can move beyond Annas' attempts to crystallise a single meaning of the myth. Instead, we must pursue an interpretation of the role of the myth in the dialogue that accommodates its polysemia.

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The Myth of Er raises more questions than it can answer. It is because they collide with the robust clarity of argument that Annas dismisses imagistic devices. Plato, on the other hand, is liberal with his use of images. Rather than being ignorant of the consequences following from his use of images and myths, I shall now argue that the way in which Plato presents Socrates deploying the Myth of Er suggests that Plato is indeed conscious of the ambiguities latent in the myth. What contributes to the difficulty of interpreting the Myth of Er is its formal features that contribute to its classification as a myth, rather than simply as a narrative or imagistic description. The Myth of Er concerns the fantastic. It is without factual basis, set in an irrecoverable time and place, and so details upon which the story rely cannot be immediately drawn from our personal experiences. This 'mythologization' of the story decentres the reader, and thus troubles interpretation from the outset. Beyond these formal features of the story which obstruct

interpretation, the myth's dramatic presentation also contributes to the reader's confusion. The Myth of Er is recounted by Socrates in indirect discourse. The myth is sizable, and on three occasions, the narration is interrupted by Socrates' own interjections[19]. The second, and largest of such interjections is easy to isolate, however, the first and third interjection blend inconspicuously into the narrative of the myth. Such a muddle of direct and indirect discourse wouldn't be problematic except that Socrates' interjections appear to contrast with Er's story itself. Moreover, these points of conflict, rather than being innocuous details, are salient matters in the main argument of the dialogue. I shall expand on two such conflicts between Socrates' interjections and the myth itself in order to suggest that these inconsistencies between Socrates' direct and indirect discourse are intentionally planted by Plato[20].

I acknowledge that such an interpretation of the myth, whereby it is claimed that Plato intentionally obfuscates its meaning, might seem overly elaborate or even convoluted. Notice, however, that Socrates, when he is addressing Glaucon following his narration of the myth, refers to the "River of Forgetfulness"[21]. However, it was only a few sentences earlier, in his narration of the myth, that Socrates recounted that the souls drank from the "River of Carelessness", which flows through the "Plain of Forgetfulness"[22]. This clear disparity between Socrates' direct and indirect discourse, which occurs within sentences of each other, can only be taken as an intentional act by Plato and as a signpost to the other inconsistencies within the myth's narration. These

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[19] 615c6-d2, 618b6-619b1, 619c6-e5. It is sometimes difficult to say with certainty where the interjections begin or end, as Socrates' presentation of the myth often blends into his interjections on it.

[20] This ambiguity between Socrates' direct and indirect discourse is discussed in detail by Halliwell (2007), who examines this 'diegetic ambiguity' in order to derive his interpretation of the role of the myth in the dialogue.

[21] 621c1

[22] 621a2

other inconsistencies concern the role of chance in attaining happiness, and the role of punishments and rewards in developing moral behaviour.

When the souls are arranged before the three Fates just prior to choosing their subsequent life, Lachesis' prophet states: "There is a satisfactory (*agapetos*) life rather than a bad one available even for the one who comes last, provided that he chooses it rationally and lives it seriously."[23] Based on Er's story, it would seem as though irrespective of chance, so long as one practices philosophy (i.e. lives it seriously), one will be content through life and then pass one's post-mortal term in heaven. Shortly after recounting these words, Socrates' interjections into the myth seems to contradict this view:

> However, if someone pursues philosophy in a sound manner when he comes to live here on earth and if the lottery doesn't make him one of the last to choose, then, given what Er has reported about the next world, it looks as though not only will he be happy here, but his journey from here to there and back again won't be along the rough underground path, but along the smooth heavenly one.[24]

There seems to be an inconsistency here between Er's story recounted indirectly by Socrates, and Socrates' direct interpretation of the story. According to Socrates, philosophy is merely a necessary, although not a sufficient condition for happiness, neither in the incarnate life, nor in the post-mortal term, as chance, symbolised in one's order in the lottery, may deny a soul the choice of a happy life. The role of chance and necessity is a central theme of the Myth of Er, both in relation to the just order of the cosmos, but also in the just order of one's soul. The influence of chance over practicing justice and attaining a good life is absent from consideration in the main arguments of the

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[23] 619b3-5: "καὶ τελευταίῳ ἐπιόντι, ξὺν νῷ ἑλομένῳ, συντόνως ζῶντι κεῖται βίος ἀγαπητός, ου κακός."

[24] 619d7-e5: "ἐπεὶ εἴ τις ἀεί, ὁπότε εἰς τὸν ἐνθάδε βίον ἀφικνοῖτο, ὑγιῶς φιλοσοφοῖ καὶ ὁ κλῆρος αὐτῷ τῆς αἱρέσεως μὴ ἐν τελευταίοις πίπτοι, κινδυνεύει ἐκ τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἀπαγγελλομένων οὐ μόνον ἐνθάδε εὐδαιμονεῖν ἄν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε καὶ δεῦρο πάλιν πορείαν οὐκ ἂν χθονίαν καὶ τραχεῖαν πορεύεσθαι, ἀλλὰ λείαν τε καὶ οὐρανίαν."

dialogue. In the Myth of Er, however, the influence of chance over one's happiness is introduced, but then seems to confound the conclusions of the arguments. This obscurity is seated not simply in the myth itself, however, but in Socrates' interjected reflection on the myth.

The second point of inconsistency in the myth's narration between Socrates' direct and indirect discourse concerns the impact of rewards and punishments in influencing moral behaviour. Er's account of the choice of lives suggests that one's character influences one's choices, rather than the external consequences of one's choices: "Er said that ... [for] the most part, their choice [of lives] depended upon the character of their former life."[25] This view of the irrelevance of external rewards and punishments is further affirmed by Er's story as various heroes from Greek mythology choose lives comparable to their former lives. For example, Ajax chooses the life of a lion, Agamemnon the life of an eagle, and Thersites the life of a monkey. We are not told whether Ajax, Agamemnon and Thersites spent the previous thousand years in heaven or purgatory, but it seems to be the case that irrespective of the rewards or punishments they had already received or would receive in their subsequent post-mortal term, their present life choice was dictated by their former life alone. Thus, Er's account suggests that post-mortal rewards and punishments have no bearing on moral behaviour. Just prior to Er's description of the soul's life choices being dictated by its former life, a contrary view about the role of punishments and rewards in influencing moral behaviour is stated in one of Socrates' interjection. Socrates states: "The majority of those who had come up from the earth [i.e. purgatory], on the other hand, having suffered themselves and seen others

[25] 620a2-3: "κατὰ συνήθειαν γὰρ τοῦ προτέρου βίου τὰ πολλὰ αἱρεῖσθαι."

suffer, were in no rush to make their choices. Because of this and because of the chance of the lottery, there was an interchange of goods and evils for most of the souls."[26] We can bracket out the role of chance in this situation, and notice that Socrates states that the risk of punishment influences one's moral behaviour, which clearly contradicts Er's proper story.

Similar to the inconsistency regarding the role of chance in attaining a happy life, the influence of external punishments and rewards in developing moral behaviour was not considered in the main argument of the dialogue. In fact, beginning at Book II, the argument expressly excluded external consequences from consideration, and instead, focused solely on the role of education in developing a just soul. That Socrates' indirect narration of the Myth of Er and his direct reflections thereon conflict regarding what role external consequences play in developing a just soul is far from inconsequential. Both these inconsistencies between Socrates' direct and indirect discourse on the myth bear on salient points about the nature of justice, and matters that were not considered in the argument itself. Far from Annas' interpretation, according to which the ambiguities of the myth are simply a by-product of imagistic presentation, these inconsistencies between Socrates direct and indirect discourse ought to be interpreted as intentionally planted by Plato himself. Thus, I shall interpret such inconsistencies as an indication that Plato has composed this myth with some philosophical agenda in mind. It is not yet evident what this philosophical agenda is, however, my thesis will eventually supply a response to this question. Presently, there is reason to proceed with a more sensitive reading of the myth to determine in what way it integrates into the dialogue. It will thus be useful to consider

[26] 619d3-7: "τῶν δ' ἐκ τῆς γῆς τοὺς πολλούς, ἅτε αὐτούς τε πεπονηκότας ἄλλους τε ἑωρακότας, οὐκ ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς τὰς αἱρέσεις ποιεῖσθαι. διὸ δὴ καὶ μεταβολὴν τῶν κακῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ταῖς πολλαῖς τῶν ψυχῶν γίγνεσθαι καὶ διὰ τὴν τοῦ κλήρου τύχην·"

the general ways in which Platonic myth has been conceived as integrating into the dialogue. Reviewing the theories of Brisson and Elias will provide us with a perspective in which I can situate my own thesis.

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Brisson's study of myth in Plato has been strongly influential on recent interpretations of Platonic myth, and for good reason. Brisson's work establishes a role of myth in Plato's thought derived from both a discursive analysis of the text, as well as from a consideration of the cultural uses of myth in Greece in general. Accordingly, Brisson's study has sought to synthesise a continuity between a notion of myth in Greek society preceding Plato's era and the nature of myth within Plato's dialogues. Brisson concludes that Platonic myth indoctrinates the vulgar mass, who are incapable of or unwilling to philosophise, with truths established by the philosopher.

> ... myth plays the role of a paradigm, and it is by means not of education but of persuasion that all those who are not philosophers – that is, the majority of human beings – are led to embrace this paradigm in order to adapt their behavior to it.[27]

Brisson's theory of myth in Plato is derived from his general conception of myth as a vehicle for preserving culturally significant beliefs in an oral cultural. The social status of myth evolves, however, in the period preceding Plato's writing, which evolution Brisson adopts from Havelock's study of the effects of the dissolution of oral culture on the "Greek mind"[28]. Plato marks a critical point in this history, as he is the force that

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[27] Brisson (1998), p. 121. Elsewhere, Brisson writes that as an instrument of persuasion: "This enables myth to play for ordinary people a role similar to that of an intelligible form for the philosopher. It serves as a model to which we can refer, in order to determine the behavior which we should adopt in any given case." pp. 116-7.

[28] Havelock (1963)

draws the blossom of literary culture from the bud[29]. For Brisson, this literary revolution is catalytic to Plato's radical transformation of the category of myth. As the role and power of myth were rooted in an oral tradition, once we reach Plato's written philosophy, which is situated within the framework of a literary culture, myth loses its former privileges. Such privileges are instead transferred into the newly specialised domain of *logos*. Brisson states:

> By contrasting *muthos* to *logos* as non-falsifiable discourse to falsifiable discourse and as story to argumentative discourse, Plato reorganizes, in an original and decisive way, the vocabulary of 'speech' in ancient Greek, in accordance with his principal objective: that of making the philosopher's discourse the measure by which the validity of all other discourses, including and especially that of the poet, can be determined.[30]

Brisson's argument relies on a strict distinction between *logos* and *muthos,* which he bases on two criteria: an external criterion, and an internal. The external criterion stipulates that whereas the truth of a *logos* can be verified or falsified, *muthos* is a non-falsifiable discourse, for it concerns subjects without verifiable referents including the gods, inhabitants of Hades, heroes, daimones and the soul[31]. The internal criterion stipulates that whereas *logos* is constrained by a necessary internal structure (presumably something like valid argument forms), the internal structure of *muthos* is contingent. Brisson ultimately concludes that *logos*, that is, deductive argument, is privileged as philosophical discourse. As fluency in deductive argument is restricted to the few, stable social organisation relies on *muthoi*, which are stylised summaries of the philosophically established theories, in order to indoctrinate appropriate ethical behaviour into the vulgar mass. Brisson's theory, although apparently sound on the surface, is vulnerable to several

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[29] Havelock (1963): "Between Homer and Plato, the method of storage began to alter, as the information became alphabetised, and correspondingly the eye supplanted the ear as the chief organ employed for this purpose. ... Plato, living in the midst of this revolution, announced it and became its prophet." (p. vii).

[30] Brisson (1998), p. 90.

[31] Brisson (1998), p. 7.

problems. One such problem concerns the understanding of Plato's own philosophical writing through the categories of *logos* and *muthos*. The second problem, which concerns the polysemia of myth, surfaces when we attempt to apply Brisson's interpretation of Platonic myth to the Myth of Er.

The first problem in Brisson's theory that must be discussed concerns the polar opposition between *logos* and *muthos*. This opposition is erected based on Plato's discussion of *logos* in the final pages of the *Sophist*[32], from which Brisson generalises a universal account of Platonic *logos*. Such a methodological approach of deriving a general theory in Plato based on a single passage is questionable in itself. More questionable, however, is whether such a classification is useful for understanding Plato's own philosophical dialogues. The first question is whether *logos* and *muthos* are jointly exhaustive for classifying Plato's writing. A *muthos* is an unfalsifiable discourse, whose internal structure is contingent. A *logos* is a falsifiable discourse whose internal structure is necessary (i.e. conforms to valid argument forms). It doesn't appear to follow that all unfalsifiable discourse has a contingent internal structure. A discourse whose referent is the soul is unfalsifiable as it is impossible to "corroborate it or invalidate it"[33] based on facts. It is yet the case that such a discourse could be structured logically, and thus, it is possible to have unfalsifiable discourse whose internal structure is necessary. Such a further category of discourse might be called *psycho-logical* discourse, and Plato's arguments about the nature of the soul would be classified in this category[34]. Such is one example of how Brisson's theory fails to accommodate Plato's own philosophical

[32] *Soph.* 259d-64b.

[33] Brisson (1998), p. 91.

[34] Presumably, Plato's proofs for the immortality of the soul would be included in this category of discourse (cf. *Phaedo*, *Rep.* 608d ff., *Phaedrus* 245c).

writing. There is yet a further category of discourse, however, which we might call *imagistic* discourse, which Brisson's schema also excludes.

Brisson's theory clearly distinguishes between *logoi* and *muthoi*, out of which he recognizes as philosophical discourse those *logoi* whose referents are Forms[35]. On the other hand, *muthoi* concern unfalsifiable subjects, such as "gods, daimons, heroes, inhabitants of Hades, and men of the past"[36], and whose discourse is organised in a contingent way. It is somewhat debatable what sections of Plato's actual writing could be so classified as either philosophical *logoi*, and what sections as *muthoi*, but it is without question that these don't jointly exhaust Plato's writing. Consider the *Republic* for example. As a dialogue filled with images, there are many passages that are neither a *logos* nor a *muthos*, such as the story of Leontius[37], the Ship of State image[38], as well as the central images of the Sun, Line, and perhaps even the Cave. Brisson's study emphasises the priority of *logos* as the philosophical discourse, which is privileged over *muthoi*. That Socrates presents a significant portion of his epistemology and metaphysics in a discursive form that is neither a *logos* nor a *muthos* exposes a sizable lacuna in Brisson's theory. Although I agree with Brisson that Plato surely sought to establish philosophical *logoi*, it is not so clear that his own philosophical writing, and particularly the *Republic*, relied solely on such *logoi* as a means of presenting his philosophy. Consequently, a wider consideration of the various discursive forms Plato uses, and their role in developing understanding and knowledge, is required.

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[35] There is a second species of *logoi*, those whose referents are sensible objects. Such a category might include discourse of the natural sciences. Brisson has little to say about this species of *logos*, but admits that at best, it can offer true opinion.

[36] Brisson (1998), p. 10.

[37] 439e6-440a3.

[38] 488a7-489a2.

Apart from failing to consider all the discursive forms of Plato's writing, Brisson's theory suffers further problems, which are exposed when we put his conclusions about the status and role of myth in Plato's dialogues to practice. Brisson concludes that Plato uses myth to persuade those who are incapable of philosophising of the truths established by philosophy. Were this the case, then the Myth of Er ought to persuade the audience of the conclusions drawn from the main arguments of the *Republic.* The main conclusion of the dialogue is that one ought to practice philosophy in order to be able to live a just life according to reason. This conclusion also seems to be the meaning of the myth, for Socrates himself, in one of his interjections into the myth, pronounces such a meaning[39]. This conclusion leads to a seemingly paradoxical situation, for, given the role of the myth is to persuade a non-philosophical audience of the conclusions of philosophy, the Myth of Er seeks to persuade those incapable of philosophising to philosophise. Such an interpretation of the role of the myth isn't necessarily contradictory, however, it seems to me implausible. There is instead a far more plausible interpretation of what meaning of the myth a non-philosophical audience would draw.

It ought to be recognised that this particular meaning of the myth, that one ought to practice philosophy in order to lead a just life according to reason, is not ostensibly presented in the myth itself. It is only brought to our attention because Socrates himself pronounces it. If we concern ourselves with the myth proper, and ignore Socrates's interjections, the most natural reaction to the myth would be to be persuaded by Odysseus' choice of a private life. If someone were indeed persuaded by Odysseus'

[39] 619d7-e5.

actions, it would follow that he would quell his ambition (i.e. *philotima*), avoid public office, and thus tend only to his family and labours. Such a meaning of the myth does not reflect the primary conclusion of the dialogue, however, it does represent the ethos prescribed to those that make up the industrial class of Kallipolis. Such a class of people, moreover, are non-philosophical, and thus, it would make sense that such a meaning would be directed at them. It is based on this reading of the Myth of Er, that Brisson's suggestion that the myth seeks to indoctrinate the non-philosophic masses is plausible.

Although Brisson's interpretation has some plausibility, there yet remains the question whether Socrates' own suggested meaning of the myth, namely, that we ought to practice philosophy in order to ensure the happiest life, is also a reasonable meaning of the myth. Such a meaning seems quite plausible, as it is reflective of the primary conclusion of the dialogue. It has already been shown that this meaning of the myth is not directed at a non-philosophic public, but to whom is it directed? This particular meaning of the myth is not ostensibly presented in the myth, but must be inferred from the choices of each character, and the consequences that follow from them. Thus, for any audience to make sense of this particular meaning of the myth they must already have some understanding of how the philosophical life ensures happiness. That is, to arrive at this meaning of the myth, one must have prior knowledge of Socrates' arguments about justice. It thus follows that the Myth of Er is not only directed at the vulgar masses, who conform to one reading of the myth, but also to those who can participate in a philosophical dialogue. For such a philosophical audience, the meaning of the myth is wholly different from the meaning directed at a non-philosophical audience.

This analysis of the Myth of Er according to Brisson's interpretation of Platonic myth demonstrates two points. First, the Myth of Er is polysemic. Second, the multiple meanings are directed to different audiences, among which are included a philosophical population. Brisson's interpretation suggested that the role of myth in the dialogues was to indoctrinate the non-philosophic public with the philosophically established truths. Although this role of myth is acceptable for the non-philosophic public, such a role of myth is not applicable to the philosophical audience. It was shown that such an audience derives its meaning of the myth based on the understandings it developed from the arguments. Thus, were it the case that the myth merely rehearsed the conclusions drawn, not only would the myth be merely redundant, but moreover, it would risk obscuring the understandings developed in the argument by representing it in terms of images. That Plato seems to intentionally confound the meaning of the myth in relation to the dialogue suggests that the imagistic representation of this conclusion is not its sole objective.

Through this thesis, I shall pursue the philosophical reception of the Myth of Er which somehow collaborates with or is supported by arguments. Moreover, it shall be shown that such a philosophical reception of the Myth of Er is not a type of reception restricted to myths alone, but is a kind of mode of reception of images in general. Thus, this thesis will also accommodate the *imagistic* discourse, of which the *Republic* is in part composed, which Brisson's binary schematisation of *logos* and *muthos* failed to address. I agree with Brisson that Plato's philosophical pursuit is directed at promoting *logos* as the principal method to establish truth. I also agree that Plato promotes a mimetic form of education whereby citizens develop ethical behaviour based on the imitation of ethical role models, which could be disseminated in *muthoi*. There is, however, a gulf that

separates this elementary imitative based indoctrination reliant on myths and the ability to reason according to *logos* alone. I shall argue that this intermediate domain of education, which includes a great majority of the population, relies on a variety of devices, which include both arguments and images such as myths. Rather than consider Plato's philosophical discourse as one striving for *logos* by excluding *muthos*, a more collaborative approach is required, whereby it is seen that images can contribute to argumentative discourse, although they cannot usurp argumentative discourse.

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Brisson's interpretation of the role of Platonic myth seeks a global theory of myth based primarily on an analysis of what Plato says. Elias, on the other hand, subscribes to a method of seeking a theory of Plato's use of myth drawn principally from his uses of myths in the dialogues. Elias pursues two general interpretations of the relationship between literature and philosophy to explain Plato's use of myth. These he calls the Weak Defence of Poetry (WDP) and the Strong Defence of Poetry (SDP). The WDP holds that Plato's use of myths is reserved exclusively for educating the non-philosophical public. Brisson's interpretation falls into this category. The SDP, on the other hand, maintains that myths establish the fundamental axioms from which *logoi* advance. Elias seeks to defend the SDP by highlighting the deficiency in deductive logical analysis resulting from the necessity of assuming initial premises:

> The programme of the *Phaedo* (101D ff.) and *Republic* (VII, 533C ff.) hopes to remove the postulated character of principles of ever-greater generality, but at the last there must remain within any system of thought statements which are primitive, which cannot themselves be proven within that system.[40]

[40] Elias (1984), p. 231. Also: "But the fact is that axioms can never be verified within the system of which they are part – the only alternatives are an infinite regress or, short of this, circularity. Such axioms can only assert." p. 39.

Elias' criticism of the insufficiency of argument is valid for deductive argument which relies on axioms, however, it is not clear that it is likewise true of Plato's method of dialectic. Plato's discussion of dialectic in the *Republic* is remarkably limited, however, it is explicitly stated that dialectic treats hypotheses as provisional and instead bases its arguments on the Forms (511b-c). Thus, dialectic generates conclusion that are true rather than assumed. If Elias' interpretation of Plato's use of myth is examined in light of this uncontroversial description of dialectic, since myth is purported to illuminate the fundamental premises of dialectic, myths must be illuminating the Forms. As a result of this interpretation, Plato's myths become both a necessary and sufficient instrument for elucidating knowledge of the Forms. As seductive as it is to imagine that myth has some inspired capacity to reveal what can't be rationally established, such a position is expressly denied by Plato's philosophy. Plato's critique of poetry may equivocate about certain matters, but it is certain that the autonomy of poetry and myth is precluded.

Elias's theory has been introduced, albeit briefly, as representative of the view that Plato's myths have some sort of non-rational capacities that reveal what dialectic can't demonstrate. Elias' theory is guided by a fondness for literature, and his argument is complemented by many elucidating citations from literary sources. Both in his examples from literature, as well as in his reading of Plato's myths, Elias shows that literary images can illuminate a perspective of that which extends beyond what argument details. What Elias is incapable of, or simply uninterested in, arguing is how such an image, although perhaps coherent and suggestive, is capable of assuring the necessity of the vision it elicits. It is such necessity that philosophical argument seeks to establish. What we can derive from Elias' theory is a sensitivity for the powerful capacity both myths and images

have for illuminating meanings, however, such a capacity is never independent of the role of argument in Plato's philosophical pursuit to establish truths.

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Although their respective methods and conclusions differ considerably, and despite their many important contributions, both Brisson's and Elias' interpretations have serious limitations. Brisson's rigid discernment of *muthos* and *logos* is too inflexible, and fails to accommodate parts of Plato's writing that are presented imagistically and yet also make philosophical contributions. Elias, on the other hand, transfers to myth the essential task of illuminating fundamental truths, and thus bases the philosophical practice on mysticism or revelation. In sum, as Brisson jettisons myth to promote *logoi*, Elias neglects *logoi* in order to salvage myth. A more fruitful means of interpreting Plato's use of myth arises from entertaining some sort of intersection between the roles of myth and argument. My thesis seeks a middle ground between both Brisson's and Elias' theories by understanding myth and argument as mutually dependent, at least in part, whereby myth is granted an essential role in philosophical discourse without being a vehicle to illumination independent of argument.

The Myth of Er has been shown to play a peculiar role in the *Republic*. It is clear that the myth is polysemous, and that it is host to a number of ambiguities. Despite such an equivocal status, the myth also plays some sort of philosophical role in the dialogue in collaboration with the arguments. It has been shown that the particular meaning the myth yields is dependent on the way in which the audience conceives it. In the following chapter, the Divided Line will be examined in order to describe a number of roles images play in developing beliefs and understandings. It will be shown that these different

cognitive values of images are influence by the mode of reception of the image the viewer adopts. Such an examination of the Divided Line will identify a particular role for images by which they serve as an essential component in producing understanding. According to this role, images serve as evidence for the soundness of deductive arguments.

CHATPER 2: THE DIVIDED LINE AND THE EPISTEMIC VALUES OF IMAGES

The Myth of Er can be considered an image, but can images do philosophical work? This question persists from the previous chapter, wherein it was determined that the Myth of Er is polysemic, with different meanings directed at different audiences. One such audience is philosophers, who understand the myth in collaboration with, but not independent of the arguments of the dialogue. In this chapter I shall look at a central passage of the *Republic*, the Divided Line, in which Plato appears to envision a philosophical role for images. In the final chapter of this thesis I shall show how the Myth of Er performs as a philosophical image.

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What does Plato think that images allow us to know? I shall argue that Plato thinks images can play a number of roles in producing beliefs and understandings of various strengths. I shall moreover show that such beliefs and understandings is less influenced by the content of the image itself, but more significantly, by the viewer's mode of reception. That is, the way in which a viewer regards an image can change the epistemic state the image produces. We shall discuss these different epistemic states through an analysis of the Divided Line, but before we do so, we must first address two issues that characterise a viewer's mode of reception. First, we must consider the constitution of the Divided Line, which will describe two possible types of referents of an image. Second, we shall consider Plato's conception of image in general, which will prepare us to understand the different ways in which a viewer can conceive the relationship between an image and its original.

As the Divided Line is situated within a mosaic of accounts that develop a number of ideas central to Plato's epistemology and metaphysics, although we are only interested in the role of images in the Divided Line, we must yet appeal to these other accounts to facilitate clarifying our understanding[41]. The Divided Line expands on the Argument from Opposites, which delimited the horizon of Plato's epistemology by distinguishing two categories of epistemic objects: sensibles (*ta doxasta*) which are objects of belief (*doxa*), and intelligbles (*ta gnôsta/ta noêta*), or the Forms, which are objects of knowledge (*noêsis*). The Divided Line takes this two-realm view of the Argument from Opposites and renders it more finely resolved by subdividing both the level of *doxa* and *noêsis* into *eikasia* and *pistis,* and *dianoia* and *epistêmê* respectively[42]. The relative epistemic significance of each section is illustrated through the respective magnitude of the divisions within the line. Adopting a method of proportion, Socrates divides the Line in such a way that as *doxa* is to *noêsis*, so *eikasia* is to *pistis*, and *dianoia* to *epistêmê*[43]. Socrates moreover establishes the relationships between each level. He first compares the lower and upper half of the Line to the relationship between an image and its original[44]. That is, sensible objects are to intelligible objects as an image is to its original.

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[41] Argument from Opposites (476e3- 480a10), Analogy of the Sun and Good (506d6-509d6), Divided Line (509d6-511e6), Allegory of the Cave (514a1-517b1).

[42] Although the names of each section are treated as though they are technical terms, Plato is not consistent with his use of terminology for the highest section, and the domain of the intelligible section in general. I shall maintain that *'epistêmê'* represents the highest quadrant of Divided Line, while the term *'noêsis'* represents the full intelligible region of the Divided Line (i.e. two upper sections of *dianoia* and *epistêmê*.)

[43] I assume that the reader is familiar with illustration of the Divided Line. Most editions of Grube and Reeve include a vertical depiction of the line at Book VI, 509.

[44] 510a8-10: "Would you be willing to say that, as regards truth and untruth, the division is in this proportion: As the opinable is to the knowable, so the likeness is to the thing that it is like?" (Ἦ καὶ ἐθέλοις ἂν αὐτὸ φάναι, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, διῃρῆσθαι ἀληθείᾳ τε καὶ μή, ὡς τὸ δοξαστὸν πρὸς τὸ γνωστόν, οὕτω τὸ ὁμοιωθὲν πρὸς τὸ ᾧ ὡμοιώθη;) Such a view of the priority of the image-original relationship to understanding the constitution of the Line is often invoked by commentators, such as Lafrance (1981), p.177: "...c'est le rapport image-original qui constitue la clef d'intelligibilité de l'ontologie de la Ligne et qui permet de concevoir un ordre hiérarchique de toutes les réalités classifiées fondamentalement en monde sensible (image) et en monde intelligible (original)."

Furthermore, the internal relationships within each half of the Line are also modelled after the relationship between an image and its original.

Certain conclusions follow from unpacking the structure and the embedded relationships within the Divided Line. First, the Line, despite being composed of four levels, only bears on two types of objects – sensibles and intelligibles – which are the objects of the domains of *doxa* and *noêsis* respectively. Within these domains, however, it is the upper-level, *pistis* and *epistêmê*, that has these as its proper object. That is, the level of *pistis* engenders beliefs based on perception of sensible objects themselves. Likewise, *epistêmê* engenders knowledge based on apperception of intelligible objects themselves. The lower-level of each domain of the Line, the levels of *eikasia* and *dianoia*, however, are concerned with images of these objects. That is, *eikasia* concerns images of sensible things, while *dianoia* concerns images of intelligible things[45]. Thus, based on the constitution of the Divided Line, it can be seen that images can have two types of referents – sensible objects and intelligible objects. The various epistemic statuses of images in the Divided Line will be in part dictated by the type of referent of the image. It will be reserved until the subsequent sections of this chapter to describe the levels of *eikasia* and *dianoia* in greater detail. First, however, we must also consider another factor influencing the epistemic status of images – the manner in which the viewer conceives the relationship between an image and its referent. This will be discussed in the context of Plato's conception of images.

The relationship between an image and its referent underwrites the unity of the Divided Line in general, but the nature of this relationship is not explicitly discussed

[45] Cf. Lafrance (1981) p. 187: "... les objets de l'*eikasia* et de la *dianoia* sont dérivés : dans le cas de l'*eikasia*, l'image dérive de l'objet physique, et dans le cas de la *dianoia*, les hypothèses initiales dérivent d'un premier principe anhypothétique."

within the Line itself. The little we can gather about images in the *Republic* comes from Socrates' description of the state of *eikasia*. Socrates states that this level "consists of likenesses [i.e. images] ... first shadows, then reflections in water and in all close-packed, smooth, and shiny materials, and everything of that sort"[46]. The level of *eikasia* consists of *eikones* (i.e. likenesses, or images), but Socrates doesn't tell us what an *eikôn* is. He merely gives us examples: shadows and reflections. From these examples we can glean certain features of the relationship between image and referent. What is characteristic of shadows and reflections is that they are necessarily dependent on their referent. That is, a shadow is a shadow of something, and likewise for a reflection. More specifically yet, not only are shadows and reflections dependent on a referent, but this dependency entails similarity with its referent. A shadow shares some similarity in outline with its referent, although it does not share its colour. A reflection shares both the outline and colour with its referent, although it may suffer some aberrations in its representation of the referent. It is due to its similarity with its referent that the term '*eikôn*' derives its sense, which is principally 'likeness'. Often, however, *eikôn* is translated by the more specific sense of 'image'[47].

An image, thus, shares a likeness or similarity with its referent. This definition can be further specified, but to do so we need to refer to another dialogue, the *Cratylus* (432a-d). There, Socrates is in the midst of a discussion with Cratylus concerning the

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[46] 509e1-510a3: λέγω δὲ τὰς εἰκόνας πρῶτον μὲν τὰς σκιάς, ἔπειτα τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὅσα πυκνά τε καὶ λεῖα καὶ φανὰ συνέστηκεν, καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

[47] I shall use the terms 'likeness' and 'image' interchangeably in this thesis. Although 'likeness' is a more literal translation of '*eikôn*', it is also often an awkward word in the English language. In must be noted, however, that the proper translation of the term '*eikôn*' in each of its uses is made difficult, as it frequently has more specific senses of 'simile' and 'analogy'. This philological problem is made all the more difficult given that there are a number of Greek terms which can likewise be translated as 'image', such as *phantasma*, *homoios*, *mimêma*, *eidôlon,* and *paradeigma*. Although each of these terms have different flavours of sense it is not the case that they can be clearly distinguished in general (*Cf.* Patterson (1985), ch.3; Tecusan (1992)).

nature of names. Cratylus has suggested that if even a single letter of a name is changed then the name no longer picks out the same referent. Socrates refutes this claim by arguing that a name could be considered like an *eikôn*, which continues to pick out the same referent even if some of its details are changed. Socrates follows this up with an important description of the nature of *eikones*:

> SOCRATES: ... a likeness cannot remain a likeness if it presents all the details of what it represents (*eikazei*). See if I'm right. Would there be two things – Cratylus and a likeness of Cratylus – in the following circumstances? Suppose some god didn't just represent (*apeikaseiev*) your color and shape the way painters do, but made all the inner parts like yours, with the same warmth and softness, and put motion, soul, and wisdom like yours into them – in a word, suppose he made a duplicate of everything you have and put it beside you. Would there then be two Cratyluses or Cratylus and an image of Cratylus?[48]

According to this thought experiment, two essential characteristics define an *eikôn*[49]. The first, which we have already noted, is that an *eikôn* must be similar to its referent. It isn't clear what the nature of this similarity is, but what seems to be the salient aspect is that the similarity of an image must have been imparted with the purpose of making it an image. Just because an olive and a grape may be similar both in colour and size does not mean that one is necessarily an image of the other (although one could be used as an image for another). Furthermore, the features that define this similarity depends on the type of referent. If the referent of the image is a sensible object, the similar features must be sensible (e.g. visual, sonic, etc.). If the referent of the image is an

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[48] *Cratylus* 432b1-d3 (trans. C.D.C. Reeve in Cooper (1997) with minor modifications by me) :
{ΣΩ.} ... οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν δέῃ πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷόν ἐστιν ᾧ εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι. σκόπει δὲ εἰ τὶ λέγω. ἆρ' ἂν δύο πράγματα εἴη τοιάδε, οἷον Κρατύλος καὶ Κρατύλου εἰκών, εἴ τις θεῶν μὴ μόνον τὸ σὸν χρῶμα καὶ σχῆμα ἀπεικάσειεν ὥσπερ οἱ ζωγράφοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐντὸς πάντα τοιαῦτα ποιήσειεν οἷάπερ τὰ σά, καὶ μαλακότητας καὶ θερμότητας τὰς αὐτὰς ἀποδοίη, καὶ κίνησιν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν οἵαπερ ἡ παρὰ σοὶ ἐνθείη αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἑνὶ λόγῳ πάντα ἅπερ σὺ ἔχεις, τοιαῦτα ἕτερα καταστήσειεν πλησίον σου; πότερον Κρατύλος ἂν καὶ εἰκὼν Κρατύλου τότ' εἴη τὸ τοιοῦτον, ἢ δύο Κρατύλοι;

[49] There may be further essential characteristics of an *eikôn*, but I shall only be concerned with these two in this thesis.

intelligible object, the similar features must be intelligible. It will be reserved until later in this chapter to elaborate on similarity of intelligible features.

The second characteristic that defines an *eikôn* is that it must maintain some dissimilarity with its referent. This characteristic is essential, for if the similarity between image and referent is pushed to indiscernibility, what remains is not an image and its referent, but simply two tokens of the same object. What this characteristic difference dictates, then, is that the notion of a perfect likeness, or perfect representation, is contradictory, if by perfect we mean an indiscernible copy[50]. Socrates makes no comment about what the nature of the difference between image and referent must be. In fact, an image may differ from its referent in a host of ways. As we proceed to consider the different epistemic states images produce, this characteristic difference between image and referent will play a crucial role. What will be most important to this argument is not the ways in which the image differs from its referent, but rather, simply whether the viewer appreciates that there is a difference between an image and its referent or not.

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Images can refer either to sensible or intelligible objects. Images referring to sensible objects can produce two kinds of epistemic states, both of which are subsumed in the level of *eikasia*. In the Divided Line, only a single sentence is dedicated to the state of *eikasia*. We have looked at this already but it is worth revisiting. Concerning the state of *eikasia*, Socrates says that it "consists of likenesses ... first shadows, then reflections

[50] I draw the reader's attention to a discussion of this issue in Goodman's *Languages of Art* (1976, pp. 17-19). Goodman performs a thought experiment which seeks to determine if the eye could be presented with a bundle of light rays from an image identical to those from the original referent of the image. Although Goodman concedes that this is theoretically possible, given that the conditions require looking at both the referent and image through a pinhole, with a single, motionless eye, and organising the viewing with scrupulous precision, Goodman convinces us that although theoretically possible, it is yet inconceivable in practice, and most importantly, is not characteristic of the way in which we look at images.

in water and in all close-packed, smooth, and shiny materials, and everything of that sort"[51]. It is clear that *eikasia* is the cognitive state associated with considering images of sensible things. Very little else is clear however, for Plato gives no other explicit description of this cognitive state[52]. What we have already learned is that images, although they share some similarity with their referent, likewise are distinguished by some dissimilarity. As a cognitive state within the domain of *doxa,* the product of *eikasia* are beliefs. Such beliefs, however, are not about the image, insofar as it is an image, but rather, about the sensible objects to which the image refers. It is for this reason that eikastic beliefs are tenuous, for as the beliefs are founded on the image rather than on the referent itself, they risk being false on account of the difference between the image and the referent. Greater analysis of this cognitive state is required before we can appreciate the relative strength of eikastic beliefs. I shall argue that *eikasia* subsumes two distinct cognitive states, which engender beliefs of varying strengths. I shall refer to these states as *eikasia* as delusional, and *eikasia* as conjectural, and that they are distinguished by the manner in which the viewer conceives a difference between image and referent[53].

The state of *eikasia* as delusional is a cognitive state wherein the viewer of an image is not aware of a difference between an image and its referent. The root of this confusion lies in the viewer's failure to recognise that images are necessarily dissimilar to the reality they represent. Thus, as the viewer takes the reality of the referent of the image to be the same as what the image represents, the viewer is in a state of delusion about the

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[51] 509e1-510a3: λέγω δὲ τὰς εἰκόνας πρῶτον μὲν τὰς σκιάς, ἔπειτα τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὅσα πυκνά τε καὶ λεῖα καὶ φανὰ συνέστηκεν, καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

[52] Plato only uses the term '*eikasia*' three times: 511e2, 534a1, 534a5. In each instance, he only names the state, but does not provide a description of it.

[53] I have derived this interpretation from Notopoulos (1933, 1936), although I make certain modifications. I am also indebted to Lafrance (1981), who also calls our attention to these two senses of *eikasia.*

actual reality of the referent. Consequently, the beliefs the viewer generates from these images are at best tenuous and at worst wholly vacuous[54]. Adam, in his gloss on the text, sheds light on this interpretation of *eikasia*:

> But since *eikones* are a lower grade of *doxasta*, *eikasia* should be understood as a lower variety of *doxa* viz. the state of mind which accepts as truth that which is a copy of a copy. In this sense, *eikasia* is a new coinage of Plato's. The translation 'conjecture' is misleading, for conjecture implies conscious doubt or hesitation, and doubt is foreign to *eikasia* in Plato's sense.[55]

Adam describes this state as one in which someone accepts images as "truth". Two different interpretations, however, follow depending on what Adam means by 'truth'. On the one hand, it could mean that the viewer actually mistakes the image for the reality it represents. In this case, the viewer thinks that the image is truly reality. Such a state might affect an attendee to an exhibition of Ron Mueck's sculptural works. As Mueck's sculptures are marked by their extraordinary realism, it is plausible that someone could fail to appreciate that he is looking at sculptures, and rather believe that he is looking at real humans[56]. Socrates himself describes this as a possible reception of images, however, he only attributes it to the most intellectually immature of individuals[57]. On the other hand, Adam's gloss could simply mean that the viewer, although he recognises the image is an image, yet thinks that the image is a faithful representation of

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[54] Those commentators that support the *eikasia* qua delusion reading of *eikasia* include Nettleship (1897), Adam (1902), Cornford (1941), Hamlyn (1958), Cross and Woozley (1964), Sze (1977) Dixsaut (1986).

[55] Adam (1902) v.2 p. 72.

[56] Such a reception of Mueck's work would be far more plausible were the sculptures observed outside a gallery, in a context where the viewer is not expecting to see sculptures.

[57] *Rep.* X, 598c2-4, in the context of a critique of painting: "if he is a good painter (*zographos*) and displays his painting (*grapsas*) of a carpenter at a distance, he can deceive children and foolish people (*aphronas*) into thinking that it is truly a carpenter." This state of extreme delusion also describes the state of the enchained prisoners in the Allegory of the Cave, 515c1-2: "Then the prisoners would in every way believe that the truth is nothing other than shadows of those artefacts." (Παντάπασι δή, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οἱ τοιοῦτοι οὐκ ἂν ἄλλο τι νομίζοιεν τὸ ἀληθὲς ἢ τὰς τῶν σκευαστῶν σκιάς.) *Cf.* also 476c: "Don't you think he is living in a dream rather than a wakened state? Isn't this dreaming, whether asleep or awake, to think that a likeness is not a likeness but rather the thing itself that it is like?"

its referent. In this second type of *eikasia* as delusional, however, the viewer only considers a similarity between image and referent, but fails to mark any difference. Such is a natural reception of images, particularly when one is viewing photographs. Given their faithful realism, it is common to neglect the differences between a photograph and its referent, however, not even photographs are perfect representations of the sensible reality. For example, as a photograph can seemingly collapse the distance between two objects in the depth of the picture plane, it is possible to alter the relative size of objects as they appear in the image.

I have described two possible conditions in this state of *eikasia* as delusional, and done so briefly offering only limited and simple examples. We could further detail nuances and subtleties in this condition, but this short discussion is sufficient to establish the essential character of this cognitive state, which is that the viewer fails to mark any difference between what is represented in the image, and what the referent is like in itself. Although we have looked at two quite different manifestations of this state, both are subject to the same epistemological concerns. As the beliefs formed purport to be about the referent itself, and the referent imaged is necessarily different from the referent itself, it is possible that the beliefs are false. Whether indeed the beliefs are false depends on the way in which the image differs from the referent, however, as the observer fails to consider this difference, he cannot qualify the fidelity of the image, and thus not gauge the reliability of the belief. I consider this a passive eikastic condition, as the viewer passively accepts the truth of the image rather than challenge the fidelity of the representation. I shall now consider a second eikastic condition which is active in character.

A second eikastic state is *eikasia* as conjectural, wherein the viewer appreciates not only that the image is in fact an image, but moreover, that as an image its representation of the referent differs from the referent in itself[58]. Based on the similarity between the image and the referent, the viewer strives to conjecture the referent from the image despite this difference. Robinson throws support to this interpretation through his analysis of the meaning of the word *eikasia* itself. As Plato's use of '*eikasia*' is considered a new coinage[59], Robinson refers to its more frequently used cognate *eikazô*: "The word *eikasia* would surely suggest *eikazô* to a Greek ... and *eikazô* never conveyed any suggestion of taking copies as originals by means of copies. Liddell and Scott give: represent by an image or likeness, portray, liken, compare, infer from comparison, from a conjecture. It will not do to say that the word means merely conjecture, and not specifically conjecture about the originals of images."[60] What Robinson here argues is that although the verb *eikazô* can have a variety of meanings, this range of meanings generally relates to the act of conjecturing a referent from a likeness or image. It is clear that despite its various meanings, it does not mean "taking copies as originals by means of copies." That is, *eikazô* doesn't means confusing images with their referents, which is the defining characteristic of the state of *eikasia* as delusional. Thus, Robinson deems *eikasia* is a cognitive state of conjecturing the original from the image.

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[58] This view is supported by Stocks (1911), Ferguson (1921, 1922), Murphy (1932), Robinson (1941). Consider Stocks description: "Suppose ... a mind is faced with an image, defective as all images are, fleeting and shifting as shadows are wont to be – with an image which he knows to be an image, but of which he does not know the original. He will be trying continually, on the ground of imperfect evidence before him, to frame a reliable mental picture of that original. He will be in a state which is fairly called one of conjecture." (p. 77-78).

[59] Cf. Adam (1902) v2, p. 72: "...*eikasia* is a new coinage of Plato's.", Cornford (1941), p. 222: "The lowest form of cognition is called *eikasia*. The word defies translation, being one of those current terms to which Plato gives a peculiar sense, to be inferred from the context."

[60] Robinson (1941), p. 191.

Whereas we described the former state of *eikasia* as delusional as one which is passive, this state of *eikasia* as conjectural is active in character, as the viewer strives to reconcile the image with the referent. Such a reconciliation between image and referent is facilitated by the viewer's experience and familiarity with the sensible referent. Effectively, the viewer is using the image as a means to observe the sensible world itself. Many paintings from the early 20th century, due to the gradual departure from realism, exaggerate the difference between image and referent, and thus demand such an active reception from its viewer. The analytic cubist works of Picasso are good examples. In these works, Picasso fragmented the image space, which presented the referent in a rather refractory way. Despite the considerable disparity between the representation of the referent and the referent itself, it is yet possible to reconstitute the referent from its image. We need not limit ourselves to examples from our era to illustrate this cognitive state. The Myth of Perseus offers an example from Greek mythology, according to which Perseus slews the Medusa, not through a direct perception of her, but by observing her through her reflection in his shield. That Medusa's petrifying powers are not mediated through her reflection symbolises a difference between perceiving an object directly, and perceiving through its image.

Not only is the condition of *eikasia* as conjectural different from the state of *eikasia* as delusional insofar as it is active in appreciating a difference between image and referent, but as a consequence of this, *eikasia* as conjectural also produces beliefs of greater reliability. As the viewer strives to infer the referent from the image itself by taking into consideration the difference between image and referent, the viewer can not only conjecture the referent from the image, but also gauge the plausibility of his

conjecture. Thus, the viewer appreciates that the belief can be false, yet maintains it as his best conjecture.

These difference between these two conditions of *eikasia* are important to keep in mind. For, rather than being conceived as contending interpretations of *eikasia*, we can follow the interpretations of Notopoulos and Lafrance who both argue that these states are subsumed within *eikasia*[61]. The viability of this interpretation rests on the fact that these two states of *eikasia* are in opposition to each other, as one cannot both recognise and simultaneously not recognise a difference between image and referent. Thus, we can conclude that the cognitive state of *eikasia* is constituted by two different modes, and whose respective beliefs produced differ in degree of reliability. Although the beliefs of both these eikastic states are susceptible of being false, in *eikasia* as delusional, one is not aware of this possibility and so the beliefs are tenuous. In *eikasia* as conjectural, on the other hand, one is aware of the possibility that the beliefs can be false, yet, he maintains his beliefs as the most plausible. These two different senses of *eikasia* rely on two different roles of images distinguished by two different modes of reception of the viewer. In the following section, we shall look at two analogical roles of images whose referents are not sensible objects, but are intelligible objects. One such role of images will be shown to play a philosophical role.

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[61] Notopoulos (1933) p. 197: "*Eikasia* is interpreted on the one hand as illusion, i.e., the confusing of an image with the original, and on the other as conjecture, inference, i.e., apprehension of the original through or by means of images." Lafrance (1981) p. 188: "l'état d'esprit correspondant à l'*eikasia* consiste dans la connaissance du monde des images, que l'on prenne ces images pour la réalité ou que l'on se serve d'images pour atteindre la réalité." Cornford's suggested translation of *eikasia* as 'imagining' preserves the ambiguity between these two senses of *eikasia*, as imagining could be considered both passive and active (Cornford, (1941), p. 222). Lafrance also suggests this translation of the term (Lafrance, 1981, p. 187).

In the former section, we showed that the state of *eikasia* includes two distinct conditions differentiated by whether or not the viewer conceives a difference between image and referent. In this section, I shall argue that the level of *dianoia* also subsumes two distinct conditions, and these two states entail two distinct roles for images distinguished by the mode of reception of the viewer. I shall argue that one such role for images constitutes a necessary component in a philosophical discourse.

Our task of analysing the role of images in *dianoia* is made easier by recognising an analogical relationship between both the upper-half and lower-half of the Divided Line in general, and also between *dianoia* and *eikasia* in particular. These analogical relationships are suggested by Socrates: "*Doxa* is concerned with becoming, *noêsis* with being. And as being is to becoming, so *noêsis* is to *doxa*, so *epistêmê* is to *pistis*, and *dianoia* is to *eikasia*."[62] Unpacking these analogical relationships will provide us with a starting point to understand the nature of *dianoia*. Recall that the domain of *doxa*, which is divided into the two levels of *pistis* and *eikasia*, concerns sensible objects and the beliefs they engender. The beliefs of *pistis* are based on the perception of sensible objects themselves, while the eikastic beliefs are produced by the perception of sensible objects as represented in images. The structure of the upper-half of the Divided Line is organised in an analogical way. The domain of *noêsis*, which is divided into two levels, *epistêmê* and *dianoia*, concerns intelligible objects and the knowledge they engender. The level of *epistêmê* engenders knowledge as it is based on direct apperception of intelligibles themselves. If the analogy between *dianoia* and *eikasia* holds, then *dianoia* apperceives intelligibles in a derivative way, comparable to perceiving a sensible object through its

[62] 534a2-5: καὶ δόξαν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, νόησιν δὲ περὶ οὐσίαν· καὶ ὅτι οὐσία πρὸς γένεσιν, νόησιν πρὸς δόξαν, καὶ ὅτι νόησις πρὸς δόξαν, ἐπιστήμην πρὸς πίστιν καὶ διάνοιαν πρὸς εἰκασίαν.

image. I shall explain below how *dianoia* only has such an indirect apperception of the intelligibles. On account of this indirect apperception, however, *dianoia* does not engender infallible knowledge, but instead, grants a sort of understanding which falls short of knowledge. I shall develop this analysis of *dianoia* in greater detail in what follows. First, let's consider the text:

> In one subsection [*i.e. dianoia*], the soul, using as images [*ôs eikosin*] the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion. In the other subsection [i.e. *epistêmê*], however, it makes its way to a first principle that is *not* a hypothesis, proceeding from a hypothesis but without the image used in the previous subsection, using Forms themselves and making its investigation through them.[63]

Dianoia is described by its use of two components: hypotheses and images (*eikones*), relying on which *dianoia* proceeds to a conclusion. *Epistêmê* is distinguished from *dianoia* in that it does not use images, and it proceeds upwards to an unhypothetical first principle. Our objective is to understand what role images serve in *dianoia*, but to do so, it is necessary to understand what role hypotheses play. Plato's adoption of hypotheses as a component of dianoetic thought must be related to the development of the Method of Hypothesis in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*[64], which was surely influenced by contemporaneous methods in geometry. What the relationship of the *Republic's* dianoetic hypotheses both to the contemporaneous mathematical sciences and to Plato's development of the Method of Hypothesis are discussed respectively in two important studies, Lafrance (1980) and Robinson (1941). These two interpretations of dianoetic

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[63] 510b4-b9: Ἦι τὸ μὲν αὐτοῦ τοῖς τότε μιμηθεῖσιν ὡς εἰκόσιν χρωμένη ψυχὴ ζητεῖν ἀναγκάζεται ἐξ ὑποθέσεων, οὐκ ἐπ' ἀρχὴν πορευομένη ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τελευτήν, τὸ δ' αὖ ἕτερον—τὸ ἐπ' ἀρχὴν ἀνυπόθετον—ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἰοῦσα καὶ ἄνευ τῶν περὶ ἐκεῖνο εἰκόνων, αὐτοῖς εἴδεσι δι' αὐτῶν τὴν μέθοδον ποιουμένη.

[64] *Meno* 86c-87d, *Phaedo* 99b-101e.

hypotheses form the basis of the two different states of *dianoia* I wish to distinguish in this section.

Professor Lafrance's analysis of dianoetic hypotheses comes through a study of the conception of a hypothesis in Aristotle, Euclid and Proclus, in order to address debates in the commentaries regarding what a hypothesis is for Plato. This debate questions whether a hypothesis is a thing[65], or a proposition, and if the latter, whether it is an existential proposition[66], or a definitional proposition[67]. Based on a review of the nature of axioms, postulates, definitions, and hypotheses in the works of Aristotle, Euclid and Proclus, Lafrance concludes that the technical terminology of geometry in the period following Plato did not have fixed meaning, and that the conceptions associated with these terms probably varies according to each author's epistemology. Lafrance further concludes that whereas Aristotle, Euclid and Proclus distinguish various logical conceptions (e.g. an axiom, postulate, definition, etc.), these various conceptions are collapsed into and blurred within Plato's understanding of a hypothesis. Lafrance eventually concludes that Plato: "considère comme hypothèse tout genre de propositions connues et évidentes pour tous et qui servent de principes à la géométrie et à l'arithmétique."[68] By hypothesis, Plato means a proposition that is taken to be true, however, he does not distinguish between existential and definitional propositions. Thus, in general, hypotheses are axioms[69].

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[65] *Cf.* Hare (1965).

[66] *Cf.* Cornford (1931).

[67] Archer-Hind, R.D. *The Phaedo of Plato, ed. with introduction, notes and appendices.* 2nd ed. New York: Arno Press, 1970.

[68] Lafrance (1980), p. 62.

[69] Such an understanding of hypotheses seems consistent with Socrates description of them at 510c2-d3: "I think you know that students of geometry, calculation, and the like hypothesize (ὑποθέμενοι) the odd and the even, the various figures, the three kinds of angles, and other things akin to these in each of their

Robinson, in contrast to Lafrance, approaches the nature of hypothesis through Plato's own works in general. Based on an analysis of the nature of hypotheses in the *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*, through which dialogues Robinson maintains that the Method of Hypothesis does not suffer revision, Robinson defines the Method of Hypothesis by five characteristics: hypothesizing, deduction, consistency, provisional and approximation[70]. By *hypothesising*, Robinson means that a proposition is taken as a deliberate adoption of opinions. One is not deluded about the lack of certainty of the postulated proposition, yet, this lack of certainty does not require complete suspension of judgement. From such postulated propositions, one infers new hypotheses by *deduction.* The validity of these deduced hypotheses is assured by their *consistency.* That is, each new hypothesis must be neither self-contradictory, nor contradict any other hypothesis in the argument. Due, moreover, to the postulated character of initial propositions, the conclusions of the argument are *provisional*[71]. As a consequence of such provisionality, the argument must be considered *approximative.* The approximative status of the argument can only be removed by founding the argument on an unhypothetical first principle, that is, on a Form.

Both Lafrance and Robinson maintain that hypotheses are considered as true, but in the case of Robinson, because hypotheses are accepted as true without certainty, the

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investigations (καθ' ἑκάστην μέθοδον), as if they knew them. They make these their hypotheses (ὑποθέσεις) and don't think it necessary to give any account (λόγον ... διδόναι) of them, either to themselves or to others, as if they were clear to everyone. And going from these first principles through the remaining steps, they arrive in full agreement."

[70] Robinson (1941), pp. 105 ff.

[71] In defence of this characteristic, Robinson cites *Republic* 437a4-9: "Nevertheless, in order to avoid going through all these objections one by one and taking a long time to prove them all untrue, let's hypothesize (ὑποθέμενοι) that this is correct and carry on. But we agree that if it should ever be shown to be incorrect, all the consequences we've drawn from it will also be lost." Cf. 388e2-3: "Then, as the argument has demonstrated – and we must remain persuaded by it until someone shows us a better one – they mustn't behave that way."

conclusions drawn from them are necessarily approximative and provisional. Lafrance, on the other hand, maintains that Plato's hypotheses are axiomatic, that is, they are true unqualifiedly, and thus, the conclusions are not provisional or approximative. A simple example will elucidate the difference between these two conceptions of dianoetic hypotheses. If A is a dianoetic hypothesis, and $A \rightarrow B$, as A is axiomatically true for Lafrance, then B is true with certainty. The argument is deemed both valid and sound. For Robinson, all that can be concluded is $A \rightarrow B$, since A is only assumed true, but not with certainty. Although the argument is valid, B is approximative as the soundness of the argument has not been verified. Whether dianoetic hypotheses are axiomatic, as Lafrance claims, or assumed, as Robinson claims, has significant impact over what the cognitive state of *dianoia* actually is.

Based on the two different interpretation of dianoetic hypotheses follow two different conceptions of *dianoia* in general. The first interpretation, whereby hypotheses are axiomatic, I shall refer to as *dianoia* as axiomatic. In this state, since the researcher conceives the hypotheses as true without doubt, the conclusions that follow from them are also taken as true with certainty. Such a state is descriptive of the condition of the mathematician[72]. Although a mathematician like Euclid or Theatetus considers that mathematics and geometry provide perfect knowledge, this state of *dianoia* is dogmatic, since the researcher takes as a first principle his hypothesis rather than a Form. The second interpretation of *dianoia*, where hypotheses are taken as assumed premises, I shall refer to as *dianoia* as ascertainment. In this state, the researcher appreciates that the hypotheses are indeed assumed and thus not certain, and consequently, the conclusions

[72] Cf. 510c2-d3

are provisional, and thus approximative. Rather than maintain a dogmatic stance concerning the truth of his argument, a researcher in the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment will continue to hold his conclusions in some doubt until he bases his arguments on the certain knowledge of the Forms. Such a dianoetic state describes the condition of an enquiring researcher, who, although he hasn't gained knowledge of the Forms, yet pursues them through his use of hypotheses.

As each of these two conceptions of *dianoia* are derived from the two interpretations of dianoetic hypotheses, both of which were supported by the text, how are we to determine which one is correct? In the secondary literature, *dianoia* is often described in terms of its scope of application. Lafrance's conception of dianoetic hypotheses is predicated on the view that *dianoia* is restricted to the mathematical sciences specifically. This position is supported by the fact that in the *Republic*, *dianoia* is only described in the context of mathematics[73]. On the other hand, however, although *dianoia* may be exemplified by the mathematical sciences, there is no clear statement that it must be so restricted. It seems reasonable that *dianoia* can be applied to a wider scope of philosophical problems, such as ethical enquiry[74]. That this is the case is suggested by

[73] A number of commentators support this position, e.g., Cornford (1941), Murphy (1951), Cross and Woozley (1964), Mansion (1969).

[74] Nettleship (1897), Hackforth (1942), Dixsaut (1986), Dorter (2005). Nettleship (1897) describes *dianoia* concerning all subjects subsumed under "the scientific habit of mind." (p. 249). Dorter (2005) makes a strong case for a wider scope for *dianoia*: "At the end of Book 6, when Glaucon fails to understand Socrates' explanation of *dianoia*, the examples that Socrates introduces are instances of the method of hypothesis used by mathematicians, and consequently it is often concluded that *dianoia* is concerned only with mathematics. But we should not forget that in the *Meno* (86e-87c) and *Phaedo* (100a-101e) Socrates has shown how the mathematical method of hypothesis is employed by philosophy as well, so the things that are said about *dianoia* would apply to the corresponding kind of philosophical as well as mathematical methodology." (p. 152)

Socrates' description of a premise in an ethical investigation as a hypothesis[75]. It isn't clear what else other than a dianoetic hypothesis such a hypothesis could be.

There isn't any clear indication from the text which interpretations of dianoetic hypotheses is correct, and thus likewise, which interpretation of *dianoia* is correct. In order to resolve this problem, I shall instead refer to the structure of the Divided Line to suggest a solution. Recall that the upper and lower half of the Line are related to each other in an analogical way: "*Doxa* is concerned with becoming, *noêsis* with being. And as being is to becoming, so *noêsis* is to *doxa*, so *epistêmê* is to *pistis*, and *dianoia* is to *eikasia*."[76] Thus, following from their analogical relationship, the state of *dianoia* ought to be comparable in nature to the state of *eikasia*. It was concluded that the state of *eikasia* was composed of two distinct conditions, distinguished by whether the viewer of an image appreciated a difference between the image and its referent. We can understand *dianoia* analogically by recognising that *dianoia* as axiomatic and *dianoia* as ascertainment are distinguished by whether or not the researcher appreciates a difference between a hypothesis and a Form. That is, just like in *eikasia* as delusional, wherein one fails to mark a difference between image and referent, in *dianoia* as axiomatic, where the fundamental hypotheses are considered as axioms, one fails to mark a difference between hypotheses and the Forms. Likewise, the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment is comparable to *eikasia* as conjectural. In *eikasia* as conjectural the perceiver recognises a difference between image and referent, and then seeks to conjecture the original based on the image. In *dianoia* as ascertainment, the researcher appreciates that the hypotheses are merely assumed, and thus, not a perfect representation of the Forms. His conclusions are thus

[75] 437a6.

[76] 534a2-5: καὶ δόξαν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, νόησιν δὲ περὶ οὐσίαν· καὶ ὅτι οὐσία πρὸς γένεσιν, νόησιν πρὸς δόξαν, καὶ ὅτι νόησις πρὸς δόξαν, ἐπιστήμην πρὸς πίστιν καὶ διάνοιαν πρὸς εἰκασίαν.

taken provisionally until the argument can be founded on knowledge of the Forms. Because *dianoia* as axiomatic and *dianoia* as ascertainment are distinguished by the disposition of the researcher with regards to the certainty of his hypotheses, these two modes of *dianoia* are mutually exclusive. Consequently, it is reasonable to consider them both as subsumed within the general cognitive state of *dianoia*. Although both these dianoetic conditions are subsumed within *dianoia*, it is not the case that they have the same epistemological value.

The cognitive state of *dianoia* produces understanding rather than beliefs as in the case of *eikasia*. Analogical to the differences in the reliability of the beliefs produced by the two eikastic states, the two dianoetic states produce understandings of different strength. The state of *dianoia* as axiomatic is representative of the mathematician's cognitive state, which Socrates critiques, not on account of the validity of their inferences, but on account of their dogmatic certainty in their fundamental premises. As his reasoning is valid, the understanding he produces is coherent, but not necessarily true. As such, Socrates compares this dianoetic state to being in a dreamlike state:

> And as for the rest, I mean geometry and the subjects that follow it, we described them as to some extent grasping what is, for we saw that, while they do dream about what is, they are unable to command a waking view of it as long as they make use of hypotheses that they leave untouched and that they cannot give any account of. What mechanism could possibly turn any consistency into knowledge when it begins with something unknown and puts together the conclusion and the steps in between from what is unknown?[77]

This description of *dianoia* as axiomatic is consonant with the delude affectation of the viewer suffering from *eikasia* as delusional[78]. It was in the state of *eikasia* as

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[77] 533b6-c5: "αἱ δὲ λοιπαί, ἃς τοῦ ὄντος τι ἔφαμεν ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι, γεωμετρίας τε καὶ τὰς ταύτῃ ἑπομένας, ὁρῶμεν ὡς ὀνειρώττουσι μὲν περὶ τὸ ὄν, ὕπαρ δὲ ἀδύνατον αὐταῖς ἰδεῖν, ἕως ἂν ὑποθέσεσι χρώμεναι ταύτας ἀκινήτους ἐῶσι, μὴ δυνάμεναι λόγον διδόναι αὐτῶν. ᾧ γὰρ ἀρχὴ μὲν ὃ μὴ οἶδε, τελευτὴ δὲ καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ ἐξ οὗ μὴ οἶδεν συμπέπλεκται, τίς μηχανὴ τὴν τοιαύτην ὁμολογίαν ποτὲ ἐπιστήμην γενέσθαι;"

[78] Socrates is fond of using a dreamlike state to describe a weak cognitive condition (e.g. 382e11, 414d5,

conjectural that the viewer seized an active role in speculating about the nature of the referent from its imperfect representation in an image. Likewise, the researcher in *dianoia* as ascertainment also seizes an active role in speculating about the truth that supports his conclusions, although he has yet attained a clear view of the Forms. The understanding such a researcher gains may be no more true than the mathematician's, however, in this state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, the researcher is explicit about the provisionality of the conclusion. Such an acknowledgement of uncertainty provides the impetus to improve his argument by means of a deeper questioning of his hypotheses. This operation of improving hypotheses is facilitated by *dianoia* as ascertainment's use of images.

Before we consider the particular roles played by images in *dianoia*, it is first important to observe in what way the use of images differs in *eikasia* and *dianoia*. Whereby eikastic images are defined by having sensible objects as referents, dianoetic images have intelligibles as referents. Socrates explains:

> Then you also know that, although they [i.e. those in the state of *dianoia*] use visible figures and make claims about them, their thought isn't directed to them but to those other things that they are like. They make their claims for the sake of the square itself and the diagonal itself, not the diagonal they draw, and similarly with the others. These figures that they make and draw, of which shadows and reflections in water are images (*eikones*), they now in turn use as images (*ôs eikosin*), in seeking to see (*idein*) those other things themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought.[79]

In this passage, Socrates describes both types of referents an image can have. On the one hand, he presents the eikastic relationship between an image and sensible thing,

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etc.), which he also uses to describe the state of *eikasia* as delusion: "Isn't this dreaming: whether asleep or awake, to think that a likeness (τὸ ὅμοιόν) is not a likeness (τῳ μὴ ὅμοιον) but rather the thing itself that it is like (αὐτὸ ἡγῆται εἶναι ᾧ ἔοικεν?" (476c4-7)

[79] 510d-511a: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὅτι τοῖς ὁρωμένοις εἴδεσι προσχρῶνται καὶ τοὺς λόγους περὶ αὐτῶν ποιοῦνται, οὐ περὶ τούτων διανοούμενοι, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων πέρι οἷς ταῦτα ἔοικε, τοῦ τετραγώνου αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα τοὺς λόγους ποιούμενοι καὶ διαμέτρου αὐτῆς, ἀλλ' οὐ ταύτης ἣν γράφουσιν, καὶ τἆλλα οὕτως, αὐτὰ μὲν ταῦτα ἃ πλάττουσίν τε καὶ γράφουσιν, ὧν καὶ σκιαὶ καὶ ἐν ὕδασιν εἰκόνες εἰσίν, τούτοις μὲν ὡς εἰκόσιν αὖ χρώμενοι, ζητοῦντες δὲ αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα ἰδεῖν ἃ οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως ἴδοι τις ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ.

though in a rather convoluted way of relating a figure made or drawn (*auta ... ha plattousin te kai graphousin*) to its image (*eikôn*) as a shadow or reflection. It seems as though Socrates describes this eikastic relationship merely to ignore it, for he is here interested in describing the dianoetic relationship between images and intelligibles. This dianoetic reception, rather than considering an image insofar as it relates to a sensible referent, considers it in relation to a Form. That is, one can draw a square in order to have some conception of the "square itself". Socrates is careful, however, not to suggest that the image depicts the Form itself. It should be obvious that any image will first and foremost be an image of sensible things. But, as the image is composed of sensible objects, and any sense sensible objects have is on account of their participation in the Forms, the image is thus informed by the Forms. Necessarily, the image remains an imperfect representation of the Forms, and thus maintains its characteristic difference with its referent. Rather than depict the Forms directly, in *dianoia*, images act as an avenue "in *seeking* to see those other things themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought." The viewer uses images to *seek* the Forms, and thus, the image acts as a medium to understanding the Forms rather than being a perfect representation of them.

In order to use an image dianoetically, it is the viewer himself who must direct his viewing towards conceiving the Forms as referents, rather than the sensible referents the image also represents. Such a process of conceiving the Forms through images is facilitated by viewing the image in light of arguments which assure the rational necessity of what the image depicts. There are two ways in which this can be done, depending on whether hypotheses are axiomatic or assumed. In the case of *dianoia* as axiomatic, images are propaedeutic but not necessary to dianoetic research. In the case of *dianoia* as

ascertainment, images satisfy a necessary role of assessing the credibility of the argument's hypotheses and conclusions.

The first interpretation of the use of dianoetic images is particular to the state of *dianoia* as axiomatic. In such a state, images are considered as a visual representation of the argument itself. That is, the image reflects the content of the argument, both the axioms, the chain of inference and the conclusion. What the image shows visually, the argument proves with necessity. Mansion defends this conception of the use of images: "Un simple écolier sait très bien...qu'il ne trouvera pas la solution de son problème s'il ne découvre pas *la construction à faire*, celle-ci étant une construction qui se justifie géométriquement, qui est en accord avec les définitions, axiomes et postulats de la géométrie, et qui lui fournira l'intermédiaire dont il a besoin dans son raisonnement pour arriver à la solution."[80] Although Mansion's description of the role of images in mathematics claims that the image is a constructed justification of the proof, I don't believe she means that the image actually assures the necessity of the conclusion of the argument, for the necessity of the conclusion is a consequence of the logic of the argument itself. Instead, I believe Mansion means that the image reflects the argument, and can show visually what the argument proves logically. According to this interpretation, images provide propaedeutic support to deductive argument. Images, however, have no necessary role in deriving the conclusions of the argument. Because the hypotheses of the argument are taken as axiomatic, the hypotheses and the deductive inferences that follow from them form the necessary and sufficient conditions to derive true conclusions. As a dianoetic understanding can be produced by hypotheses and

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[80] Mansion (1969), p. 369.

argument alone, there is no necessary role for images to play. Consequently, images play only the role of rendering the exercise of deducing inferences easier by providing a visual reference for the argument. Although this is indeed an important role for images to serve, it does not grant images a philosophical role. It is in the second interpretation of the use of images in dianoetic thought that images will be granted a necessary role in philosophical research.

The second state of *dianoia*, *dianoia* as ascertainment, wherein hypotheses are assumed and conclusions are approximative and provisional, suffers from a certain difficulty. Although the conclusions drawn follow necessarily from the hypotheses, as the hypotheses are not known with certainty, the conclusions are provisional. What's problematic is that there is no way to know, based on the hypotheses alone, how reasonable the conclusion is. That is, although the argument is valid, there is no evidence of soundness. Images, however, can serve as evidence of soundness. Jackson, who interprets *dianoia* in a way comparable to what I call *dianoia* as ascertainment[81], describes the role of images in *dianoia* in such a way:

> Next, what are 'the visibles used as images' of which the mathematician's models and diagrams are typical? They must be, I think, the particulars or 'many', from which in virtue of their participation in the idea we derive that imperfect knowledge of the idea which is expressed in the *logos*. So long as the man of science has not got a firm footing in the world of ideas, he cannot get clear of the visibles from which the *logos* is obtained.[82]

Jackson's interpretation requires some explanation. Jackson claims that any *logos* (i.e. proposition), that is not derived from the Forms is a hypothesis, whereas, a proposition derived from the Forms is an *archê*. As *dianoia* uses only hypotheses,

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[81] That is, Jackson (1881) recognises that *dianoia* is described by its "use of *hypotheseis* which never cease to be hypothetical" (p. 144). By 'hypothetical', Jackson doesn't mean a hypothetical proposition, but must mean a categorical proposition that is hypothetical (i.e. assumed to be true). Consequently, the conclusions are only provisional.

[82] Jackson (1881), pp. 144-145.

consistent with Robinson's interpretation of hypotheses, its conclusions are only provisional. As a consequence of dianoetic hypotheses being merely assumed, *dianoia* also relies on images. These images, although they are not perfectly representative of the Forms, derive their meaning from the Forms, and so, it is in the light of these images that the hypotheses may be rendered reasonable. In this way, images fashion as evidence for the soundness of the argument, but only in a qualified way. For, as the image itself is an imperfect representation of the Forms, it can only imperfectly gauge the soundness of the argument. An example will make clearer how an image can assess the soundness of an argument.

Consider Socrates' first argument for the nature of the Guardians (373e9-376c5). Socrates has argued that in the city, each person will perform the one occupation to which he is naturally suited. The Guardians of the city, thus, are those naturally suited to protect the city. I have condensed Socrates argument in order to make the illustration simpler:

1. Being vicious to enemies and gentle to the citizens is required to protect the safety of the city.
2. Guardians are vicious to enemies and gentle to friends.
3. Guardians can protect the safety of the city. (1, 2)

This argument is valid, but there is a question of soundness, as Premise 2 is only assumed to be true. Socrates thus questions the truth of this hypothesis. This premise is of course a hypothesis because knowledge of the Form that would guarantee the truth of this premise is not known[83]. In order to provide evidence for the soundness of the argument, Socrates presents a very simple image:

[83] This definition of the Guardian is Socrates' first articulation of the Form of Justice. Recall that this was the definition of Justice Polemarchus advanced in Book I (334b8-9). It will not be until Book IV that Socrates further specifies the Form of Justice to be the rational governance of the soul.

SOCRATES: I couldn't see a way out, but on reexamining what had gone before, I said: We deserve to be stuck, for we've lost sight of the image (*eikonos*) we put forward.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

S: We overlooked the fact that there *are* natures of the sort we thought impossible, natures in which these opposites [i.e. viciousness and gentleness] are indeed combined.

G: Where?

S: You can see them in other animals, too, but especially in the one to which we compared the guardian, for you know, of course, that a pedigree dog naturally has a character of this sort – he is gentle as can be to those he's used to and knows, but the opposite to those he doesn't know.

G: I do know that.

S: So the combination we want is possible after all, and our search for the good guardian is not contrary to nature.[84]

In order to provide evidence for the truth of the hypothesis that Guardians are vicious to enemies and gentle to friends, Socrates presents an image of well-trained guard dogs which exhibit this particular sort of character. The image fashions an example that supports the truth of the hypothesis, and thus, the argument is deemed sound in light of the image. The image satisfies this role due to an important difference between images and arguments. An argument begins with its founding premises, and proceeds ultimately to its conclusion. Being delimited by such a beginning and end, the argument cannot of itself draw inferences about anything that is outside the range of its founding premises, and thus cannot justify the truth of its founding premises. Images, on the other hand, have neither beginning nor end, but instead, offer a synoptic view. This synoptic view, it would seem, is the sense the viewer draws from the image. As we commonly say that a picture is worth a thousand words, the sense of the images is not strictly confined to a delimited range. It is because the image imparts a view that overruns the strict boundaries of the argument that the image provides a perspective on the argument wider than what the argument itself can show. Not only does the image reflect the content of the

[84] 375d3-e7

argument, but likewise, it places the hypotheses in a context that can confirm their truth. With respect to the examples of the argument about the nature of the Guardians, an image of guard dogs on the one hand reflects the argument in that it illustrates that the disposition of viciousness and gentleness are necessary characteristics for providing protection. Moreover, the image offers a perspective to see how it is not contradictory to possess these opposing characteristics. Although this is a very basic example, it shows how an image both reflects the argument, but also provides evidence for its soundness. An important question, however, must be addressed. What ensures that the image is not simply contrived to confirm the argument?

The defining characteristic of an argument is that it conforms to a structure that assures the truth of its conclusions provided its premises are true. An image, however, has no such criteria of validity. If we recognise, however, that this dianoetic use of images is acting as a vehicle to illuminate the Forms, it is deemed representative of the argument insofar as it coherently conforms to the argument. The argument strives for a univocal meaning, and it is this meaning that is sought in the image also. The image is thus representative only insofar as it displays the consistency of the premises of the argument. In this way, the image and argument mutually collaborate, as the argument requires the image to provide evidence for its soundness, and the image relies on the argument to constrain what it can coherently represent. The conclusion of the argument is substantiated insofar as the image and argument are concordant. As images are polysemous, however, although an image may be highly concordant with an argument, it will necessarily differ in some respects. This difference between image and argument, although it marks the limitation of the truth of the dianoetic understanding, can also play

a constructive role in the philosophical process. By either revising the image or the hypotheses with respect to this difference, the researcher can improve the precision of the understanding the argument engenders. Thus, in *dianoia* as ascertainment, not only does the collaboration of image and argument justify a conclusion, but it also provides a passage by which to further advance the argument in pursuit of knowledge of the Forms.

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In this chapter, we have described four epistemic statuses of images, each of which is distinguished by the viewer's mode of reception. That is, the strength of the cognitive state the image supports is dependent on how the viewer observes the image. In particular, this depends on what type of referent the viewer seeks, and whether the viewer appreciates a difference between the image and the referent. What has been observed is that as the cognitive value of each role of images increases, from those of *eikasia* through to those of *dianoia*, the image becomes more reliant on arguments to justify its significance. This increasing significance of images culminates in their role in the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, where images satisfy a necessary role in the philosophical pursuit, which role images satisfy only in collaboration with arguments. In the following chapter we shall return to the question of the philosophical role played by the Myth of Er, conceived as an image. It is possible, of course, to consider the Myth of Er in any one of the four roles of images described in this chapter, however, I shall consider the myth as an image in a dianoetic fashion collaborating with the arguments of the *Republic* with the intention to demonstrate how the image provides evidence to support the arguments of the dialogue.

CHAPTER 3: THE MYTH OF ER AS A DIANOETIC IMAGE

In chapter 1, it was suggested that the myth of Er plays some sort of philosophical role in the dialogue, as one of its meanings is directed at a philosophical audience. Moreover, this philosophical meaning of the myth is dependent on, rather than distinct from the arguments of the *Republic*. In chapter 2, we considered Plato's epistemology, as presented in the Divided Line, to consider whether there is any such role for a myth, considered as an image, to collaborate with argument in some philosophical way. This analysis of the Divided Line revealed four distinct roles for images to play in producing beliefs and understanding. One such role, in the cognitive state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, uses images as evidence for the soundness of deductive argument to generate justified, albeit qualified conclusions. In this chapter, it will be shown how the Myth of Er operates as an image in this state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, and thus, how it acts as a necessary component in the philosophical discourse of the *Republic* in conjunction with the arguments.

In order to demonstrate that the Myth of Er acts as a necessary component in the philosophical discourse of the *Republic*, the myth must be shown to satisfy the two defining characteristics of images in *dianoia* as ascertainment. First, the myth must reflect the philosophical argument. Second, the myth must act as evidence of soundness for the founding premises of the argument. A further characteristic of the role of arguments and images in the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment is that differences between the image and argument persist. Such differences expose the inadequacies of the conclusions of the argument, and draw the researcher's attention to aspects of the image or argument that ought to be reconsidered in order to improve the strength of the

conclusion. In the final section of this chapter, I shall review the salient differences between the Myth of Er and the arguments of the *Republic*, which were identified in chapter 1. It is based on these differences that the reader of the *Republic* is invited to continue the philosophical investigation in order to develop a more comprehensive and precise conception of justice.

This analysis, in which the Myth of Er is an image in the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, demands a dianoetic reception of the myth. Such a reception of the myth is predicated on two assumptions. First, it is assumed that knowledge of the Form of justice has not been attained, and thus, cannot provide a first principle for establishing our argument. Instead, the arguments are based on hypotheses that are only assumed to be true, and consequently, although the conclusions are justified, they remain approximative and provisional. Secondly, the dianoetic reception of the myth is concerned with intelligible referents rather than sensible referents. Let me explain what this means. The Myth of Er is a story about Er witnessing a series of events in a realm between heaven and Earth. If our reception of this myth considered the referents as sensible objects, we would treat the myth as a factual description of a sensible place, filled with sensible things. Such an eikastic reception of the myth would grant beliefs about the events that occur, and the nature of the things in the story. This is a possible reception of the myth, however, a dianoetic reception treats the myth as a vehicle to illuminate an understanding of a Form, which, in this case, is the Form of Justice. Thus, we are interested in the myth insofar as it helps us to understand the nature of Justice. We will pursue this understanding by considering the myth in relation to the arguments which develop Socrates' conception of Justice. This sort of reception of the myth gives us some

flexibility in how we interpret the myth – whether it is a literal description of the events of the afterlife, or whether there is a more symbolic reading of the myth. We shall discuss different interpretations of the myth in greater detail below. First, we shall consider the arguments that are reflected in the Myth of Er.

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The *Republic* addresses three central questions: what is justice, is justice a virtue or not, and is justice more advantageous (*lusitelesteron*) than injustice[85]. Naturally, these three questions interrelate, and one follows from the others, however, the Myth of Er most clearly illustrates the arguments addressing the third question. Arguments concerning the advantages of justice are the topic of Books VIII and IX. Very generally, Socrates presents three arguments that support his conclusion that justice is more advantageous than injustice. The first is a political argument, which infers the greatness of each type of person from the greatness of each of their corresponding types of political constitution (543a-580c). As monarchy is deemed far greater than tyranny, the philosophical life, that is, the just life representative of a monarchy, is more advantageous than the tyrant's life. The second argument bears on the psychology of each character type. It argues that each part of the soul has its proper type of pleasure, but that the pleasures of the philosopher, or those particular to the rational part of the soul, produce the most pleasant kind of life (580d-583a). The final argument proposes a theory of pleasure, which concludes that the philosopher's pleasure is purer and truer than the pleasures proper to the appetitive or the spirited part of the soul (583b-588a). In order to show that the Myth of Er acts as an image in the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment, I must

[85] *Cf.* Book I, 354a-c.

demonstrate that the myth satisfies two criteria. First, the myth must illustrate these arguments, and secondly, it must provide evidence for the soundness of these argument. Clearly, a detailed consideration of these arguments is required to defend this use of the myth. As this analysis would be very lengthy, I shall focus on the second argument, as it is the simplest of the three.

Socrates' second argument that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life considers the relative quality of life proper to each type of person (i.e. appetitive, spirited, philosophical). Socrates claims that there are three types of pleasure, each proper to one of the parts of the soul (580d7-8). These different types of pleasure yield different qualities of life. However, each type of person claims that his particular type of pleasure renders his life the most pleasant (*hêdistos*) (581c8-10). Thus, Socrates presents an argument to determine which type of person is capable of correctly judging which type of life is truly the most pleasant. The argument goes as follows:

1. Every judgement of what type of life is most pleasant based on experience, reason and argument (*empeiria kai phronêsis kai logô*) is correct. (582a5)
2. Every philosopher bases his judgement of what type of life is most pleasant on experience, reason and argument. (582a8-d13)
3. Philosophers are the only type of person to base their judgements of what type of life is most pleasant on experience, reason and argument. (582a8-d13)
4. Every philosopher's judgement and only the philosopher's judgement of what life is most pleasant is correct. (582e8-9) [1, 2, 3]
5. Every philosopher judges the philosophical life to be the type of life most pleasant. (581c8-10)
6. There exists a philosopher.
7. The philosophical life is the most pleasant life. (583a1-3) [4, 5, 6]

The argument claims that it is only the philosopher who is capable of correctly judging which type of life is most pleasant, for he is the only one to have experience of

the pleasantness associated with each particular type of life, and can judge them according to reason and argument. It can be seen that the argument is valid – that is, the conclusion follows from the premises – however, its soundness is yet questionable[86]. This question of soundness stems from premise 3, for it does not seem impossible that a non-philosopher has experienced the pleasures of the philosopher, and judges them according to reason and argument, yet still determines that a non-philosophical life is the most pleasant. If this is indeed a possible scenario, then the argument is unsound. Whether it is indeed a possible scenario requires further examination.

What seems to be the root of the concern with this argument is that the experience of pleasantness is generally considered a subjective affectation, and thus, each person should be entitled to evaluate for himself what he considers to be the most pleasant life. Socrates, however, is trying to evaluate one's experience of the pleasantness of life from an objective point of view. To determine if Socrates is permitted to make this move, we must answer two questions. First: can the quality of the pleasure proper to each part of the soul be judged objectively? Second: can the pleasantness of another person's life be judged objectively? Socrates' argument is less threatened by the first question than by the second. Because of the way Socrates has defined the soul, and because there is no indication in the *Republic* that souls differ from person to person except with respect to the balance of the parts within the soul, Socrates rightly claims that these specific types of pleasure can be objectively evaluated. Moreover, because of the way the philosopher is conceived, he is a suitable judge of the relative value of each of these types of pleasure.

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[86] One significant problem with the argument is that Socrates' main question is whether the just life is more *advantageous* than the unjust life, however, he only seeks to show that the just life, (i.e. the philosopher's life) is more pleasant than the other types of lives. Although I consider the difference between pleasure and advantageous to be sufficiently significant to raise concerns, I shall not consider these concerns here. For a treatment of this criticism of the argument, see Annas (1980), p. 307.

For the philosopher is not essentially different from the other two types of character, but instead, the philosopher subsumes the other personality types[87]. Thus, it isn't the case that the philosopher *only* experiences philosophical pleasures. He experiences appetitive and spirited pleasures also, but only in an appropriate way. It is for this reason that the philosopher can reasonably judge the respective value of each type of pleasure. But does judging the respective value of the pleasures that another person experiences entail judging the quality of the pleasantness of his life in general?

It is not clear whether the objective evaluation of each type of pleasure entails the objective evaluation of another person's pleasantness of life, even if such a life is dictated by a certain type of pleasure. This is so because it isn't clear how the value of the pleasure proper to each type of person translates into an overall pleasantness of life. However, we can imagine a scenario of a life dominated by a lower-valued pleasure that yields the highest quality of life. We described this scenario above, in which a spirited or appetitive person, who has experienced philosophical pleasures, yet judges, according to reason and argument, that a non-philosophical life is the most pleasant. Is this imagined scenario plausible? In one way it seems contradictory, as it claims that a philosopher would rationally choose not to be a philosopher. If by a philosopher we mean someone who has acquired knowledge of the Good, and if this knowledge is eternal and infallible, then it is impossible for a philosopher to be anything but a philosopher. But I don't think this description of the philosopher holds for the simple reason that although knowledge is infallible, humans are not, and we can imagine that the potency of wisdom dissipates

[87] Nettleship's gloss on this argument is helpful for establishing this particular understanding of the philosopher: "by the philosophic form of soul Plato does not mean one which exists, so to say, alongside of and to the exclusion of the others. He thinks of it as the fullest form of human nature. As you go downwards from this fullest form of character, experience becomes more limited." (1897), p. 321.

without its proper exercise. The philosophical life is not only difficult to attain, but surely difficult to maintain. Are the pleasures of the philosophical life so great that they outweigh the struggle to maintain them? Socrates would no doubt affirm this claim, but it remains a plausible suggestion that someone could have experienced philosophical pleasure and still rationally choose to lead a different sort of life because it is more pleasant, at least to him[88]. If this scenario is accepted as plausible, then it challenges the truth of premise 3 of the argument above, and thus undermines its soundness. Socrates anticipates this objection to the argument, for in his subsequent argument, he establishes how much greater philosophical pleasure is than the other types of pleasure. Socrates will defend the greatness of philosophical pleasure by arguing that "the other pleasures are neither entirely true nor pure but are like a shadow-painting."[89] We must consider this argument also.

Socrates' final argument to justify the claim that philosophical pleasures are not just greater, but vastly greater than the pleasures associated with the appetitive and spirited part of the soul is quite complex, confusing, and has been subject to criticism[90]. I shall be interested in this argument only insofar as it supports establishing the soundness of the second argument discussed above. This third argument is in two parts. In the first part, Socrates argues that philosophical pleasures are purer than appetitive and spirited pleasures. In the second part, he argues that they are also truer. What Socrates means by a

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[88] This question of course invokes a vexed debate on the nature of *akrasia*, (i.e. weakness of will). Although I don't intend to address the nature of this condition here, it yet seems that we meet people like this all the time. For example we all have met someone who is intellectually gifted and in command of a strong character who chooses a life in business that under-actualises his potential. Still, as the compensation is so great, which affords him ample pleasures for moderate effort, he reaps great happiness from his life. Can we be as certain as Socrates that the happiness of the philosopher is really greater than the happiness of such a person?

[89] 583b3-7: "ἆθρει ὅτι οὐδὲ παναληθής ἐστιν ἡ τῶν ἄλλων ἡδονὴ πλὴν τῆς τοῦ φρονίμου οὐδὲ καθαρά, ἀλλ' ἐσκιαγραφημένη τις."

[90] See, e.g., Cross and Woozley (1964) pp. 266-268.

'pure' (*kathara*) pleasure is one that is independent of pain, rather than a pleasure that has arisen due to the absence of pain. An appetitive person, for example, considers the satiation of hunger a pleasure. Socrates deems this an impure pleasure as it is not a pleasure in itself, but simply a relief from pain. Philosophical pleasures, however, are not a relief from pain, and thus are pure. As such, philosophical pleasure are more satisfying than appetitive and spirited pleasures. Socrates further increases the significance of philosophical pleasures by claiming that they are also truer pleasures. This part of the argument is rather recondite due to the abstract way that Socrates discusses pleasures[91]. It is difficult to grasp at first what Socrates actually means by philosophical pleasures being 'truer' (*alêthestera*). What seems clear is that Socrates is not claiming that when one feels hungry he is mistaken in his sensation of this feeling. It is because such a feeling doesn't bear on the truer part of the soul, that is, the rational part of the soul, that they are deemed less tru3e. And because philosophical pleasures satisfy that part of the soul which is 'always the same, immortal, and true", they are deemed truer than other pleasures. Socrates extends this analysis further, and by means of a clearer definition of what he means by pleasure.

> "Therefore, if being filled with what is appropriate to our nature is pleasure, that which is more filled with things that are more enjoys more really and truly a more true pleasure, while that which partakes of things that are less is less truly and surely filled and partakes of a less trustworthy and less true pleasure." (585d11-e4)

What Socrates seems to be saying is that since the different types of pleasures have different levels of truth, the truth of the satisfaction likewise differs. This difference in truth is related to the duration of the satisfaction. Because what is learned can be very

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[91] e.g. 585c1-5: "That which is related to what is always the same, immortal, and true, is itself of that kind, and comes to be in something of that kind – this is more, don't you think, than that which is related to what is never the same and mortal, is itself of that kind, and comes to be in something of that kind?"

long lasting, and perhaps even eternal, the pleasure experienced is not only very satisfying (as it is a pure pleasure) but is also enduring. The satiation of hunger, however, which might only last hours or perhaps less, renders not only a less satisfying pleasure (as it is impure) but it is also subsides quickly. The pleasure of philosophy endures because that which renders this pleasure, namely knowledge, endures. And so the philosopher can ever build upon what he has already learned. The source of the glutton's pleasure, although it leaves him momentarily sated, is consumed and expended without leaving any lasting mark. The appetitive soul is forever bailing a leaky boat. The philosophical soul is continually erecting an adamantine tower. Because philosophical pleasures are not only more satisfying, but more enduring also, Socrates deems them exponentially greater than the other pleasures. Consequently, the just man's life is 729 more pleasant than the unjust man's (587e1-2).

Between the two arguments, Socrates establishes that the philosopher's life is most pleasant. As the philosopher is representative of the just man, Socrates thus infers that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life. The soundness of this argument was initially questioned because one of the founding premises claimed that only a philosopher has experienced philosophical pleasure. In this final argument about the purity and truth of philosophical pleasure, Socrates establishes a vast separation in the greatness of philosophical pleasure as compared to the other types of pleasure. This increases the credibility of the premise in question. However, this premise persists as a questionable aspect of the argument, since Socrates hasn't proven that no one but a philosopher has experienced philosophical pleasures. Thus, although the argument is highly plausible, this conclusion, that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust

life, must yet be considered provisional. To add further support to the strength of Socrates' argument, I shall appeal to the Myth of Er. I shall argue that the image the myth presents provides a context in which the soundness of this questionable premise is assessed. To defend this use of the myth, I shall first show how the myth is representative of the argument, and then secondly, I shall show in what way the myth provide evidence to assure the soundness of the argument.

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The Myth of Er is divided into three sections. The first part concerns the divine judgement of the newly arriving souls and the congregation of the souls returning from their thousand-year duration in heaven or purgatory (614c-616a). This section establishes the divine external rewards and punishments awaiting each soul after death. The second section imagines the structure of the cosmos, and affirms a necessity to its order, which not only suggests that the structure of the cosmos is rational, but also that it is just (616b-617c). The final section describes the choice of lives each soul makes, and their subsequent reincarnation (617d-621b). Many different themes are introduced in the myth, and they form a complex synthesis that illuminates how our actions are seated within the entire expanse of the cosmos. The focus of the analysis of the myth will be restricted to those aspects that bear on providing evidence to assess the soundness of the argument discussed above. This will limit the discussion to mainly the first and third sections of the myth.

The argument with which we're concerned concludes that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life. It will be recalled that the just life is the philosophical life, and thus, it is led according to reason. It requires some interpretation to determine

how this argument is reflected in the myth. As we are pursuing a dianoetic reception of the myth, we are less interested in the story as a factual description of the afterlife and more interested in the understanding that gives the myth meaning. As the myth can be considered an image, and images are by their nature polysemic, the myth possesses a host of meanings. In the state of *dianoia*, the meaning of the myth pursued illustrates the understanding of justice articulated by the argument. Thus, an interpretation of the myth whereby the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life is being sought.

Unsurprisingly, the commentary on the Myth of Er present a range of interpretations, some of which are more plausible than others. Not all interpretations consider that the myth reflects the ethical vision promoted by the dialogue's arguments[92]. This view is generally predicated on the fact that there are significant difference between the myth and the argument. Necessarily, there will be differences between what an argument articulates, and what a myth pictures. However, in the case of the Myth of Er's relationship to the arguments of the *Republic*, Socrates himself claims that the myth shows what the argument concluded, namely, that we ought to lead a life of philosophy (619d7-e5). Although Socrates' interpretation of the myth may be implausible, we should first consider why Socrates thinks that the myth is reflective of the argument.

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[92] This view is held by McCabe (1992) and Gonzalez (2008). McCabe offers an interpretation of the nature of understanding in Plato as the dialectical reconciliation of contradicting arguments. She extends this conception of understanding to claim that myths form a dialectical relationship with arguments by promoting a position contrary to the arguments. Although McCabe's analysis of Platonic understanding is insightful and well-argued, her general conclusion is undermined as her parsimonious treatment of the myths, and the Myth of Er in particular, lacks serious reflection. Gonzalez (2008) states: "Er's story is not an illustration or application of the philosophical argument nor a more vivid and popular packaging of this argument's content." (p. 20) Gonzalez draws this conclusion from the fact that as the attainment of the virtuous life is dependent on such a vast range of factors, which the arguments of the *Republic* don't address, it seems that not even philosophy is capable of assuring a choice of a virtuous life (p. 8). This interpretation has little plausibility. Although the myth describes the decision of a virtuous life as difficult, it is nowhere suggested that it is not possible. It is far more plausible to consider the Myth of Er as expressly illustrating the difficulty of choosing virtuously so that one will practice philosophy seriously.

If one takes the myth to reflect the arguments in some way, two classes of interpretation can be distinguished according to the role the myth serves with respect to the arguments. One class of interpretations maintains that the myth operates in some non-philosophical way. Thus, the myth is directed either to different parts of the psyche, or to non-philosophical audiences[93]. Although it is certain that this is one of the roles that the myth can serve, it does not exhaust the possibilities of the myth's functions. This is confirmed by another class of interpretations that not only recognises that the myth reflects the dialogue's arguments, but subsequently subjects the myth to philosophical scrutiny, which thus provides an opportunity to determine in what way the myth functions in conjunction with the arguments[94]. That is, the myth is interpreted in light of the arguments in order to further elucidate either the myth, the arguments, or both. Such is a dianoetic reception of the myth. This method, however, demands an explicit interpretation of the myth itself, which, due to the range of allusions and inter-textuality, the subtleties of the narrative, and Socrates' own interjected interpretations, is not a straightforward affair. One finds in the commentary a range of interpretations from the strictly literal to the richly symbolic.

What challenges this interpretation of the myth is to determine how literal the myth is intended to be. If a strictly literal interpretation of the myth is adopted, then Er's story is considered a description of the events that await us following death[95]. Based on

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[93] Both Brisson (1998), and Lear (2006) present these views, although for different reasons. Brisson understands *muthos* in opposition to *logos*, and thus, incapable of collaboration with *logos*. Lear, on the other hand, dilates the psychological forces allegory bestirs, which are non-rational. What we described as an eikastic reception of the myth would also fit into this category of interpretation.

[94] This class includes a host of interpretations: Annas (1982), Thayer (1988), Schils (1993), Johnson (1999), Dorter (2006), Halliwell (2007), etc.

[95] Annas (1980, 1981) bases her analysis of the myth on such a literal interpretation. See also Schils (1993), and Johnson (1999).

this reading of the myth, one ought to practice his ethical agency according to reason in one's incarnate life, not only to achieve happiness in that life, but more importantly, in order to develop one's reason to choose well his subsequent life in the next iteration of life choice. This literal interpretation of the myth, however, raises a certain difficulty which seems to deny the possibility of a soul exercising its ethical agency, either in its incarnate, or its post-mortem state[96]. As one's subsequent life is dictated by his former life, and the former life was dictated by his previous one, the choice of lives seems to be dictated by an infinitely regressive chain of necessity. Such would deny that the souls are exercising their ethical agency during their post-mortem phase. Moreover, as one's life is fixed by necessity before birth, it precludes the possibility of practicing ethical agency during one's incarnate experience. Consequently, it seems to follow from this literal interpretation that the Myth of Er patently abolishes the possibility of any free choice, let alone a rational choice of a just life.

A further difficulty with this literal interpretation of the myth is that it makes it difficult to understand what is meant by the life which is 'most advantageous'. In the *Republic*, Socrates described justice as rendering one's life 'most advantageous' in terms of the quality of the psychological disposition it maintains. This was shown to be far more pleasant than the psychological disposition of those with appetitive or spirited souls. In the myth, however, this sort of intrinsic happiness is neglected in favour of the external rewards and punishment following from divine judgement. As these external rewards and punishments are dispensed tenfold for the justices and injustices one commits during their incarnate existence, these would seem to diminish the significance

[96] This problem was discussed in chapter 1, p. 18.

of, if not outright trump the happiness one experiences during his incarnate life. Consequently, this interpretation puts into question whether in fact it is because of its inherent goodness that one should practice justice, or because of its divine rewards.

Rather than adopt a literal interpretation, one can also read the myth as symbolic of the human condition in general[97]. According to this reading, the post-natal choice of life each soul makes is symbolic of the gamut of choices that comprises one's incarnate life. This interpretation resolves the two difficulties that surfaced from the literal interpretation. According to this symbolic reading, one's incarnate life is not wholly constrained by necessity. As every soul is given a free choice of his subsequent life, thus we interpret the myth to mean that every human has free choice over the actions he will commit in life[98]. Consequently, the possibility of invoking reason and exercising ethical agency throughout one's life is preserved. Moreover, the divine rewards and punishments awaiting one following death are simply the rewards and punishments that follow from one's just and unjust actions. These can be interpreted as external rewards and punishments, but likewise, they can be internal also. It is significant that the myth situates these rewards as being reaped after the soul has completed its physical life, and thus greatly distances the rewards and punishment from the act of choosing. That is, according to this interpretation, one's rewards and punishments don't immediately follow one's actions, but nevertheless, they follow eventually. This is a powerful message, both for him who is pursuing a tyrannical life, but also for him striving to be a philosopher – punishments and rewards, though not immediate, are inevitable.

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[97] Thayer (1988) argues for this reading.

[98] These choices are not completely free, as they are partially constrained by circumstance and subject to chance, which are symbolised respectively in the number of lives available, and the sequence in selection dictated by one's lot.

This interpretation is both elucidative and compelling, but it suffers at least one significant problem. It seems to preclude, or at least ignore the possibility of an immortal soul. Are the arguments of the *Republic* dependent on the immortality of the soul? This difficult question isn't one I wish to broach here. Nonetheless, this interpretation's indifference to the immortality of the soul strikes one uncomfortably, for the Myth of Er follows immediately after an argument for the immortality of the soul[99]. The credibility of this interpretation weakens unless it is capable of qualifying its neglect of the immortality of the soul, but this seems impossible without renouncing the interpretation altogether. Despite this criticism, this metaphorical reading of the myth has been shown to be generally representative of the content of the argument of the dialogue. I shall not ignore this particular criticism, and shall return to it later in this chapter. We shall proceed, however, to consider the relationship between the myth and the argument through this particular interpretation of the myth.

According to our reading of the text, Er's report of the afterlife is symbolic of one's incarnate experience. In order to demonstrate a dianoetic reception of the myth, this interpretation of the myth must reflect the arguments that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life. How the myth represents the argument is very easy to detect. Patently, the myth illustrates the choices made by souls exemplifying a particular character type, and then shows the resulting quality of the life that would follow therefrom. The most obvious, and likewise most affecting example is the figure of Ardiaeus, the former tyrant of Pamphylia. Not only does Ardiaeus suffer punishments tenfold for his injustices as a tyrant, which punishments surely would have been vicious,

[99] 608c9-611b7.

but he is also then stricken eternally to Tartarus. In Ardiaeus, there is a crisp example of the condition of the tyrant. Not only does he suffer vicious punishments for his injustice, but he will be eternally imprisoned on account of his profligate and unlawful desires[100]. The myth also includes other examples of other character types, such as those with spirited souls, such as Homer's heroes. Both Ajax and Agamemnon are described as choosing the life of a lion and eagle respectively. That they both choose animals that typify strength and pride is unsurprising. What is significant about their choices is that they are motivated not by the intrinsic goodness of such lives, but rather by their contempt for the human race. This poses a conflict, however, as the spirited type is defined by a need for recognition by others. In the lives they have chosen, they can no longer receive human recognition. Their choices exemplifies the frustration that besets the hero, whose desire for honour can never be satiated.

There are two further examples of character types that deserve consideration. The first is that soul who draws the first lot, and chooses the life of a tyrant. This soul, we are told, returned from heaven, which implies that his former life was judged to be just. Socrates tells us that in his former life, he must have merely imitated just behaviour, as he was unable to make a wise and prudent choice of a subsequent life, and rather, was tempted by the power and wealth of the tyrant. This character has central importance in understanding the myth, for it is directed to challenge those who merely adopt the mores of their community, but who aren't reflective about the actual goodness of the choices they make. The folly of this character's choice is not simply due to the grave deeds he is destined to commit, nor the punishment that will match his injustice. What is more

[100] Cf. 579b3-c2: "And isn't this the kind of prison in which the tyrant is held – the one whose nature is such as we have described it, filled with fears and erotic loves of all kinds?"

alarming is that this is the final choice the soul will ever have, for surely he will be cast to Tartarus following his duration in purgatory. This character's example of passing from heaven to eternal imprisonment in a single cycle of reincarnation exposes the gravity individual life choices bear. It tells us that grave injustices, whose effects are irrevocable, are remarkably easy to commit. Thus, although one may seem to be living a just life, without knowledge of what is just, one never knows whether some action, although anticipated to be innocuous, turns out to be malicious, either to oneself, or to others. The example provided by this character's choice is thus an entreaty to appreciate the significance of one's actions, and moreover, it demonstrates what risks are taken by good-hearted people who lead a life of ignorance.

The final character worth discussing is Odysseus, who plays a peculiar role in the myth. Odysseus is recalled from Greek mythology as a hero, but his life choice is far different from the choices of Agamemnon and Ajax. Odysseus' choice is clearly presented as a positive example, but it is difficult to appreciate what sort of example Odysseus' choice is offering. That Odysseus is reflective about and deliberate in his choice suggests the appropriate attitude with which to face one's life decisions. It is not at all suggested, however, that Odysseus' choice is informed by knowledge of the Good, nor is it suggested that he has any notion of Socrates' understanding of justice. What is notable about Odysseus' choice is that he renounces ambition (*philotimia*), which is the characteristic proper to the heroic or spirited type of person. Although Odysseus' choice is presented as a positive example, it seems to be included in the myth to invite imitation from a less reflective audience, who, rather than consider the meaning of the myth, instead seeks role models to emulate. Odysseus' adoption of a quiet life, refraining from

political involvement, and shrugging off ambition, is the disposition that must be adopted by the greater majority of the citizens, those who are not philosophically adept and who have yet to master a control of their appetites, if the ideal state is ever to be formed. This role of the myth conforms with Brisson's interpretation of Plato's use of myth, as discussed in chapter 1, whereby the myth is a stylised presentation of the conclusions of philosophy for a non-philosophical audience[101].

What's conspicuously missing from the myth is an image of the philosopher making his proper choice. If the myth is truly reflective of the argument, then we would expect some character selecting the life of a philosopher-king. The myth proffers no such example. This, however, doesn't mark a dissimilarity with the arguments. Although Socrates' argument describes certain aspects of the philosopher, he does not describe his nature in detail, unlike the detail in which the tyrant is described[102]. The arguments of the *Republic* conclude *that* the philosopher is the most just and happiest individual, but beyond defining the philosopher by general characteristics, such as his knowledge of the Good, it is not clear what particular kind of life he leads[103]. Although the myth does not illustrate the choice the philosopher makes, it can still be observed that the philosophical life is the happiest. This is the case as the other character types always share a risk of being sentenced to purgatory, and even to Tartarus. It is only the philosopher who seems to be able to avoid these punishments. This claim is made qualifiedly, however, for there

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[101] See chapter 1, pp. 24-29.

[102] 571a1-580a8.

[103] If the myth teaches anything new about the philosopher, it is what degree of insight into human nature he possesses, for it is the philosopher who: "will know what the good and bad effects of beauty are when it is mixed with wealth, poverty, and a particular state of the soul. He will know the effects of high or low birth, private life or ruling office, physical strength or weakness, ease or difficulty in learning, and all the things that are either naturally part of the soul or are acquired, and he will know what they achieve when mixed with on another." (618d-e) Such is both a vast and detailed understanding of the human experience.

is yet a question of what role chance plays in influencing the possibility of leading a just life. We shall eventually return to this question. In the main, however, the myth has been shown to offer a vivid illustration of the arguments concerning whether justice is more advantageous than injustice. That the myth reflects the arguments satisfies the first characteristic of the role images play in *dianoia* as ascertainment. To satisfy the second characteristic, the myth must also act as evidence to assure the soundness for the argument.

In the arguments proving that the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life, it was shown that a question of soundness stemmed from whether it is possible to experience philosophical pleasure yet still deem another type of life more pleasant. Although Socrates' final argument concludes that philosophical pleasures are vastly richer than the other types of pleasure, this question of the soundness of the argument persisted. The argument is convincing in showing by how much the philosophical life is more pleasant than the tyrannical life, but it is not as convincing in showing by how much the philosopher's life is more pleasant than those with other sorts of personalities. Could someone who has experienced the philosophical life reject it in favour of an appetitive or spirited character? We imagined that such a scenario is plausible as the demands incumbent on the philosopher merely to maintain his proper soul may outweigh the pleasures the philosophical life guarantees, at least for some individuals. Such individuals may thus rationally choose to adopt a spirited or even an appetitive life, for although their pleasures will be less pure and lasting, they will be more easily attained.

The Myth of Er, however, challenges such an imagined scenario. What the myth illuminates, which the argument doesn't clearly convey, is not simply how rich

philosophical pleasures are, but more importantly, how fragile the happiness the spirited or appetitive person experiences is. This fragility is exposed in the life choices of Ajax and Agamemnon who renounce human lives altogether as a consequence of the failure to be sufficiently honoured by others. This fragility of happiness of the non-philosopher, however, is much more powerfully exposed in the soul who hastily and imprudently chooses the life of a tyrant. As his former life was deemed just, we understand that it must have been a pleasant life. How quickly, however, this pleasantness is turned into regret, shame, and then punishment due to a single impertinent choice, the viciousness of which was not a product of malice, but of ignorance. What the myth illuminates is that it isn't simply for the sake of the pleasure granted that makes the philosopher's the most advantageous life, but moreover, what vulnerabilities beset every other kind of character, which, due to their ignorance of what is good, are always at risk of falling away from justice.

It is because the arguments whether justice is more advantageous than injustice are not founded on the Form of justice that a question of soundness persisted in the argument. In collaboration with the image of justice presented in the myth, the credibility of this questionable premise is significantly strengthened. For the myth shows that not only is the philosopher's life most pleasant, but moreover, the philosopher knows what risks are run by those who lead a life of ignorance. In the light of the myth, that a philosopher would rationally choose not to be a philosopher seems to be contradictory. Thus, that the philosopher is the only type of person to have experience of all types of pleasure appears to be a true proposition. What the argument alone could not make explicit is suggested more clearly in the myth.

Although the soundness of this argument appears to be established, and thus, the conclusion true, without knowledge of the Form of justice, although the conclusion is well justified, it yet remains provisional. A complete understanding of justice can only come through knowledge of the Form, which is delivered by dialectic alone, without the aid of images. Our present approach is an intermediate stage in the development of knowledge, which demands a rigorous consideration not only of deductive arguments, but also of images which collaborate with them. Ultimately, however, although the image strives for congruity with the argument, residual differences always persist. In the previous chapter, it was shown that such differences, rather than being an obstacle to developing understanding, instead can offer a gateway to improving the precision of the understanding. In the final section of this chapter, I shall discuss certain difference between the image and the argument which indeed present a passage for further refining this conception of Justice.

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The Myth of Er, as an image, is polysemic. In chapter 1, it was suggested that Plato manipulates the polysemic nature of the myth, which manipulation is exposed by the inconsistencies between Socrates direct and indirect speech on the myth[104]. We isolated two such inconsistencies. The first concerned the role of chance in attaining happiness, the second, the role of punishments in developing moral behaviour. A characteristic of the state of *dianoia* as ascertainment is that the differences between the image and the argument present passages by which the argument can be improved. I shall now suggest that Plato's intentional manipulation of these inconsistencies is directed at

[104] See above, p. 20.

drawing our attention to differences between the image and the argument, differences which bear on salient aspects of the nature of Justice which were not adequately addressed in the dialogue.

In the Myth of Er, the influence of chance over the choices one can make in life is symbolised by the falling of the lots (*klêroi*). We highlighted a significant inconsistency in Socrates' direct and indirect speech pertaining to the influence of chance in attaining happiness. According to Er's story, there is a satisfactory life (*bios agapetos*) irrespective of one's lot provided that it is chosen rationally and lived seriously (i.e. philosophically)[105]. Er's story thus claims that philosophy is a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. Socrates' interjection into the myth, however, was shown to be inconsistent with Er's story, for Socrates states that there is a happy life for him who pursues philosophy and doesn't draw one of the final lots[106]. Socrates' interjection suggests that although philosophy is a necessary condition for attaining happiness, it is not a sufficient condition. According to Socrates, the chance one is subject to can actually prevent him from realising a philosophical soul. This is quite a reasonable suggestion, as we can imagine many reasons why one is prevented from flourishing philosophically, whether it is due to being born into slavery, or in lacking the means to study, or in being viciously persecuted for attempting to practice philosophy. This ambiguity within the myth, however, draws our attention to the fact that chance was not a subject consider extensively in the arguments of the *Republic*.

The arguments of the *Republic* are vague about what role chance plays in attaining or preventing the philosophical life. On the one hand, at least one passage

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[105] 619b2-6.
[106] 619d7-e5.

suggests that philosophy can overcome chance (e.g. 604c5-7), others suggest that developing into a philosopher is subject to chance (e.g. 498a11-c2, 592a7-9, etc.), while others suggest that chance can actually corrupt the philosopher (e.g. 492a1-492a5, 494c4-d2, etc.). In this instance, then, there is a rather important incongruity between the myth and the argument. Whereas the myth itself suggests that philosophy is a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness, the argument has not established this case. This difference between the image and arguments ought to motivate us to reconsider the arguments in light of an understanding of what role chance actually plays in influencing the justice and happiness of one's life.

The second point of inconsistency in the myth's narration between Socrates' direct and indirect speech concerns the impact of punishments in influencing moral behaviour. Er's story suggests that one's choice of life is dictated by one's former character (620a2-3). Such a view is consistent with the choices made by the Greek heroes, such as Ajax and Agamemnon, who select subsequent lives comparable to their former ones. These choices seem dictated by their character alone without dependence on the external (i.e. post-mortem) rewards or punishments they received. Socrates' interjection into the myth, however, suggests that many souls choose different types of lives due to the external punishments they received[107]. Thus, there is a disparity between whether external punishment does or does not have an impact on effecting moral reform. As Socrates admits that his own society, and all others, are far from just, and hence, are populated with many who must improve their moral character[108], the question is especially significant. The arguments of the *Republic*, however, are themselves

[107] 619d3-7.
[108] Cf. 592a-c.

ambiguous about the role of punishment, for although the role of external rewards were expressly isolated from consideration (358b), the role of external punishments were never directly considered. This dissonance between the myth and the argument thus highlights a second point of inadequacy in the understanding of justice, and begs further consideration.

Although the inconsistencies between Socrates' direct and indirect speech are one avenue by which to recognise salient differences between the myth and the argument, because the myth is polysemic, deeper reflection on the myth only serves to multiply the differences. We have discussed two examples, but further differences have been brought to light by others[109]. One further difference of considerable importance is discussed by Halliwell, who notices that Er's story seemingly confounds two conceptions of the nature of the post-mortem entity. In some cases, Er describes these entities as souls (*psuchai)* in a manner consistent with Plato's dualism and the nature of the soul in the *Republic* as some pure substance of rational and ethical capacities[110]. In other cases, however, Er describes the entities in terms far more characteristic of incarnate humans, who have personal histories and memories that excite passionate behaviours, and endure bodily pleasure and pain[111]. This ambiguity about the conception of the immortal entity affects how the myth is interpreted. On the one hand, the literal interpretation of the myth, which we discussed above, lends itself more to understanding the souls as an abstract immortal entity. On the other hand, the symbolic reading caters to an understanding of the post-mortem entity as something closer in character to a human. It isn't insignificant that the

[109] See Gonzalez (2008), who iterates through a number of differences between the myth and the argument to argue that the myth is not in fact representative of the argument as a whole.
[110] e.g. 614d5, 617d6, 620a1, 620b6, etc.
[111] e.g. 615d6, 615e6, etc.

actual nature of the soul is still questioned by Socrates just prior to the recounting of the Myth of Er[112]. Such an inconsistency between the myth and the argument, as well as the numerous others that we have neglected to discuss, rather than challenge the plausibility of either the arguments or the myth, instead can be treated as points of departure for further advancing the argument, and further expanding the understanding of the nature of justice.

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Because knowledge of the Forms lies at the end of a long road, the philosopher must have at his disposal a wealth of experience and an array of instruments to assist him on this journey. Although subject to ambiguities and polysemia, images serve as one of the tools necessary to engage in the philosophical process. In its ability both to illuminate a wide perspective on an argument, and to represent relationships pertinent to the success of an argument that remain implicit in its premises, images collaborate with arguments to provide evidence for the plausibility of arguments' hypotheses. The Myth of Er plays such a collaborative role with the arguments of the *Republic* that conclude that justice is more advantageous than injustice. Considering the myth as a symbolic representation of the lived human experience, the myth illustrates why the just life is more advantageous than the unjust life. Not only has the myth been shown to reflect the conclusions of this argument, but moreover, it enriches the context in which the soundness of the argument is gauged. The Myth of Er was shown to illustrate not only why the philosopher's pleasures are greater than all others, but moreover, why it is convincing that the philosopher is the

[112] *Cf.* 611b-c: "But to see the soul as it is in truth, we must not study it as it is while it is maimed by its association with the body and other evils ... What we've said about the soul is true of it as it appears at present. But the condition in which we've studied it is like that of the sea god Glaucus, whose primary nature can't easily be made out by those who catch glimpses of him."

only type of person to have experienced philosophical pleasures. Because the myth has shown that the risks to which the appetitive and spirited person are vulnerable are so great, it is unreasonable to maintain that a philosopher could rationally choose to be anything but a philosopher. In this way, the Myth of Er has provided strong evidence for the soundness of the argument that the philosophical life is more pleasant than any other type of life. Although this conclusion is both justified logically and supported by the myth, it remains provisional as it fails to be founded on knowledge of the Form of justice. A consequence of this provisionality is that there are differences between what the image presents, and what the argument concludes. We have considered three examples of such differences between the Myth of Er and the argument. All of such differences bear on significant aspects of the nature of justice. These difference, rather than discount the success of the conclusion, however, encourage further consideration of the problem, deeper analysis of the argument, and a broader imagination of the image.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this thesis, I have demonstrated that the Myth of Er plays a philosophical role in the *Republic* by acting as evidence for the soundness of the arguments in the dialogue. According to this reading, if the Myth of Er were removed from the dialogue, and the reader developed an understanding of justice based on the arguments alone, as the conclusions are based on hypotheses that are assumed, but not known with certainty, his conclusions would be only approximative and provisional. The Myth of Er, although it does not establish the certainty of the assumed hypotheses, it does provide a context in which the truth of these hypotheses can be gauged. As such, the myth strengthens the understanding of justice developed in the *Republic*.

This thesis has offered an interpretation of the role of Plato's use of myth that cuts across three general understandings of Plato's use of myth in his dialogues, as described in chapter 1. The first view denies Plato's myths any philosophical role as images and myths are incapable of achieving the clarity and univocality that arguments attain. Myths, on account of their ambiguities and polysemia, risk confounding and obscuring philosophical understanding. However, this interpretation of Plato's use of myth is challenged as Plato appears to intentionally manipulate the ambiguities in the Myth of Er according to some philosophical agenda.

The second interpretation of Plato's use of myth, the 'honeyed-cup' reading, also denies the myths any philosophical role. According to this reading, myths present for a non-philosophical audience the truths established by philosophy. Myth and philosophy are held in strong opposition, and argument is the sole instrument for establishing philosophical truths. However, Plato's myths, although unsuitable for philosophical

discourse, have ethical and political functions in indoctrinating correct values into an audience incapable of philosophical study. This interpretation of the role of the myth was shown to be a plausible interpretation of the Myth of Er, as Odysseus, who chooses a private life and rejects the temptation of ambition, is exemplary of the ethical values Socrates seeks to instill in the non-philosophical population. But this is not the only meaning the myth presents, as Socrates himself states that the myth shows us that one must live a life according to philosophy. That is, the myth shows what the dialogue itself demonstrated argumentatively. To derive this meaning of the myth, one must have familiarity with the arguments of the *Republic*. Thus, this meaning of the myth is directed at a philosophical audience that is familiar with the arguments of the dialogue.

The final interpretation of the Plato's use of myth considers myth as a vehicle to reveal that which exceeds the touch of argument. As arguments are always dependent on primitive hypotheses for which they cannot account, arguments are never able to assure their conclusions with certainty. It is suggested that myth, on account of its ability to illuminate understanding in an immediate and penetrating way, can somehow assure the truth of fundamental hypotheses. The problems with this reading are many, particularly with respect to Plato's own use of myths. Socrates' critique of poetry may be interpreted to preserve some role for poetry in philosophy, but it certainly does not grant poetry a status autonomous from arguments.

The analysis of the relationship between the Myth of Er and the arguments in the *Republic* presented in the first chapter raised an apparent problem: the Myth of Er, although it is polysemic and contains ambiguities, has a philosophical role in the dialogue in conjunction with the arguments. An examination of the Divided Line provided a

solution to this problem. The Divided Line envisions a number of roles for images to play in developing beliefs and understandings. These different roles of images, each of which have different cognitive values, are dependent on the way in which the audience considers the image. Four roles of images were described, two in the state of *eikasia*, which consider images as referring to sensible objects, and two in the state of *dianoia*, which consider images referring to intelligible objects. One such dianoetic role of images, in the state called *dianoia* as ascertainment, was shown to support deductive arguments by illuminating a wide context in which the soundness of the argument can be assessed. Images, when used in this fashion, act as a necessary component in philosophical discourse in conjunction with arguments.

In the third chapter, the Myth of Er, considered as an image, was examined in light of this philosophical role of images. In order to demonstrate that the Myth of Er permits a dianoetic reception that supports the arguments, the myth was considered in relation to one of the arguments that concludes that justice is more advantageous than injustice. A detailed analysis showed that although the argument is valid, its soundness can be questioned as it assumes that only philosophers have had experience of philosophical pleasures. It was based on an interpretation of the myth in light of this argument that the soundness of the argument was made more plausible. For, the Myth of Er not only generally reflect the argument why justice is more advantageous than injustice, but it exhibits in details the risks that beset all those who are not philosophers. This view of the philosopher's condition in relation to the condition of other types of people illustrates why it is inconceivable that a philosopher would rationally choose to be anything but a philosopher. It is based on this illustration of the philosopher that the myth

provides evidence for assuring the soundness of the argument, and thus plays a necessary role in the dialogue. Moreover, this role for the myth is not independent of, but essentially dependent on the arguments.

The final chapter of this thesis also included an examination of a further consequence of the interrelation between myth and argument in the *Republic*. Although the myth supports the argument in a philosophically necessary way according to its similarity with the argument, the differences between the myth and argument expose the limitations of the understanding of justice developed in the *Republic*. Thus, such differences between the myth and argument identify aspects of the understanding of justice that demand reconsideration. Three examples of such differences between the myth and argument were considered, which included what role chance plays in becoming just, what role external punishments play in effecting moral reform, and what is the fundamental nature of the soul. Although the mutual collaboration of the arguments and the myth promote a justified understanding of the nature of justice, on account of these differences between the myth and the argument, the conception of justice promoted in the *Republic* is qualified, and must remain provisional. However, these differences between the myth and argument, which the interlocutors of the dialogue fail to resolve, invite the reader to continue the philosophical process by reconsidering the argument with deeper analysis, and the myth with broader imagination.

A central obstacle this thesis was confronted with from the start was a pervasive view that images, due to their ambiguities and polysemia, can only occlude, rather than advance philosophical research. This thesis has demonstrated that although philosophical discourse is essentially dependent on arguments, images also serve a necessary role in

this process. Such a view of the role of images surfaces from our general reading of the Divided Line. There are many interpretations of what the Divided Line symbolises, but one such interpretation is that it depicts a process of intellectual maturation. Such an interpretation is harmonious with a general reading of the Allegory of the Cave. One begins his intellectual development by founding beliefs on sensible things, first through looking at images, and then at the sensible things themselves. Subsequently, one appreciates that there is something beyond the sensible particulars, something that causes its rational order. In seeking such intelligible causes, one learns to reason, and eventually one may actually come to know these intelligibles in themselves. This journey of intellectual maturation, from regarding images of sensible things, upwards to gaining an apperception of the Forms, is pursued not only through the development of logical and argumentative competencies, but moreover, through an increasing aptitude for reading images. Plato's Myth of Er, through its appropriation of themes and motifs from Greek cultural history, as well as through its prodigious originality, presents the reader with an image rich in suggestion. On its own, the myth delivers a host of meanings, coupled with myriad suggestions. Presented in conjunction with the arguments of the *Republic*, however, the visions the Myth of Er illuminate are canalised in support of a justified conception of justice.

This understanding of the role of images in Plato's philosophical method opens the door to exploring a variety of additional problems in his philosophical presentation. This interpretation of the relationship between the Myth of Er and the arguments of the *Republic* could be generalised, both with respect to the general use of images and myths in the *Republic*, and perhaps even to a general use of myth across a wider range of

dialogues. Moreover, further study could be dedicated to developing a criterion for qualifying the strength, goodness, or usefulness of an image. An examination of the concept of beauty (*to kalon*) might prove fruitful as a criterion for evaluating images. As beauty is a nexus of metaphysical and ethical issues, it could inform a criterion for the proper reception of an image[113]. On the other hand, it has been suggested that beauty, rather than being merely an instrument of, can be a component for understanding[114]. Such an interpretation suggests that there is not simply an ethical but also an epistemological dimension of beauty. If this conclusion holds, beauty can thus supply a criterion for evaluating the validity of images, and thus, act as the keystone for mediating between images and arguments in Plato's philosophical method.

[113] See e.g. Lear (2006), Nussbaum (1990).
[114] See, e.g. Nussbaum (1982).

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