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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Myth Matters: Intelligent Imagination in Plato's Phaedo and Phaedrus

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis examines the function of myth in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Focusing on the afterlife of *Phaedo*, and the *palinode* of *Phaedrus*, I assert that Plato emphasizes the limits of understanding, and as a consequence, the need for *intelligent imagination*. Ultimately, myth serves to underscore the essential philosophical project of cultivating self-knowledge and therefore is an integral part of Plato's philosophical project.

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Dedication

To my favorite philosopher, M. M.

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Introduction

Plato and his dialogues are in many ways the worst subject for an MA thesis, since there is no limit to the intriguing veins of investigation. This is evidenced not only by Plato's numerous works, but by the plethora of brilliant secondary material on Plato. With so many fascinating avenues to explore in the dialogues, I have chosen the perennial philosophical issues, love (ἔρως) and death (θάνατος), as discussed in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* and conveyed through myth in particular.

In the process of trying to understand Plato's method of analysis and his use of myth, I have realized that Plato is one of the most talented artists ever to have lived. During his life, he wrote thirty-five dialogues, and thirteen Epistles, each with astonishing and enduring intellectual consequences. But what makes Plato such a gifted philosopher and artist—as I have come to see by examining his use of myth—is his ability to change style and form to suit the topic of investigation. Like Michelangelo's sculptures, or Leonardo da Vinci's frescos, Plato's dialogues place him among the finest artists: those who were able to manipulate media and forms so that they could leave the world with lasting evidence of the beauty that abided within their minds and was then fashioned by their hands.

So, in a modest effort to understand Plato, my thesis looks at love and death with a focus on the myths in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Beginning with the assumption of Plato's ingenuity and talent, I attempt to navigate the dialectic and narrative undertakings of these two dialogues. I assert that Plato uses myth to endorse what I will describe as *intelligent imagination*. This theory posits the necessary use of imagination after rational argument has been exhausted, and

empirical data is no longer available. When it comes to subjects as ineffable as loving and dying, I contend that Plato turns to myth in order to express important ideas that require complex explanations in both *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Myth is thus the self-conscious use of language to express the limited cognitive capacity that confines us all. Therefore, myth represents one of the many ways that Plato analyzes ideas he deems to have philosophical merit. Ultimately, I believe that intelligent imagination emphasizes the value and distinctiveness of the philosophical method, and the philosopher as individual.

In the first chapter, “Myth, Plato and All the Rest,” I provide a literature review as well as establish my methodological approach. I have used a pluralistic analysis that considers both the philosophical and literary content of the dialogues. I then outline my theory of *intelligent imagination*, which is grounded in the foundational ideas of Kathryn Morgan and Christopher Rowe, both of whom emphasize the importance of the process of the philosophical examination (i.e., myth, and the limitations of language to express complicated ideas), not only the conclusions drawn from the dialogue. Next, I briefly discuss Platonic myths in relation to religious myths. I then consider the etymological development of *mythos* and *logos* in the context of Plato and broader Greek mythology. Finally, I argue for a framework that supports reading Platonic myths within the context of a dialogical unit before extrapolating individual ideas to other dialogues, or more specifically into the myths of different dialogues. The second chapter, *On Phaedo*, examines the role of Aesop and the afterlife myth to argue for the necessity of cultivating a philosophical soul through a life of inquiry into the nature of illusion and reality. In

the third chapter, *On Phaedrus*, I consider the Boreas Myth, the Myth of the Charioteer (or the *palinode*), and the Myth of Theuth, to attempt to understand the role of myth-making in demonstrating the virtue of an examined life.

Chapter One: Myth and Plato and All the Rest

In the dialogues, Plato neither uses nor disparages myth in only one way. Because of the variation of myth in Plato, it is necessary to ask why Plato uses myth frequently and specifically in the dialogues. And it is precisely because of our broad knowledge of what myth (from *μῦθος*) has become that it is important to orient this study, and to make an effort to understand, rather than undermine, Plato's ideas and reasons for using myth. Once I have established a broad understanding of the development of myth-making in this chapter, I examine Plato's myth-making specifically.

I take myth to be an intentional aspect of Plato dialogues, so I do not think it is a question of *whether* these myths have value; rather it is a question of *what* value they have and how they are used to engage Plato's audience in philosophy.

Moreover, I do not think there is a great deal of value in mining for *mythos* or *logos* in the dialogues, where *logos* is deemed more valuable or truthful, and myths thereby less so. Because Plato refers to speeches that are clearly mythical, such as those of *Phaedrus*' horses and charioteer (and many other examples that will be discussed), as both *mythos* and *logos*, I believe it is more accurate to read the myth as a distinct intentional parts of the dialogue that functions with the other forms of speech-making. At times, Plato's myths work to support argument, or present metaphysical or eschatological ideals, and may not be reasoned through in the form of a precise argument; but they are part of what makes the dialogues philosophically fruitful. It is not necessarily my intention to promote myth over argument (or *logos*, in some cases), but rather to assert that when present together in a dialogue, they

always work in tandem. I want to dispel the concern that by referring to a speech as a “myth,” Plato is necessarily downgrading it from philosophy. I do not believe that myths are only used for their persuasive type, as the work of Luc Brisson asserts (1998, and 2004). Nor are they ever simply distracting whimsical narrative breaks; the myths are in the dialogue because Plato wants them to be.

This chapter will lay the groundwork for my project by presenting several broad ideas about myth in the fields of *Classics*, *Religious Studies*, *Philosophy* and *Comparative Literature*, in order to shed light on the specifics of Plato’s relationship to myth. I take a positive position on the use of myth—which I term *intelligent imagination*—and I develop this in detail throughout this thesis.

I argue that Plato endorses a specific kind of myth (*μῦθος*) to pursue philosophy—one that develops a method of analysis that is self-aware and self-critical. Plato’s myths use and endorse *intelligent imagination*, as they are grounded in dialectic, but cannot be satisfied by typical argument or syllogism. As such, Plato builds on these methods and empirical data, so that he can keep his interlocutors and readers engaged in philosophical pursuits with a method that is self-correcting. I will further argue that his myths are chiefly metaphorical or non-literal. Moreover, he uses them as a pedagogical tool to effectively instruct his audience and to establish how to effectively and intelligently use one’s imagination to extrapolate from unverifiable ideas without abandoning the project. Platonic myths express Plato’s subversive criticism of his intellectual culture, and so Plato’s myths borrow from traditional Greek ideas, allowing him to present his views in an efficacious form, while maintaining the appearance that his ideas are not as radical as he

intends them to be.¹ Thus myth critiques the language and intellectual structures that are necessary for philosophy that are ultimately inadequate for understanding the transcendental, intelligible realm of the Forms. Because these myths are non-literal, I believe that while they use ideas and imagery of the afterlife and non-human world, they are equally interested in promoting the need for philosophical cultivation in this world, and do not just anticipate the fruits of the potential afterlife. Exploring ideas of a virtuous and worthwhile life requires a deep understanding of the turbulent relationship between knowledge and linguistic representation.

I will attempt to bring Plato's myths into conversation with his philosophy as well as his literary techniques. I assert that Plato did indeed promote the process of *discerning myth-making*. However, it is essential to address an obvious concern, which is that Plato does indeed—on more than one occasion—denounce poets and myths. To take this as merely trademark Socratic irony is at the very least, naïve. In this chapter, I will define what I take *Platonic Myth* to be, as well as discuss it in relation to definitions of myth commonly deliberated in Religious Studies, Philosophy, Classics and literary theory.

While literary analysis raises the risk of too broad a range of interpretations, I assert that it is a necessary risk, as Plato wrote dialogues and not philosophical treatises, thus indicating that there is philosophical import in all of his written work. The details and narrative structure are not merely window dressings for his

¹ Hatab, Lawrence J. *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths*. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1990. 207-257

arguments, but express complex ideas. The primary scholars I have consulted to investigate Plato's literary form are Kenneth Dorter, Christopher Griswold, Kathryn Morgan and Christopher Rowe. Each offers analyses that consider Plato's writing style and the progression of the academic analysis and of *mythos* and *logos*—both in terms of historical development and etymological nuance.

To approach Platonic myth in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, it is necessary to consider the relationship between *mythos* and *logos*. However, in examining the etymological development of myth, it becomes apparent that *Platonic myth* is a unique kind of myth. Therefore, I briefly consider the trend of development of *mythos* from prehistory Homer and Plato, to the current state of scholarly interest in Plato's myth, to offer insight into the debate and the perceived disjunction between *mythos* and *logos*. To begin, I will discuss some considerations when interpreting myth in a religious context.

My research is organized around understanding *Platonic Myth* as a category of myth specific to Plato and his dialogues. I consider *Platonic Myths* to be Plato's original myths, which appear most prominently in the middle dialogues.² This project examines the use of myth in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, concentrating on the

² The designation *middle dialogues* refers to those dialogues commonly believed to have been composed in the middle of Plato's career. These dialogues all consider similar subject matter concerning metaphysics and eschatological issues. However, the term middle dialogues is not universally accepted amongst Plato scholars, as noted in Annas and Rowe, *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, 2002. For the sake of this project, however, I find the generalization acceptable and useful. Rowe takes issue with the designation of *early*, *middle* and *late* dialogues. His primary concern is that these theoretical frameworks oppose a unified reading of the dialogues. I use *middle dialogues* to refer to the chronology of these dialogues, as they were written in the same period. As well, there is significant overlap in the content.

myth of rebirth from *Phaedo*, and the *palinode* from *Phaedrus*. Certainly, including *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Gorgias* and *Symposium* would be a more comprehensive project. Moreover, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are complementary dialogues for discussing myth because they use myth in a similar way. In both dialogues, Plato's takes on eschatological concerns and myth is a narrative framing device that occurs consistently throughout. However, each dialogue has a very different setting and topic: *Phaedo* is set at Socrates' execution, while *Phaedrus* is set in the countryside with one of Socrates' young interlocutors. This contrast also allows me to demonstrate the adaptable features of myth.

Plato is a talented artist, not just a philosopher. One cannot simply read excerpts from the dialogue, or look for literal or strictly allegorical readings of myth; this is especially the case when trying to work out Plato's thoughts about myth and ultimately his use of language as a tool for philosophy. Moreover, I do not believe that Plato was interested in developing static doctrine, or monolithic concepts. Plato offers a radical vision of the world in terms of his conception of the interaction between reality and illusion, which objects or ideas belong to these categories, and the limitations that arise when we try to obtain truth, rather than information acquired by the senses and the empirical world. So, as well as establishing a new intellectual discipline, I argue that Plato aims to establish primarily a method of analysis that embodies and actively manifests its primary goal, which is self-knowledge. Thus, he is centrally concerned with investigating the intersection of what is real and what is mere illusion. Additionally, Plato aims to engage his audience in thought projects by way of the dialogical form—which challenged

norms and intellectual concepts of his environment—and establish his own philosophical and intellectual agenda. To understand this agenda, one must include myth, (*μῦθος*), myth-making and the art of speech-making.

Myth ultimately calls on the reader, and often the interlocutor, to investigate the philosophical process and methods of examination, as well as the conclusions. It draws attention to the difficulties or near-impossibility of certain ideas, especially in terms of representing reality and the intelligible realm of the Forms using language. It is perfectly reasonable to move from the argument to *intelligent imagination*, so long as one does so in a self-conscious, critical fashion that acknowledges both what is known and what is unknown. For Plato, if *reality* is not available to us through the sensible world, an intellectual life is the best way possible to begin to to comprehend it. Thus, myth acknowledges the disease of language.³

I. Methodology

I argue that the myths in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are a part of a narrative flow used to support philosophical exposition. To effectively engage with his audience, Plato uses various pedagogical processes. Among these methods is the creation and strategic application of myth. By using a pluralistic approach to the dialogues—one that analyzes myth and narrative form as a part of the overall dialectic endeavour—I will argue for the importance of *intelligent imagination*.

³ Morgan, Kathryn A. *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 180-184.

Limitations for philosophical explorations must therefore be examined according to what is philosophy in comparison to other means of exploration. To proceed thoughtfully, it is also essential for a philosopher to be aware of her intellectual limitations and biases. This includes considering Ancient Greek assumptions, such as Greek gods and divinity. Plato borrows the familiar structure of (Greek) religious myths and myth-making in order to create a perceived tension that forces the interlocutor to engage critically, not only with the topic of investigation but also with the means of investigation.

My lens incorporates both philosophical and literary considerations, so it includes a strong focus on the literary structure of the dialogues and how such aspects interact with Plato's representation and discussion of the soul and the afterlife. Literary analysis includes investigating character, setting, and the historical conceptuality of the relationship between myth and reason, primarily in terms of the relationship between *mythos* and *logos*.

⁴ I include both literary and philosophical scholarship, in order to begin to answer the following questions concerned with Platonic metaphysics: Why does Plato employ myth when discussing matters of the afterlife and the nature of the soul? What can we take away from the literary structure of the individual dialogues and the placement of the myths in the dialogues in this analysis? What tools does Socrates employ to engage with different interlocutors? How does Socrates engage

⁴⁴ I will not examine the specific characters and their relationship to Socrates or Plato at this time. For a more detailed discussion, see R. Gotshalk, *Loving and Dying: A Reading of Plato's Phaedo, Symposium, and Phaedrus*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001.

with the reader via Plato's writing style and dialogical structure? And, what does this mean for developing a broader theory and understanding of Platonic myths?

My approach to the dialogues is best described as *pluralistic*, as my methodology considers Plato's philosophical concerns, his writing style, and his intended audience. Plato is a unified thinker, who carefully crafted and styled multifaceted approaches to the search for reason and truth. Therefore, no aspect of the dialogues should be taken for granted, including his writing style. To understand how and why Plato uses myth, both reason and literary style must be considered tools communicating his love of wisdom and need for self-examination. I explore the myths that Plato found valuable for the study of philosophy and the pedagogical process. *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are thus a sample to begin the project of ascertaining the significance and the function of Plato's myths.

All the following scholars reviewed are interested in examining the multifaceted effects that myth has on each of these dialogues. In my analysis, I rely on scholars who have contributed to advancing Plato development and history of myth. As mentioned above, these scholars include K. Morgan, Bruce Lincoln, Martha Nussbaum, C. Rowe, and Daniel Werner, as well as others. These scholars exemplify a welcome trend of Platonic scholarship with a genuine concern for Plato's literary style. Overall, this work presents a more contextual and inclusive approach than is typical of scholars prior to the mid-1980s.⁵ Problems or incongruities arise when

⁵ Press, Gerald. *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993, 80. Press attributes this shift in part to the influence of Schleiermacher and Hegelian approaches to the study of philosophy.

one's analysis is too focused on finding the primary speech or dialogue in a given dialogue.

I have also considered the work of the more analytical traditions, such as that of Julia Annas and Gregory Vlastos. Neither one considers myth in any great or relevant detail, or takes it to be a valuable aspect of the dialogical form. In Annas' article, "Plato's Myths of Judgment" (1982), she considers the portrayal of judgment in various myths from *Gorgias*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*. She concludes that Plato is inconclusive in his ideas of judgment in the afterlife and that the myths are primarily used to explain the intricate relationship between individual action and the determinacy of the cosmic order. Thus, no consistent portrayal of the nature of judgment is rendered from these myths. Rather, in Annas' view, through these myths Plato reveals his interest in, and uncertainty about, the decree of cosmic judgment. I find that Platonic works—such as Christopher Gill's *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (1993) and *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (1995), as well as the work of Gregory Vlastos—overlook Plato's use of myth and offer little insight into its meaning. Scholars such as Luc Brisson, in *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology* (2004) and *Plato the Myth Maker* (1998), offer a somewhat complicated apology for its prevalence in the dialogues. I hope that my view of myth offers a more substantial conclusion for *Platonic Myth*.

I find that promoting the inclusion of myth in Platonic analysis also means, to a certain degree, eliminating strict dependencies or sharp distinctions between *early*, *middle* or *late* dialogues. Scholars such as Annas and Rowe believe the

designation of *early, middle* or *late* imposes developmentalist views that are ultimately problematic because they inevitably overlook the value of certain dialogues. Instead, Annas and Rowe promote a unitary view that aims to equalize the relevance of each dialogue on its own terms, rather than in comparison to others.⁶ The many perspectives on Plato's myth, and the etymology of *mythos* (*μῦθος*), correctly acknowledge that there is no one way to go about understanding the process of myth-making in Platonic dialogues. Myth in the dialogues needs to be considered both in a broad sense (with respect to its historical use), and by considering the contextual specifics of the dialogues in which they appear.

There are several limitations to my research, most of which are based on the timeline of this research project. While my research represents an effort to examine Platonic myth through a broader framework, I do not include *Timaeus*, *Gorgias* or *Symposium*, or *Republic*. The examination of these texts would certainly be extremely valuable. However, given the time constraints for project completion, I have limited my project to two dialogues. Accordingly, my findings represent the

⁶ Annas (2002, 1-24) argues for a "unitary view" of the dialogues. Sharp distinctions between early, middle, and late dialogues imply that early dialogues can be replaced with later works and ideas. This is problematic because it is a speculative psychological claim about Plato's philosophical development and acumen, and it degrades Plato's authority as the author of his text. That is, Plato's authority should come from understanding achieved by reasoning through his arguments. Moreover, Annas criticizes Plutarch's school, which promotes doctrinal views that can only be understood correctly by receiving them the way Socrates' audience would have. Conversely, skeptical academics assert the need to keep arguing and analyzing the dialogues and can accept ancient methods of *ad hominem* arguments and bold ideas that, when put through extensive examination, are successful. In contrast to Annas and Rowe, Frede promotes a developmentalist view that asserts that we can use the *Republic* as *aporetic* treatment, and that Plato's development as a philosopher needs conscious consideration.

seed of a theory that with further analysis has potential to become more fruitful and to offer a broader range of applicability to understanding Platonic myth.

Religious Studies offers a unique discipline—one that is very familiar with myths and the many forms. Therefore, it is common to include literary analysis to analyze narrative structure of ancient texts, as well as to consider the author's writing style. Religious Studies offers an interdisciplinary environment and approach to myth that has the potential to shed light on a broader theory for Plato's use and creation of myths.

II. *Intelligent imagination*

Intelligent imagination is a term I have coined to refer to Plato's conscious and strategic use of myth. *Intelligent Imagination* posits that once one has developed a foundation of empirical data, it is often necessary to use one's imagination to investigate further, where there is no empirical data. This is not a free-for-all, as Plato will carefully demonstrate, but rather a thoughtful method of examination that enables the self-reflective process of acknowledging one's ignorance and intellectual limitations. However, it is my belief that Plato fully recognized that at times one needs to explain the complexities of reality and the ineffability of concepts such as love and death using imaginative means.

Thus, *intelligent imagination* is essential to support an argument lacking certainty: as with *Phaedo's* myth of the afterlife, which follows an argument for the soul's existence. It may also be used when Plato is attempting to establish metaphysical ideas about the soul or the problems of relying on the corporeal and

external world, as he does in the *palinode*. It is *intelligent* because there is nothing accidental or haphazard about these parts and speeches in the dialogue. They are used to enhance Plato's argument, acknowledge uncertainty, and recognize the effort to understand one's ignorance and limitations when pursuing knowledge—especially knowledge of the sensible world of the Forms. And it is *imaginative* because Plato neither claims that the stories are historical, or empirically true, nor does he think it is necessary for them to be. Therefore, there is an essential project of acknowledging the limitations of comprehension, and of using a trust-worthy system. Plato is aware of his ignorance and the need for re-examination, and most significantly, for a method of philosophical examination that will continue ceaselessly. Intelligent imagination is grounded always in truth or empirical data, and is not independent of critical thought. So even in the absence of perfect knowledge, the process is no less valuable.

Further, Plato composed his myths in order to establish his philosophical agenda; thus they have a different intention than the ideas offered from a Religious Studies perspective, such as Ninian Smart's notion of a religious myth. However, Plato does not abandon the conventions of (Greek) religious myths, and at times his myth-making conforms to Smart's patterns. Plato's myths are indeed concerned with similar subject matter: the relationship between the human and the divine. He borrows people and places from Greek myth, as in the proem of *Phaedo* with the Ship of Delos, and unambiguously refers to his speeches as myths (*μύθοι*), as is the case with the *palinode* and the afterlife. At the same time, he does not censor his criticisms of Greek intellectual authorities like Homer, or poets (ref *Phaedo*), or

rhetoricians like Lysias in *Phaedrus*. These other intellectual disciplines do not stymie his own intellectual authority or efforts to establish a new intellectual discipline.

I maintain that Platonic myths must be understood in their own category of myth, because while Plato acknowledges and incorporates certain Greek rituals and religious myths, and acknowledges other myths like the Boreas and Aesop's, he also writes own original speeches that consciously take the shape of myths. Moreover, by acknowledging other disciplines of myth, Platonic myths call into question common or religious values, as Plato is not retelling traditional myths verbatim, but allowing ideas to toy with one another. His myths thus support a counterculture of his philosophy. *Mythos* may be necessary to consider speculative and intangible claims about the soul and afterlife. Therefore, myth has several functions: it is a pedagogical tool; it provides structure and unity to the dialogues; and most significantly, it is a methodological process that inspires continued self-reflection and self-criticism, and therefore facilitates philosophical analysis.

III. Myth in the Context of Religious Interpretation

Before I go into the details of *Platonic Myth*, I will briefly consider *myth* broadly and examine several manifestations of its conceptuality. First, I will consider myth in terms of its Religious Studies context. Then, I will sketch a short history to develop an outline for the etymological development of *mythos* (*μύθος*). These broad, foundational ideas will help orient this analysis, and lay a foundation for a

thoughtful interpretation of how *Platonic Myth* might be understood—and for understanding why, at first—though I will assert incorrectly—, myth seems to be the antithesis of philosophy.

Myth has often been considered an unreliable and unverifiable source—dogmatic and persuasive, it is not typically indicative of a reliable, or valuable source of intellectual examination in terms of philosophical analysis, particularly in modern Platonic scholarship. However, when examining the etymological development of myth, it becomes apparent that Platonic myth participates in this development. Therefore, I briefly consider the trend and development of *mythos* from prehistory, Homer and Plato, to the current state of scholarly interest in Plato's myth. This section will offer some insight into the debate and the perceived disjunction between *mythos* and *logos*, both in Plato's historical context, and in the academic discourse surrounding the debate.

Prior to Aristotle, philosophy did not exist without the inclusion of myth. Both Plato and Xenophon created original myths, and included myth in their philosophical arguments. The schism between *mythos* and *logos* burgeoned when scholarship began to value reason and science above all, and so *logos* monopolized credibility. R. G. A. Buxton asserts that German scholars such as W. Nestle and Goody epitomized the problem of the distinction between *mythos* and *logos* when they described the shift of *mythos* to *logos* as one marking a change from the “imagistic and involuntary” to the “conceptual and intentional.”⁷ As will become clear, *mythos*

⁷ Buxton, R. G. A. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 27. Morgan 2000, 25-32.

is not merely evidence of rudimentary reasoning: In the context of Plato's antecedents and then in Plato's dialogues, it is both authoritative and instructive. Thus, it is not merely a project of replacing *mythos* with *logos*, but developing a method to support the evolving process of obtaining knowledge.

When looking at religious myths, Marcia Eliade asserts it is best to consider religion as *living myth*. For Eliade, to grasp the structure and function of mythologies, and the power they have over their respective societies, we must consider mythology in its totality: that is, in a lived human reality. Myths do not exist in a vacuum, but are in a sense alive through practice, ritual and the day-to-day activities of the people affected by a mythology and its subsequent religious practices. Consequently, myth is not a pure fiction, but rather a *truth par excellence*. These *stories* are expressed as realities when a practitioner becomes actively involved in the myth through ritual—a transformation that demonstrates an attempt to experience or achieve the ideals that are set forth by said myth.

Thus, for Eliade myths are “cosmogonic” and explain the existence of the human and divine world, and the nature of the relationship between the two. Therefore, animals, people, and social structures and institutions are a living part of the “cosmogonic myth.” Origin myths reveal a coherent history that explains the existence of the world and the role of people and society. Thus “the sacred history recorded in myth provides a critical blueprint for the conduct of every day life.”⁸ Accordingly, religious symbols create a narrative (or myth) that reveals a sacred

⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *The Quest History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969, 72-87.

history. The general structure of the myth depicts a history which includes a supernatural creator who has a direct relationship to suitable behavior. This history is considered absolutely true and unfalsifiable as it does not require any empirical evidence. Moreover, the myth allows one to obtain knowledge of existence, which is expressed phenomenally through ceremony and ritual. Thus, one is “seized by the sacred,” and therefore lives the myth through recollection and by reenacting the sacred event.⁹

Eliade refers to these events as existing in a *Grand Time*—one expressing events that have indefinite pasts and form a social or ritual memory. Therefore, religious myths legitimize divine power and the need for humans to interact with the divine. Thus, they attempt to solidify a truth that ensures a human–divine interaction, which becomes ritual, and simultaneously expresses a divine truth that is revealed by the myth, and maintained by the tradition.¹⁰

Ultimately, religious myth describes and defines the intersection of the sacred and profane. It is the universal process of *sacralization* and must be concerned with religious or sacred structures. Myths are anti-historical and anti-temporal. They have been created through the transformation of specific persons and specific historical events, and so do not rely on, or require, historical facts for a specific time or place. This transformation or *mythicization* is a transaction between the sacred and profane, which results in mythic models, as well as a collective memory. Thus, the memory and the model are ahistorical and instead rely on the

⁹ Allen, Douglas. *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

¹⁰ Smart, Ninian. *The Phenomenon of Religion*. New York: Herder and Herder, 197, 53-78.

repetition of a ritual that is the result of a *living myth*.

Moreover, according to Eliade, it is because of the Greeks that myth is considered synonymous with fiction, primarily because Greek myth does not have the necessary ritual context. Eliade claims that the study of myth is often based in Greek myth, because it inspired the arts and literature in a deep and unavoidable way. However, Eliade always means “religious myth” by which he is referring to living religious myth. For Eliade, the Greeks proclaimed myth to be fiction twenty-five centuries ago and their myths were not meant to establish ritual; as such, they cannot be interpreted as “living myths.” Other myths—such as spoken tales—may share a narrative structure, but only when the narrative is active in living ritual does Eliade want to refer to it as a *myth*. Therefore, the Greeks are not ideal to a consideration of myth, as the “Greek culture [...] was submitted to a long and penetrating analysis from which it emerged radically *demythified*.”¹¹ Homer and Hesiod told of archaic dramas that were already part of an established oral history; however, their heroes are not moral exemplars, as no one wants their people to behave like Agamemnon. Thus, for Eliade, Classical Greek myths are not useful for a functioning definition of *myth* within a religious context.¹²

To continue exploring religious myths, I will offer a brief summary of Ninian Smart’s ideas. Smart is concerned primarily with how mythologies are manifest as rituals, and asserts that religious myths are often a means to sanction and recreate a specific event that has significant meaning for the tradition. Cosmological myths

¹¹ Allen, Douglas. *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 179-237.

¹² *Ibid.*, 183.

therefore legitimize ritual practices or explain transactions between the human and divine world. Furthermore, religious myths operate to bring lasting value to significant events, regardless of historicity. As a result, myths have the ability to bind a people together through shared ritual and belief of a divine world. Myths are taught and shared generationally, establishing resilient traditions. They also offer cosmological explanations for the transactions between the human and divine world, attempting thereby to alleviate the fear of chaos. Myths are less concerned with historical accuracy or re-creation, and instead primarily focus on the phenomenological effect of the rituals acted out; thus, the retelling and individual experiences are more valuable than the original occurrence of the event (or myth). The structure and creation of myths make space for personal or individual experience to play a valuable role in a living tradition.¹³

Alternatively, Max Müller claims that myth is an essential part not only of religious lives, but of intellectual exploration. It also expresses the human dependence on language. It represents an aspect of our complicated relationship to language, which not only expresses thought, but is responsible for manifesting thought. Language must then also include the less perfect or clear expressions of thought, such as symbols, gestures, and images.¹⁴

Was mythology a mere accident, or was it inevitable? Was it only a false step, or was it a historical progress of the human mind?... Mythology is inevitable, it is natural, it is an inherent necessity of language, if we recognize in language the outward form and manifestation of thought; it is, in fact, the dark shadow which can never disappear till language becomes altogether commensurate with thought, which it never will. Mythology,

¹³ Smart, Ninian. *The Phenomenon of Religion*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973, 4-15.

¹⁴ Dundes, Alan. *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley: U of California, 1984, 150-151.

no doubt, breaks out more fiercely during the early periods of history of human thought, but never disappears altogether.¹⁵

Thus, myth ably expresses thoughts and phenomena that are difficult to convey, helping us articulate and then comprehend these ideas. Müller asserts, consider it as,

[S]omething which [...] does certainly not mean what it seems to mean, as something that requires explanation, whether it be a system of religion, or a phase in the development of the human mind, or an inevitable catastrophe in the life of language.¹⁶

Thus, philosophers have always had an invested interest in mythology, from Socrates to Descartes to Spinoza to Hegel. Mythology is an ancient and eternal concern. While there is no agreement on precisely what myth is, it calls attention to an “undercurrent of meaning.”

Accordingly, Müller rejects those who wish to cast off gods and heroes as mere Homeric constructions, or the invention of scholars from Comparative Mythology. Religion was undoubtedly involved in Greek culture and society even if it did not manifest in a way that is analogous to other religious rituals or contexts. Müller believes that it is religious practices that did not necessarily have an established priesthood or strict doctrinal code that allowed for the fertile soils of philosophy; as evidenced by Xenophon, Plato, and Heraclitus who all criticize religious practices and deities, but were still able to remain part of the popular intellectual milieu.¹⁷

¹⁵ Müller, F. Max (Friedrich Max), and Jon R. Stone. *The Essential Max Müller: On Language, Mythology, and Religion*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, 150.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 146-150.

By considering myth both in the Religious Studies and the Greek contexts, one can surmise that not only are there multiple disciplinary views acting on the ideas around myth, but more importantly that Plato's myths share aspects of both religious and Greek mythic concepts. This is relevant to contextualize myth as taxonomy and to consider the potential pejorative perceptions of myths and its relationship to falsehood. That is, we can see that the etymology of *mythus* does not inherently designate something as irrational or false, while like religious myths, Plato's myths also do not require empirical or historical fact, but no less aim at transmitting relevant ideas.

IV. Mythos (Μῦθος) versus Logos (Λόγος)

In this section, I briefly consider the origin and historical development of *μῦθος*, and advance a concept of myth that is more specifically concerned with myths from the Ancient Greeks and Plato. In its development, *μῦθος* became disassociated with truth or rationality particularly by eighteenth century German scholars. However, this is not necessarily an accurate understanding of myth in terms of Plato's philosophical argumentation, where myth, as Morgan asserts, is a dialectic device not essentially independent from reason (*λόγος*). Myth highlights the contextual tensions of ideas and definitions that are in development, such as the shift in Greek literature to philosophical texts. The subsequent work of Lincoln and Morgan clarifies some of the conflicts in the relationship between *μῦθος* and *λόγος*. Their research aims to incorporate myth into the process of understanding Plato's dialectic and discourse as a conscious part of the development of his philosophical

discipline. Each examines the history of the relationship Greek philosophy has had with myth circa the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries BCE. Starting from the beginnings of the formations of a Greek literary culture, this research traces the development of the concepts *μύθος* and *λογος*. This means considering *μύθος* as it was used in prehistory, embracing everything from Homer to postmodern attitudes.

When Plato writes, he establishes an argument for the general distrust of poets, and denies their previously uncontested authority through unsubstantiated literature that is divinely inspired or prophetic. Muses are believed to use poets as conduits to disseminate their prophetic and divine knowledge, which invariably includes performative aesthetics.¹⁸ In contrast, Plato promotes a philosophical system highly critical of, and concerned about, the credulous use of poetry and *mythos*.¹⁹

Because of his relationship with the Muses, the poet claims a kind of omniscience and self-affirming authority. Hesiod and Homer each give a great deal of credit to the Muses for endowing them with knowledge and the ability to speak well. Homer's Demodocus possesses a great deal of power in his words; he is able to bring Odysseus to tears. Demodocus thus demonstrates the authority of poetry in Greek society when he performs in the Phaeacian court. Lincoln believes that this speech depicts Demodocus as a kind of divine authority, and therefore that the reliability of his ideas and speeches is a result of the inspiration and authority of the

¹⁸ Lincoln, Bruce. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1999. 24, Lincoln and Morgan's ideas of myth are corroborated by Hatab, 1990; Werner, 2012; and Buxton, 1999.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 38-43.

Muses. Likewise, Hesiod receives two gifts from the Muses legitimizing his authoritative voice as a poet: firstly, the sweet dew poured into the mouth of poets, filling him with a kind of divinity, and secondly, divine breath. With the knowledge and endorsement of the Muses, the poet then becomes connected to the powers of memory and thus possesses information from the past. They then also have a connection to Apollo and therefore to prophetic seers. Because of the power that poets receive from Muses, they are indebted to them. So, they must relinquish personal authority or originality, and embrace the responsibility of appealing to them for more inspiration and, therefore, authority.²⁰

Interestingly, according to Lincoln, Homer and Hesiod, each uses *logos* to describe qualities that are deceptive, misleading, or manipulative. By contrast, *mythos* is typically spoken by strong men. Hesiod uses *mythos* six times, and with one exception, it is spoken by a powerful man. Furthermore, 93% of the time that *mythos* appears in the *Iliad*, it is delivered by an authoritative male speaker.²¹ Additionally, Homer uses *logoi* to describe women's ability to persuade men to abandon battle, as when Calypso tries to convince Odysseus to abandon his heroic destiny. Similarly, Hesiod describes Pandora's use of *logos* as manipulative, unscrupulous and seductive. Hesiod also uses *logos* to describe those who outwit others who are physically, but not intellectually, stronger. For both poets, *logos* typifies feminine characters who are shrewd and convincing, and characterizes tales that are potentially false.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 20-25.

²¹ *Ibid.* 12-15.

It is not until Heraclitus that *logos* becomes associated with descriptions of a rational or empirical quality. Heraclitus does not mention *mythos* at all; instead, he focuses on *logos*, most often written in prose that is argumentative rather narrative. It is at this point, however, that *logos* is connected to the supernatural. *Logos* is later redesignated to describe persuasive speech, rather than unfalsifiable beliefs. And it is from Heraclitus onward that *logos* is no longer fundamentally connected to the purely descriptive, or domineering, or feminine speeches, as is it was for Homer and Hesiod.²²

Consequently, for some, the myths of Plato's dialogues give rise to the perceived division between *mythos* and *logos*. That is, while attempting to establish a new intellectual discipline, scholars (such as Goody, 1977, and W. Nestle, 1940)²³ interpose a clear distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. Morgan, like Lincoln, rejects this general distinction in favour of a more nuanced approach that considers the role Platonic myth plays in the dialogues. Plato intends to establish the distinction between different kinds of myth and their sources within his philosophical framework, establishing a new intellectual agenda. Therefore, Plato reacts against Homer and Hesiod and their unquestioned authority over the intellectual world and the nature of the divine world. Thus, philosophy manipulates myth because of the existing mythological, literary culture and uses what remains to mount a general suspicion of linguistics and the representation of reality and discourse with greater objectivity. Platonic myth aims to emphasize both the style of the old form and its

²² *Ibid.* 5-6, 10-18.

²³ Buxton, R. G. A. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 28-30.

insufficiencies by manipulating normative intellectual vernacular, and using it to create a new discipline.²⁴

Mythos and *logos* are not inherently at odds with one another, just as myth is not inherently unphilosophical. Plato is not trying to make a direct move from the mythical (fictitious) to the empirical (scientific). There is no lateral move to debunk myth as a legitimate intellectual project in the dialogues. Instead Plato makes a conscious move to use the myth-form to make philosophy self-conscious in order to raise second-order questions, juxtapose styles of discourse, and ultimately take part in the rhetorical enterprise of manipulating discourse and speech.²⁵

V. Myth as the Method

Because of the complexity of the meaning and use of myth, this section continues to examine the etymology of myth and *logos*, but focuses on Kathryn Morgan's research, and how these terms pertain to Platonic dialogues more specifically. Morgan develops a dynamic interpretation of myth and philosophy for the Presocratics and then later for Plato. The assertion, "Myth is paradigmatic of the incapacities of language,"²⁶ epitomizes Morgan's thesis on the myths from the middle dialogues. Her analysis of Plato's myths considers in what way Plato applies features of his literary and intellectual milieu to create a new method of

²⁴ *Ibid.* 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 32-35, Partine 2009 11-13. Plato uses *mythos* a total about of 87 times; 42 uses refer to traditional Greek myth(s) in general, 27 refer to Plato's original myths. And 18 are ambiguous as they refer to philosophical doctrines and rhetorical devices—something I discuss in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

²⁶ Morgan, Kathryn A. *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 211.

philosophizing, which ultimately critiques the limitations of language and textualization. Morgan includes other ancient philosophers such as Xenophon and Heraclitus in her examination. I will limit my own examination to her insights into *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*.

Myth works to problematize methods of linguistic representation in Plato's intellectual world. It is not an extraneous literary detail, but is a method to develop a new process of philosophizing that is by its very function self-reflexive. A central reason for using myth then is that unlike typical syllogisms, myth works more effectively as a complex mirror capable of deepening self-understanding. This mirror forms images that assist and inspire one to aim for a refined knowledge as well as self-knowledge. Accordingly, Platonic myth keeps the phenomenon of human experience in front of us.²⁷ The language of myth appeals to the ordinary senses but discusses concepts inaccessible through the senses, because it is inherently tinged with the reader's experience; thus, it is not only an examination of the text, but it becomes an examination of one's self.

By appropriating and manipulating myth, Plato establishes new principles for philosophical inquiry and draws attention to intellectual disciplines that are not sufficiently self-critical, such as poetry, as well as to other thinkers that Plato believes assert themselves as intellectual authorities because of their extant authority, such as rhetoricians and the gods. Platonic myth takes on the limitations of linguistic methodologies as well as existential problems, and considers the ways that our mortal existence interferes with the quest for knowledge and truth. Thus,

²⁷ Morgan 2004. 245.

Plato uses myth in order to consider uncertain boundaries and attempts to express what scientific or rational language cannot when describing the soul and the realm of the Forms. By writing myths into the dialogues, Plato ensures that the method of examination is self-conscious so that it does not fall into the same old traps of assumed authority or unquestioned reason. Instead, the method of examination is self-checking, as it is aware of both its own epistemological limitations and those of the reader.²⁸

Plato, as well as others like Xenophon, takes concerted measures to establish a new means of assessing and understanding reality. However, they are working in a culture deeply invested in the authorities of poetry and mythology. As such, any attempt to transplant traditional myth into the dialogues would miss the mark. Therefore, to understand how Plato is using myth, it is necessary to consider *Platonic Myth* as something other than Greek myth. Plato was uncomfortable with the limitations that language placed on one's ability to describe reality. By manufacturing a tension between philosophy and myth, the limitations of language become more obvious: language provides inadequate empirical data and is liable to deceive. Thus, one realizes that all things cannot be explained purely scientifically, nor can one depend exclusively on the imaginations of any old wordsmith; and the difficulties of expressing reality free from illusion come to the forefront.

Plato does not use traditional myths verbatim; however, he borrows familiar concepts and imagery from traditional myths, in order to create a new narrative with a new philosophical function. His myths express novel concepts, and what

²⁸ *Ibid.* 1-15.

remains are merely fragments or shadows of the popular myth. Plato's myth challenges the authority of traditional Greek myths and he thereby asserts himself as his an autonomous intellectual authority. He therefore employs the authority and influence of the Muses in order to critique and challenge the established authoritative systems. Plato aims to assert that humans are responsible for wisdom, rather than remain dependent on traditional knowledge often internalized without examination. The Muses may inspire, but people acquire knowledge by other human means, as well—a fact that Plato explores throughout his dialogues.

Nevertheless, when Plato is writing the dialogues, he needs to establish his philosophy as an authoritative discipline. Philosophy then positions itself in opposition to traditional linguistic authorities and attempts to establish new standards for truth claims. In terms of Greek literature and popular intellectual sources, these myths and poetry have no formal criteria for "truth"; instead they are concerned with using narratives that are emotionally effectual and memorable not to mention steeped in traditional tales of theatrical gods. The poet delivers an effective or convincing speech and his words are considered divine because the Muses inspire them. However, Lincoln asserts that the rise of Parmenidian philosophy brings a new standard of *alethea* (truth), which is derived from careful discourse.²⁹ Therefore, the authority of philosophy does not come from the Muses and is not an unfalsifiable or unquestionable authority. Rather, Plato calls into question these indemonstrable authorities in order to critique unexamined conventions. By appropriating myth, the convention of myth can then be used to

²⁹ *Ibid.* 1-22.

ensure that philosophy never becomes too self-authoritative, but is instead established as a method that is self-reflective.³⁰

In writing original myths and weaving philosophical discourses together, *Platonic Myth* demonstrates that these myths are only valuable when considered in terms of the dialectic method, and as a part of the narrative of a specific dialogue. On their own, Platonic myths are incomplete, but when considered in context and used with the argumentation and reasoning of the narrative of the dialogue, they express the difficulty of obtaining knowledge, the instability of language, the limitations of working with written texts and avoiding doctrines, and the difficulty of knowing or expressing the transcendental or intelligible world of the Forms.³¹

Myth is clearly a game we play with language, but language is itself a game. It is not one with which we should be flippant about (like the sophists). If the status of argument is uncertain, and if the language used to express them is unstable, and if Plato writes philosophical myths that explicitly problematize their own philosophical and linguistic status, the problem of Platonic myth mirrors the problem of Platonic dialogues. Plato writes myths for precisely the same reason that he writes dialogues: to ward off certainty and keep the philosophical quest alive in terms that acknowledge its fragility. We should take them very seriously indeed.³²

Platonic myth reminds the philosopher that the philosophical environment is full of landmines that must be intelligently navigated. Using myth can compensate for what empirical knowledge cannot ascertain or define effectively with intelligent imagination, which is developed upon reason and evidence. Thus, the arguments are provisional, because myth wards off certainty, and can be re-evaluated, depending on the context.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 30-45.

³¹ *Ibid.* 184, 179. Rowe, C. J. *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Rowe expresses this difficulty as “complex ideas” that involve using myth and imagery to offer ideas that have multiple levels of meaning, depending on the capacity of the interpreter.

³² Brisson, Luc, and Gerard Naddaf. *Plato the Myth Maker*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 184.

VI. An Alternative Analysis

In *Plato the Myth Maker* (1998), and *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology* (2004), Brisson offers a perspective on Plato's opinion of myth that runs contrary to the one argued in this thesis. For Brisson, poetry and myths are problematic because they encourage *mimesis*, which Plato asserts should be eliminated from the ideal city. He accordingly interprets Socrates' use of Aesop's myths and myth-making as a pseudo-negation of the value of inspired music, or the promotion of philosophy over myth. Moreover, Plato uses myth to establish ideas that are a part of traditional Greek thought and are discursive and unfalsifiable by nature, and that, as a consequence, offer no philosophical truth. Myth is information that has been transmitted orally and received from ancestors and is concerned primarily with histories that can be described as "fabrication." He takes Socrates' Aesopian reference (*Phaedo* 60b-61b) to mean "poetic-fabrication," which includes poetry that is divinely inspired and thus also encompasses "myth-making."³³

Thus, for Plato there are two problems with myth. First, myth is an unfalsifiable discourse, and is usually concerned with transmitting stories or cultural mores rather than studying empirical data. Secondly, for the purposes of persuasion, the elements of the story (or myth) are linked in a contingent program, and are extraneous to argumentative discourse, which conversely manifests from

³³ Brisson, Luc. *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2004. 40-48.

necessity, not from observation. Thus, myth is persuasive speech and works on ordinary people the way reason appeals to philosophers (the elite). Ultimately, myth is merely a string of words one can repeat or adopt as a model for one's behaviour. As such, Brisson sees value in myth only for its utility of persuasiveness, and states, "for Plato the interest of myth resides neither in its truth value nor in its argumentative power, but in its usefulness at the level of ethics and politics."³⁴ Therefore, the separation between *mythos* and *logos* for Brisson is clear; *logos* expresses rational thought, whereas *mythos* is an unfalsifiable story transmitted for the sake of historicizing a communal message.

Continuing, Brisson asserts that myths are saved, often problematically, through allegorical interpretations, which rely on symbolic meaning. Allegory is problematic because it opens the myth up to wide and varying interpretations and continual adaptation, which enable the myth to adjust to the context in which it is being interpreted. Additionally, part of Plato's critique of myth lies in his concern for the illustrative and performative aspect of the fine arts, which can lead to mimesis. The poet's work intentionally engages the memory of a community with words that corroborate the history of a divine tradition, which, for Brisson, is more concerned with creating a lasting memory than with critical inquiry.

Therefore, the problem for Plato is that imitation is an inherent aspect of myth. Words are a mere description of the gods; thus, they fall short of the actual qualities of the divine, which is ineffable. The images do not reflect reality, so they cannot aid the senses or develop one's intelligence. This issue is further complicated

³⁴ *Ibid.* 112-121.

by the shift from the oral and performative tradition to written poetry, as standardized by the works of Homer and Hesiod. While the oral tradition would have been adapted to the audience, the textualization of these myths now describes attitudes and behaviours that come off as anachronistic. Thus, the previously authoritative and immortal stories that derived from the spoken poet begin to appear false. Moreover, writing and textualization transform the process of narration to rely more predominantly on description, initiating the critique of the function and validity of poetry and oral transmission. Allegory (and myth) are aimed at collective memory and the *hoi polloi*, and so myth is not for the philosophical [elite].³⁵ Brisson states that Plato is responsible for a deliberate devaluation of myth:

In Ancient Greece, the meaning of *muthos* changed as a function of the transformations that affected the vocabulary of 'saying' and of 'speech' in the course of historical evolution ending with Plato when the meaning of *muthos* became fixed once and for all.³⁶

However, he essentially overlooks that Plato also uses these nouns interchangeably, both in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters. Thus, Brisson does not consider Plato's dynamic use of myth as a part of the rational discourse of *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, in particular, rather he relies too heavily on *Republic* and imposes views on myth without enough context. I agree with Brisson's assertion that Plato believed that certain myths were distasteful and ill-considered—a critique that appears clearly in *Republic*. However, I find that the Brissons' style of schism between Plato's myths and preference for *logos* is far too simplistic as it implies that Plato uses myth one-dimensionally.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 2-14.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 19.

I agree with Brisson that these forms of communication have elements of ancient and classical myth that Plato does not endorse. However, this style of examination is too broad and vague, because it relies on fragments from the dialogues that do not acknowledge Plato's own examination of *mythos* (see the *palinode* or the afterlife of the *Phaedo*). Plato is indeed concerned with persuasive, unfalsifiable speech, which also applies to Lysias' rhetorical vomit (*Phaedrus*). Plato also rejects mimesis for the sake of mimesis. However, many of the other myths of his dialogues (which I will examine) indeed support Plato's ideals—particularly the examination of illusion and the sensible world.

Just because myth serves a persuasive function within Plato's discourse, does not make these aspects of his dialogues unphilosophical or opposed to logos, or less valuable than reason and argumentation. Socrates may persuade or entice his interlocutor with a myth, then draw him into argumentation, then return to myth, when argument has reached its limits. However, the philosophical method of criticizing traditional intellectual discourse is equally important to building a philosophical argument.

I will assert that contrary to Brisson's research, *Phaedo's* myth of the afterlife is philosophically significant as it creates a reflective surface for self-examination to ascertain whether one's actions are philosophically fruitful. Plato's non-metaphorical myths both criticize and depict incoherent descriptions and use myth to compare and criticize modes of discursive practice. These myths are not purely argumentative, but create, through imagery, a persuasive argument for the afterlife. However, it is unlikely that Plato would have thought this was just a useful flourish

creating a memorable image of the consequentialism. I side with Rowe's assertion in *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, and assume that all of Plato's writing supports Platonic ideals and by extension the myths he applies. Therefore, they cannot be excluded in an examination of the philosophical significance of Plato's dialogues. For Plato, the important philosophical exercise was the process of understanding which forms of communication were valuable, and, equally importantly, recognizing the deficiency or limitations of all kinds of speech or argument.

Fundamentally, Plato wrote dialogues that he intended as philosophy; what is crucial is not just the vehicle, but the philosophical method. The dialogues between Socrates and interlocutors are intended for an audience.³⁷ Whether or not the dialogue is *aporetic*, or the interlocutor uses a combination of myth and *logos*, Plato wrote in order to further a particular system of philosophy via endless examination. However, when the dialogues are cut into discrete parts, and cross-examined beyond recognition, the efficacy of any individual dialogue is lost. A dialogue must be first read on its own, as a complete set of ideas. There are no dialogues that are purportedly more philosophical than others, only the examination of our relationship to the world through various interlocutors, and topics, and dialogues. Myth is a necessary part of that exploration simply because it is a part of the dialogical process.

³⁷ There are, of course, some exceptions, such as the *Laws*, or the *Timaeus*, which is mostly a monologue; however, I will put this aside for now, as what constitutes a *Platonic dialogue* is also a subject of debate.

VII. Reading Platonic Myth

I will demonstrate that particularly in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, Plato's myths are an expression of his self-reflexive philosophical method, and that by applying perplexing narrative and linguistic schemas, such as myth, Plato developed a sophisticated method of persuading one towards a philosophical life of analysis.

The text refers to all the central myths this project investigates as myths (*μύθος/μύθοι*) at one time or another. I am more interested in the treatment of myth, rather than the nominal designation. Therefore, I do not rest my classification of these sections of the dialogue as myth purely because of Plato's designation; Plato also refers to these same speeches as *logos*, (*λόγος/λόγοι*).

Moreover, I do not believe that the myths I consider from *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are meant to be read entirely literally. The narrative style of the dialogue either explicitly states or implies as much. However, these myths are neither more nor less philosophical than any other part of the dialogue or argument. All the dialogues are concerned with the problems involved when investigating the intelligible world via the sensible, and with the consequent intelligibility of forms. By avoiding literal interpretations and considering the progression of speeches and shifts from myth to argument the philosophical direction becomes clear because of the context.³⁸

³⁸ Annas, Julia, and C. J. Rowe. *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*. 2002, (149-172). C. Gill discussed the challenges of cross-reading Platonic dialogues rather than considering an individual text as a dialogical unit. Cross-reading tends to include second-hand ideas from other dialogues, which can lead to mining for ultimate truths and doctrines rather than focusing on the specifics of one dialogue.

Rowe wants to emphasize that Plato is not only a philosopher, but a writer as well. Because Plato is working within both philosophical and literary territory, he does not always say exactly what he means. As a writer, Plato is aiming to express his philosophical ideas effectively to his audience, through written works. Thus, Plato is interested in what the audience needs in terms of intellectual investigation. This, for Rowe, means that Plato appropriates multiple literary formats in order to present complex ideas. Complex ideas are, by definition, layered, and so they can offer either more or less meaning, depending on the reader. Accordingly, each dialogue is an attempt at clear and reasoned persuasion for the reader.³⁹

Because Plato has what Rowe calls a substantive, positive agenda,⁴⁰ he alters his writing style and content of the dialogues in order to best address the Socratic idea under investigation. Considering both the literary and philosophical aspects of the dialectic unifies Plato's works and brings concordance to the variations between the dialogues. The infrastructure of the dialogues is therefore a "nexus of ideas." Thus, in each dialogue, there is a foundational understanding that Platonic ideas, such as the nature of the Forms and the soul, are working in each text even if they are not the specific focus of the text.⁴¹

Gill critiques G. E. L. Owen and Vlastos for imposing "Socratic Doctrines," which are based on other texts. This method contrasts with a Straussian reading that emphasizes the dramatic unit of the dialogue, as well as the role of the reader, which has experienced a resurgence in Platonic scholarship within the last fifty years.

³⁹ Rowe 2007, 1-15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 17-25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 39-51.

Further, dialectical style takes the form of a narrative each with a different interlocutor for whom many of the dialogues are named.⁴² Through each interlocutor, the dialogues investigate Platonic ideas, such as the sensible and the intelligible world, enabling subtle shifts in the process of analysis by offering a variety of perspectives. The dialogues are not strictly philosophical treatises; rather they are more accurately narratives with elements of style that contribute to their overall meaning and value.⁴³

I realize that I am to some extent going against my own precepts by reading the dialogues with a focus on myth. Nevertheless, I endeavour to consider the meaning of each myth, within the context of the dialogue to which it is attributed, before coming to conclusions about Plato and myth. As I began my investigation with individual analyses of the dialogues, and then tried to draw broad comparisons through cross-reading *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, I believe that Rowe would support this method. Therefore, I do not think this project degrades the value of the dialogical unit that I wish to endorse.

Plato redefined an intellectual culture by altering the relationship to literature and our attitudes about the divine world. Despite Plato's interest in the divine and transcendental, his work continues to be relevant and valuable; if Plato's work were merely a collection of superstitions, it would not still incite so many important reflections on the modern condition of being and philosophy. As it were,

⁴² For example, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias (Minor and Greater)*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Protagoras*, *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, *Critias*, *Timaeus*, *Philebus*.

⁴³ Rowe 2007, 17-20.

Plato was interested in the mores and pedagogy of Athens during his time; however, because of his unique talent, we can still today, with his philosophy, intelligently ponder our relationship to mortality and our systems of values.

Nevertheless, Plato does not explicitly retell traditional Greek myths, nor does he adhere to one model or methodology.⁴⁴ When considered in terms of the religious myths of Müller and Eliade, *Platonic Myths* are not meant to develop a cultural narrative or ritualize a religious event.⁴⁵ *Platonic Myths* are radical ideas and pose radical action and intellectual endeavours that cultivate a self-reflexive life, critique authority, help in the acquisition of knowledge through dialectic and philosophical analysis, and deconstruct people's relationship to the divine. Plato built a dynamic system of intellectual rigor—one that has been able to evolve and remain relevant. By using classical and common elements of myths he developed a literary discipline that is self-aware. Thus he asserts the problem of the dependence on language and its relationship to cultural norms, which are inherently ambiguous and problematic. Thus, Plato attempted to legitimize the philosophical process that included myths. Accordingly, *Platonic Myths* are concerned not only with ideas and truths; they are also concerned with the process by which ideas are manufactured as a part of a system of investigation that is thorough and trustworthy.

⁴⁴ Hatab 1990, 246-257.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 19-29.

Chapter Two: Phaedo and the Art of Dying

In this chapter, my analysis will highlight the thematic use of myth in *Phaedo*. I will consider Plato's reference to myth throughout *Phaedo*, with special attention to Socrates' myth of pleasure and pain (*Phaedo*, 60 b-c) and of the afterlife (107c-115a). In *Phaedo*, Plato argues that the cultivation of the soul is a worldly pursuit, as actions in this life will be mirrored in the afterlife. Correct cultivation of the soul requires the ability to determine what is nurturing for the soul in its human form. This requires examining the relationship between illusion and reality, and pleasure and pain. Platonic myth functions as a reflective surface for the analysis of delusion and reality and appearance.⁴⁶ By focusing on Socrates' discussion of Aesop's myth-making and his final myth of the afterlife, I will support my claim that Plato endorses myths which lead to self-examination through, as I have called it, *intelligent imagination*.

First, I will use the Aesopian myth of the two-headed god, *pleasure and pain*, to support my claim that *intelligent imagination* is necessary for navigating between reality and illusion and is also necessary for philosophical cultivation in this life, as much as in the afterlife. Therefore, *Phaedo's* myth of the afterlife is most appropriately understood as an allegory for human life and the consequences of pursuing things of value, such as virtue and justice, and avoiding things that weigh down the soul, such as tyranny, murder, and, especially, self-indulgence. I believe the afterlife myth resonates with the Aesopian myth of pleasure and pain, which

⁴⁶ Dorter 1982, 1-10.

highlights the danger of wasting one's life on things of no value, such as bodily pleasure, rather than seeking knowledge and reality. Therefore, the depiction of the afterlife can be understood as a reflection of one's life: Consequently, only the best human life devoted to philosophy will yield the best afterlife. Thus, for Plato, one does not have to die to experience the punishments or rewards described; one lives them daily by choosing to live by truth or misperception.

As I have discussed in my first chapter, myths work with dialectic to draw attention to Socrates' self-awareness and therefore his self-conscious use of language, despite its inherent limitations in exploring philosophical topics. Even though we must use language to communicate philosophy, we must not forget that it lacks the capacity to explore the true essence of things, which are beyond the visible world. Ultimately, myth appears as a critique of our dependence upon language and the sensible or physical world. The form then aids us in understanding the nature of being human and ultimately promotes philosophy and self-reflection to enable us to achieve a virtuous, well-lived existence.

The self-conscious application of myth in *Phaedrus* allows for several pedagogical processes. By employing myth, Plato aims to achieve a text that actively engages the reader and interlocutor in self-conscious examination. We need then, to distinguish *Platonic Myths*, which are philosophically fruitful myths, from other, non-philosophical myths. Ultimately, myth supports what I take Plato's ambition in *Phaedo* to be, which is to investigate the distinction between what is real and what is illusory.

In short, myth in *Phaedo* creates philosophically fruitful tension. By applying myth to the literary structure of the dialogue, Plato develops a methodological tool that allows one to examine the means of examination. Therefore, *mythoi* juxtaposed with *logoi* and Socratic dialectic demand constant and careful. This method avoids the falsity of knowledge that is taken as perfected or finite, and supplements what *logoi*, or argument, cannot express with verifiable certainty. Consequently, the need for intelligent speculation and imagination to examine reality is accentuated.⁴⁷

I. *Phaedo* Source Research

To support my reading of *Phaedo*, I will primarily rely on the work of Kenneth Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo: an interpretation*, 1982, Kathryn A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*, 2000, Christopher J. Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, 2007, Christos Zafiroopoulos, *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's Phaedo*, 2015. Dorter's interpretation focuses on the importance of a non-literal or metaphorical reading of the afterlife, as well as on emphasizing the myth of pleasure and pain as a way of approaching the problem of truth versus illusion. Zafiroopoulos emphasizes the proem and the Ship of Delos and Socrates' offering to the Muses to argue for the role of Apollo and Socrates' attempt to place philosophy among approved music or offerings. Finally, Morgan and Rowe's work both support my *intelligent imagination*

⁴⁷ Morgan 2000, 20-35.

thesis, which calls on us to acknowledge our intellectual limitations, particularity as concerns language and the need for imagistic myths to do philosophy.⁴⁸

In his book, Dorter argues that the details of the afterlife myth are relevant to the part of the dialogue principally because worldly choices are important, as one cannot achieve a positive afterlife without a good human life.⁴⁹ The myth of pleasure and pain, which contributes to Plato's philosophical agenda, and the myth of the afterlife, are distinctive and reveal independent Platonic ideals. By acknowledging Aesop's fables in the proem of the dialogue (60b-61e), Socrates recognizes that myths are valuable as an avenue of encouraging analysis.⁵⁰ They acknowledge that intellectual pursuits require a certain kind of divine inspiration, or intelligent imagination. However, by writing his own myths, Plato asserts that he is not hampered by other intellectual influences when working to his own conclusions. Plato's myths apply a method of self-criticism and self-reflection. Thus, Socrates moves forward with myth-making that recognizes the ideas of the past, the gods, the Muses and Aesop, but asks for more, probing cultural norms such as Greek poetry and Pythagorean beliefs.⁵¹ The myths of pleasure and pain and of the afterlife investigate the human relationship to the physical and intellectual world. Thus, the philosopher becomes engaged in the nature of illusions and reality by comparing the physical world with the soul's afterlife in the form of a myth.

⁴⁹ Dorter, Kenneth. *Plato's Phaedo: An Interpretation*. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1982 160-168, 193-199.

⁵⁰ Zafiroopoulos, Christos A. *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's Phaedo*. 2015. 1-10.

⁵¹ For a more detailed analysis of Plato's religious or Pythagorean beliefs and his relationship to the divine, see Rowe 2007, Dorter 1982, Partenie 2009.

The *Phaedo* opens with the arrival of the Ship of Delos (58 a-b) and ends with a sacrifice to Asclepius (118a) situated between two rituals in the analysis of myth: pleasure and pain, and the afterlife. By framing the dialogue with myth and ritual, Plato directs the reader's attention to the tensions inherent in the pedagogical process of philosophy: for example, discriminating truth from illusion by scrutinizing myth.⁵²

Accordingly, Plato's myth investigates the ambiguity of language and knowledge, and offers an alternative to, as well as a critique of, traditional Greek myth, as well as an alternative to the intellectual disciplines of his milieu.⁵³ As I will demonstrate, Plato always uses myths to support a philosophical agenda. He is aiming to encourage readers, who are obliged to remain vigilant, and to carefully critique all of their intellectual intuitions and assumptions, emphasizing worldly philosophical cultivation. The Platonic point is that death is no escape for those who do not pursue philosophy (83c-d).⁵⁴

Myth in *Phaedo*, then, is concerned with both philosophical analysis and intuition, which are the models for human experience and intellectual exploration. One must begin philosophical analysis with empirical information from the physical world. But when that has been exhausted, one must form a hypothesis that is inevitably provisional and will require reconsideration once more is known. Then the relationship between myth and argument exposes the difficulties and

⁵² Dorter, 1982. 160-165, Dorter further emphasizes Plato's use of myth as more correctly concerned with moral matters than with literally interpreting myth.

⁵³ Hatab, Lawrence J. *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths*. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1990. missing page ref.

⁵⁴ Zafiroopoulos, 2015. 52-56, 75, 90-96.

insufficiency of the human mind when examining the sensible world from the intelligible. By shifting back and forth between *mythos* and *logos*, Plato tests the boundaries of each form of speech. So the dialogue functions to test the boundaries of the capacity for an argument's capacity to uncover truth, and then continues with myth once an argument has been exhausted. Accordingly, when Socrates can no longer use logic to persuade Simmias and Cebes, he transitions from the argument of opposites (103a) to the afterlife myth (110a). He adapts his discourse for his interlocutor and uses myth to acknowledge intellectual limitations when attempting to describe the afterlife and provide a helpful demonstration by way of the afterlife myth. The afterlife myth begins with rational origins (proof of the soul 105c), and self-consciously expresses insufficiency, which is "paradigmatic of human discourse in general," reminding the reader that Socrates' hypotheses are always provisional.⁵⁵

II. Aesop and Making Music

Phaedo begins with a framing narrative, when Phaedo meets Echerates who wants to hear about what was said on Socrates' final day (58d). Thus, the *Phaedo* recalls Socrates' final day through Phaedo's narration; it is a second-hand account of what Socrates said, and Phaedo does his best to be accurate (59d). However, there is no one else present to confirm or deny the details of Phaedo's recitation. Therefore, we must trust his story, and acknowledge that he is working from his memory, and accept the proviso that what is being said may be not be completely accurate.

⁵⁵ Morgan, 2000. 185-192.

When Phaedo begins his narration, Socrates' death is imminent, as the ship of Theseus has returned from Delos. This ritual commemorates Theseus' heroic act, which saved the lives of fourteen young men and women from the Minotaur. Athenian law dictates that the city must remain pure while the ship is away and the ritual for Apollo is in progress: No executions ensue during this time. Socrates has been awaiting his execution in prison, because the ship left shortly after he received his sentence. The dialogue is thus set against the background of an Apollonian ritual, when Socrates discusses death and afterlife in terms of myth, which he believes will please his fourteen audience members, the Muses (the keepers of the arts), and their ward, Apollo, god of death (58a-b).⁵⁶

While in prison, Socrates' dreams have directed him to make an offering to the Muses and to do something unusual (61a-b):

Socrates: ... so the dream was encouraging me to do what I was doing, that is, to make music, because philosophy was the greatest kind of music and I was working at that. But now, after the trial and while the festival of the god delayed my execution, I thought, in case the repeated dream really meant to tell me to make this which is ordinarily called music, I ought to do so and not to disobey.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Zafiroopoulos, 2015, demonstrates that Plato borrows features of Greek tradition by including Apollo and the Muses in order to establish himself as an independent authority and to place philosophy under the guidance of Apollo. This is done by opening the dialogue on the Ship of Delos (58a-b, 60d-e) and the banning of the Pharmakos. Thus Apollo endorses Socrates' music or offering. 41-42, 72-75, 95, For more information on the Athenian Theory of Delos see Murray and Wilson. *Music and the Muses: the culture of 'mousikē' in the classical Athenian city*. 2004. PGGG???

⁵⁷ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 210-213

καὶ ἐμοὶ οὕτω τὸ ἐνύπνιον, ὅπερ ἔπραττον, τοῦτο ἐπικελεύειν, μουσικὴν ποιεῖν, ὡς φιλοσοφίας μὲν οὐσίας μεγίστης μουσικῆς, ἐμοῦ δὲ τοῦτο πρᾶττοντος· νῦν δ' ἐπειδὴ ἢ τε δίκη ἐγένετο καὶ ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔορτὴ διεκώλυέ με ἀποθνήσκειν, ἔδοξε χρῆναι, εἰ ἄρα πολλάκις μοι προστάττοι τὸ ἐνύπνιον ταύτην τὴν δημώδη μουσικὴν ποιεῖν, μὴ ἀπειθῆσαι αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ποιεῖν.

When Socrates begins, he discusses poetry, the Muses, Aesop's fables, and the kind of music he should make to correctly venerate the Muses in his last few hours. But it is not initially clear what kind of music or offering Socrates' means to make and he is not specific about to which Muse he will make an offering. So, as well as offering philosophy, he decides that he is also going to make a myth or write in verse, as Aesop did. Socrates does not want to miss the mark in his final days, so he is going to listen to his dreams and make an offering of music, which he prefaces with the myth of pleasure and pain (60d-61e), and follows with his own elaborate myth of the afterlife (108a).

Zafiroopoulos maintains that Plato uses the Muses for two primary purposes. The first is to connect his dialogue to the divine, and the second to establish Socrates as a new authority—one who is neither wholly dependent upon the gods, nor completely disassociated from their wisdom and authoritative knowledge. As such, philosophy is considered to be under the divine supervision of Apollo and the Muses. As a result, Plato's *logoi* are regarded as a part of the meaningful *logoi* of the *polis*. However, Plato reinterprets the divine mania (*μανία*) of the poets, who are also inspired by the Muses. He does so by beginning with the established order, making music for the Muses and then writing in verse.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Additionally, Zafiroopoulos 2015, emphasizes the theme of liberation in the dialogue, which is established in part by referring to Aesop and the muses. Socrates is liberated from prison and his soul from his body; he is also liberating his interlocutors from the fear of death: both the literal end of one's existence and the figurative death of leaving behind a previous, fruitless nature. Furthermore, Apollo is responsible for the delay of Socrates' execution as the ship from Delios is delayed. Delia is associated with Apollo's miraculous birth, which in turn is related to the festival of Thargela, which is likely occurring around the same time that the *Phaedo*

Contrary to the poetry of Homer or Evenus, which are claimed to be divinely inspired and sanctified by the Muses, philosophy is human and created by an autonomous agent: for example Socrates. Therefore, Socrates does not simply accept the divinely inspired poetry without question; instead, he becomes a knowledgeable spectator and interpreter of the divine eternal truths, and is therefore not just an instrument of divine forces. Although Socrates' offering of music indicates that he is under the guidance of Apollo, he will not be totally subject to him. Socrates' philosophical music indicates that the ideal musical composition is the ideal offering to Apollo.⁵⁹

Similarly, Morgan argues that Socrates' philosophy aims to absorb and transform narrative religious speech, which includes the role of the Muses in the arts, divination and traditional myths. Morgan asserts that the dialogue then follows a clear progression from the Aesopian myths to "philosophical music." Socrates starts with ordinary music, and divination from Apollo, and progresses to a more rigorous level of scrutiny, transforming divination into philosophy.⁶⁰

It therefore appears that Socrates' offering to the Muses (music) (60 d-e) is inspired by Aesop's fables. But it is not Aesop's oeuvre that inspires Socrates, but

is set. The Thargelia also celebrates the expulsion the *φαρμακον*, the ritual sacrifice to Apollo. This in turn recalls Aesop, who is believed to have been a deformed man as well as a slave, who was sacrificed at Delios. Thus, Socrates's conviction and execution is compared to the outlawed practice of human sacrifice, and likens his life and death to that of Aesop and emphasizes a theme of liberation through philosophy. 29-42, 90-95

⁵⁹ Zafiroopoulos, Christos A. *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's Phaedo*. 2015. 90-96

⁶⁰ Morgan, Kathryn A. "The Voice of Authority: Divination and Plato's *Phaedo*." *The Classical Quarterly* 60.1 (2010): 63-68

rather Aesop's authority and proclivity for myths and metrical verse. In its place, Socrates will tell a better myth, because he is going to make philosophy and reveal that philosophy is the greatest music (60d-61e).⁶¹

Aesop's myths are used as the foundation of Socrates's myth-making. However, Aesop did not take on the correct subject, which is why Socrates is a revisionist. Nevertheless, because Socrates is not himself a myth-maker, he needs to rely on Aesop for help in appropriately venerating the Muses and making good myths (61b).

Socrates: Since I was not a maker of myths, I took the myths of Aesop, which I had at hand and knew, and turned into verse the first I came upon.⁶²

After making this claim however, Socrates seems to ignore it, and goes on to discuss the afterlife based on the things he has *heard*, rather than the things he *knows*, even though he is uncertain about what the afterlife holds (61a):

Socrates: I myself speak of them only from hearsay; but I have no objection to telling what I have heard. And indeed it is perhaps especially fitting, as I am going to the other world, to tell stories about the life there and consider what we think about it; for what else could one do in the time between now and sunset?⁶³

But he will still explore the possibilities with a long myth (61d-e).

⁶¹ Morgan, 2010, 65-68. For a discussion of the relationship between Aesop and Socrates and the importance of Socrates' status as a philosopher, see Zafiroopoulos, "Socrates and Aesop: A Few Notes on Plato's Portrait of the Arch-Philosopher," 2011.

⁶² Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 212-213

καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ οὐς προχείρους εἶχον καὶ ἠπιστάμην μύθους τοὺς Αἰσώπου, τούτους ἐποίησα, οἷς πρώτοις ἐνέτυχον.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 214-215.

Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἐγὼ ἐξ ἀκοῆς περὶ αὐτῶν λέγω· ἃ μὲν οὖν τυγχάνω ἀκηκῶς, φθόνος οὐδεὶς λέγειν. καὶ γὰρ ἴσως καὶ μάλιστα πρέπει ἐμέλλοντα ἐκεῖσε ἀποδημεῖν διασκοπεῖν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀποδημίας τῆς ἐκεῖ, ποίαν τινὰ αὐτὴν οἴομεθα εἶναι· τί γὰρ ἂν τις καὶ ποιῶ ἄλλο ἐν τῷ μέχρῳ ἡλίου δυσμῶν χρόνῳ;

III. Pleasure and Pain, Illusion and Reality

With Socrates' attitude towards Aesop's myth-making as a framework for analysis, we return to the earlier scene when Phaedo is confused by his emotional uncertainty. He is not, as he expected to be, simply filled with sadness and pity about Socrates' death. Instead, he says that he is unable to accurately describe his feelings, as they are a mixture of both pleasure and pain. While he is depressed that his friend is dying, he is also happy to be in his company, talking philosophy, as they have always done (58e-59a):

Phaedo: But a very strange feeling came over me, an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and of pain together, when I thought that Socrates was presently to die. And all of us who were there were in much the same condition, sometimes laughing and sometimes weeping;⁶⁴

Phaedo's reaction and the behavior of Socrates indicate that neither man is conforming to a typical response to death. Socrates is consistent with his principles, and will spend his final hours in philosophical discussion. While Phaedo is becoming more self-aware, he realizes that he might, at an earlier time, have felt only sadness, but something is shifting in his perception. Socrates underscores Phaedo's cognitive dissonance with an Aesopian-inspired myth (60b-c):

Socrates: What a strange thing, my friends, that seems to be which men call pleasure! How wonderfully it is related to that which seems to be its opposite, pain, in that they will not both come to a man at the same time, and yet if he pursues the one and captures it, he is generally obliged to take the other also, as if the two were joined together in one head. And I think, he said, if Aesop had thought of them, he would have made a fable telling how they were at war and god wished to reconcile them, and when he could not do that, he fastened their heads together, and for that reason, when one of them comes to anyone, the other

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 204-205.

—καὶ γὰρ οἱ λόγοι τοιοῦτοί τινες ἦσαν—ἀλλ' ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπόν τί μοι πάθος παρῆν καὶ τις ἀήθης κρᾶσις ἀπὸ τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, ἐνθυμουμένῳ ὅτι αὐτίκα ἐκεῖνος ἔμελλε τελευτᾶν.

follows after. Just so it seems in my case, after pain was in my leg on account of the fetter, pleasure appears to have come following after.⁶⁵

Socrates ponders the confusing nature of pleasure and pain, because, while they appear to be different, they are not separate, but rather seem to exist together. When one arrives, the other is sure to follow. They appear to be opposites, because they present as different physical and emotional sensations. Yet one cannot expect to experience only one or the other, because the opposite emotion is never far behind. Or—as Phaedo’s experience demonstrates—they can be experienced simultaneously. Thus, Socrates decides that Aesop should have written about pleasure and pain as if they were fastened together into a single entity.

Most people will pursue things that bring pleasure and actively avoid pain. In doing so, however, they spend a lifetime concerned with the wrong things: for instance, mourning death, rather than focusing on philosophy, as Socrates would rather do. Emotions are manifestations of illusion, because they are ambiguous and related to the many physical sensations of our bodies; thus, they are not formed by rational contemplation. As such, it becomes challenging to separate and describe an experience with a particular emotion. The human experience is layered and

⁶⁵ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 208-209.

ὡς ἄτοπον, ἔφη, ὧ ἄνδρες, ἔοικέ τι εἶναι τοῦτο ὃ καλοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἡδύ: ὡς θαυμασίως πέφυκε πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι, τὸ λυπηρόν, τὸ ἅμα μὲν αὐτῷ μὴ θέλειν παραγίγνεσθαι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἐὰν δέ τις διώκη τὸ ἕτερον καὶ λαμβάνη, σχεδόν τι ἀναγκάζεσθαι ἀεὶ λαμβάνειν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον, ὥσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς ἡμμένω δὴ ὄντε. καὶ μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, εἰ ἐνενόησεν αὐτὰ Αἴσωπος, μῦθον ἂν συνθεῖναι ὡς ὁ θεὸς βουλόμενος αὐτὰ διαλλάξαι πολεμοῦντα, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἐδύνατο, συνῆψεν εἰς ταύτων αὐτοῖς τὰς κορυφάς, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ᾧ ἂν τὸ ἕτερον παραγένηται ἐπακολουθεῖ ὕστερον καὶ τὸ ἕτερον. ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἔοικεν: ἐπειδὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ ἦν ἐν τῷ σκέλει τὸ ἀλγεινόν, ἤκειν δὴ φαίνεται ἐπακολουθοῦν τὸ ἡδύ.

complex. To rely only on emotions for examination and truth-seeking will not lead to a clearer vision of what is real. Phaedo cannot claim to be experiencing only one emotion about Socrates' death; it is more complicated than that. Emotions are changeful and unreliable. Socrates likens them to the pain that leaves once the fetters have been removed from his legs (59a).⁶⁶

Moreover, Socrates' Aesopian tale points to the idea that myths should elucidate the disparity between truth and appearances. Pain and pleasure appear to be separate, when really, they are two heads of the same beast (or god), and cannot exist without each other. So, the myth draws attention to misapprehensions about important things, such as death and the afterlife.

In the argument for the theory of opposites (70d-72e), Socrates establishes that opposites in general are like pleasure and pain and do not exclude the presence of the other, but rather all things require its opposite in order to sustain its own existence and for us to perceive its qualities. Thus, opposites are actually joined; they have a relationship to their opposite, because each is distinguishable by the qualities of its opposite. We are aware of heat from its absence and understand our mortality by observing death. They may seem like opposites but as Socrates demonstrates, one's actions are inextricably linked to one's afterlife.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Zafiroopoulos, 2015. 53

⁶⁷ Dorter. 1982, 55-60, Dorter develops this argument in much more detail. Partenie, 2009, 18-24, proposes a similar explanation of the argument for opposites and the pleasure and pain fable, with the caveat that Plato uses in these myths to depict divine role models. While I think this divine role model thesis may be plausible, and Plato's relationship to the divine is worth considering, it is not a topic that I will consider in-depth. Nor do I think it weakens my overall thesis for *Platonic Myth*.

IV. The Afterlife Myth

Before Socrates discusses his vision of the afterlife, he discusses the nature of the soul and establishes that humans are the caretakers of their souls. In this discussion, Socrates asserts that the soul takes its education to the next world, thus if one misinterprets the pleasurable or the physical as what is most valuable, rather a truth, the soul will take whatever qualities and education it has accrued during its life on its journey to the afterlife (80d-81a):

Socrates: Will this soul of ours, being naturally of such a kind, be immediately dispersed and destroyed when it is separated from the body, as most people say? Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias; on the contrary, it's much more as follows: if it is pure when it separates off and drags nothing of the body with it since it has not willingly had any association with it in life, but has avoided it and drawn itself together into itself, since this has always been its habit—that is nothing other than practicing philosophy correctly and, in fact, practicing dying readily. Or would this not be the practice of death?⁶⁸

To confuse the body's wants with the soul's needs is to be mired by the world of illusion and favours the pursuit of pleasure over the mind. To cultivate the soul, one must pursue philosophy. If one does not purify oneself of the limitations of sense stimuli, one remains attached to the physical world. Once one relinquishes desire for

Michellini, Ann N. *"The Rhetoric and Philosophy: Socrates' Swan Song,"* 2003. 313-332. Gallop examines Socrates' death as a means for self-reflection on mortality and one's philosophical response to dying.

⁶⁸ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 280-281

αὐτίκα καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ψυχῇ ἰτέον, αὕτη δὲ δὴ ἡμῖν ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ οὕτω πεφυκυῖα ἀπαλλαττομένη τοῦ σώματος εὐθύς διαπεφύσεται καὶ ἀπόλωλεν, ὡς φασιν οἱ πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι; ἐπολλοῦ γε δεῖ, ὦ φίλε Κέβης τε καὶ Σιμμία, ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ᾧδ' ἔχει· ἐὰν μὲν καθαρὰ ἀπαλλάττηται, μηδὲν τοῦ σώματος συνεφέλκουσα, ἅτε οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἐκοῦσα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ φεύγουσα αὐτὸ καὶ συνηθροισμένη αὐτὴ εἰς ἑαυτήν, ἅτε μελετῶσα ἀεὶ τοῦτο—τὸ δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦσα καὶ τῷ ὄντι τεθνάναι μελετῶσα ῥαδίως· ἢ οὐ τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη μελέτη θανάτου;

pleasure, or fixation on the physical, the intellect can move to the fore, and the path be cleared for wisdom. Virtue must be cultivated and the soul must be cared for correctly; actions in life will dictate the quality of one's afterlife⁶⁹ (83d-e):

Socrates: Because each pleasure or pain nails it as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it corporeal, so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true. For because it has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body it is compelled to adopt also the same habits and mode of life, and can never depart in purity to the other world, but must always go away contaminated with the body; and so it sinks quickly into another body again and grows into it, like seed that is sown. Therefore it has no part in the communion with the divine and pure and absolute.⁷⁰

By telling myths, Socrates proves that philosophy is the best music and that it properly cultivates the soul. He does so by appropriating the framework of Aesop, and venerating Apollo with his original afterlife myth.⁷¹ While Socrates' *logoi* take into consideration the authority of both Apollo and Aesop, he proves that philosophical music supersedes religious *logos* through scrutiny and personal experience, his own imminent death. However, as Socrates begins with Aesop's fable, advances with his own *logos*, and finishes with an original Pythagorean-inspired *mythos*, he absorbs the music from other sources into his superior

⁶⁹ Ritter, Constantin. *The Essence of Plato's Philosophy*. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1933. 68-71.

⁷⁰ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 290-291.

ὅτι ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερονᾷ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ, δοξάζουσιν αὐτὰ ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῆ. ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοδοξεῖν τῷ σώματι καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χαίρειν ἀναγκάζεται οἶμαι ὁμότροπός τε καὶ ὁμότροφος γίνεσθαι καὶ οἷα μηδέποτε εἰς Ἄιδου καθαρῶς ἀφικέσθαι, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα ἐξίεναι, ὥστε ταχὺ πάλιν πίπτειν εἰς ἄλλο σῶμα καὶ ὥσπερ σπειρομένη ἐμφύεσθαι, καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἄμοιρος εἶναι τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τε καὶ καθαροῦ καὶ μονοειδοῦς συνουσίας.

⁷¹ This is followed by what Morgan (2010) considers his most sound argument for the immortal soul (106e8–107a1).

philosophical music. His music is superior because it is grounded in argumentation, and so intelligent imagination allows us to conceive of an afterlife that is probable.⁷²

Socrates never wants to pursue philosophy overconfidently (61d-e). He speaks about things he cannot verify and assures us that this is a necessary and intelligent imaginary leap. Moreover, he does not ignore his limitations; he states them outright, and makes clear his method (110a-b).⁷³ According to Socrates' vision of the afterlife (108a), there is a long and winding intellectual journey ahead. Death offers us no escape from a mediocre life—a truism demonstrated by the river Acheron (107c-d).

⁷² Zafiroopoulos, Christos A. *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's Phaedo*. 2015. 47-54, Partenie, Catalin. *Plato's Myths*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009. (85-97) proposes a similar explanation of argument for opposites and pleasure and pain fable; with the caveat that Plato uses in these myths to depict divine role models. While I think this maybe possible, and Plato's relationship to the divine is worth consideration, it is not a topic but I will consider in-depth. *Ibid.* 69-75. Rowe 2007, further emphasizes the Pythagorean or religious language that is used in the opening of *Phaedo*. Plato uses language that would have likely been familiar to his audience and interlocutors, but is not meant to be taken literally, and is used instead for the sake of improved comprehension. He claims that Plato is borrowing religious language for the Pythagorean interlocutors Simmias and Cebes, which is also in this case metaphorical, as he is not directly endorsing Pythagorean ideals, but does indeed borrow from them. Therefore, it is up to the philosopher to understand that this does not necessarily support religious ideas; rather, he uses familiar language in order to communicate with his interlocutors. This is further supported by Socrates' use of third-person speech that distances him from full commitment to Pythagorean ideas. Instead this language further supports the metaphorical interpretation of the afterlife myth.

Taylor, A. E. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. London: Methuen & CO LTD, 1960. 174-178, asserts the immortality of the soul. Emphasis on cultivating matters of the mind is—besides a moral argument—an image of the fortitude of a true philosopher when facing death. The dialogue is more pointedly a justification for the “tendance of the soul,” rather than the proof of its immortality, or ingenerability.

⁷³ Taylor 1960, 207.

Nevertheless, the afterlife cannot be precisely as he describes it: a labyrinth of lakes within the earth, where souls await their fates (114d-e):

Socrates: Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while; and he ought to repeat such things to himself as if they were magic charms, which is the reason why I have been lengthening out the story so long.⁷⁴

Therefore, he offers the Muses a myth of his own creation: a myth about the afterlife and the soul. He describes a philosophical journey in the form of an unverifiable myth, acknowledging its factual improbability (114d). Thus, the afterlife myth bids us to engage with not only the problem of our mortality, but the problem of appearances and reality, since it is necessary to apprehend the distinction in order to live the best life: one guided by philosophy.

The afterlife myth shows that human life is germane to the afterlife, and so the care of the soul must be a worldly task. As we have seen, one can only expect the fructification of seeds planted during life. Because Socrates has lived as a philosopher, he has nothing to fear—not just because he can expect the afterlife to be great, but because philosophy is best and has already yielded the best outcome⁷⁵ (63 b-c):

⁷⁴ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 390-391

τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελήλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρί: ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκίσεις, ἐπεὶ περ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὕσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρέπει μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν—καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος—καὶ χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ, διὸ δὴ ἔγωγε καὶ πάλαι μηκύνω τὸν μῦθον.

⁷⁵ Dorter 1982 1-10, Aesop's fables are referred to both as *mythos* (61b) and *logoi* (60d).

Socrates: But as it is, you may rest assured that I expect to go to good men, though I should not care to assert this positively; but I would assert as positively as anything about such matters that I am going to gods who are good masters. And therefore, so far as that is concerned, I not only do not grieve, but I have great hopes that there is something in store for the dead, and, as has been said of old, something better for the good than for the wicked.⁷⁶

In the afterlife myth, Socrates makes it clear that to be confident in the face of death one must have lived a philosophical life. This is clear at the beginning, as well as the end of the dialogue, when Socrates asserts his belief that he is going to a place with better men (63c, 107c). Philosophers are intimately interested in death, and the separation of the body and soul. The body of the philosopher is a constant distraction (66 b-c), and real philosophers practice dying (67e).

How then does one practice dying? Certainly, it is a mental pursuit, which requires granting the mind a higher status than the body, and recognizing the soul's immortality. But I believe we can also surmise that it requires that we examine our mortality. Given that the body will not last forever, we spend the limited time we have focused on pursuits that will nourish the soul. *Phaedo* offers several suggestions and all require the courage to pursue self-examination when others may think it preferable to pursue pleasure. One needs to be courageous to study philosophy because, as the myth of the afterlife demonstrates, we cannot be certain of much. Unlike the myths of Aesop, which offer insight into human characteristics

⁷⁶ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 218-221.

νῦν δὲ εὖ ἴστε ὅτι παρ' ἄνδρας τε ἐλπίζω ἀφίξεσθαι ἀγαθούς—καὶ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν πάνυ δισχυρισαίμην—ὅτι μέντοι παρὰ θεοὺς δεσπότας πάνυ ἀγαθούς ἤξειν, εὖ ἴστε ὅτι εἴπερ τι ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων δισχυρισαίμην ἂν καὶ τοῦτο. ὥστε διὰ ταῦτα οὐχ ὁμοίως ἀγανακτῶ, ἀλλ' εὐελπίς εἰμι εἶναι τι τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι καί, ὥσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται, πολὺ ἄμεινον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς.

and idiosyncrasies, or Homer and the Greek myths, which might offer a certain amount of security in terms of acting piously and ensuring one's immortality through heroic endeavours (like Agamemnon or Odysseus), philosophy makes no such grand promises.

The river system in Tartarus in the bowels of the earth manifests several beliefs about our human lives. Firstly, one dies as one has lived, so if one lives as a tyrant, one will die like a tyrant. Even if reincarnation is an actuality for Plato (which I agree with Dorter is required from the dialogue), one will still suffer the consequences of one's actions within one's lifetime. Just so, if one is not reborn, one has wasted one's life pursuing bodily inclinations or more importantly an illusion, only to find that pain was never far off. However, the philosopher is not weighed down by pleasure and pain, because she knows that these are not real things, but merely part of the much greater project of self-knowledge. When one passes into the afterlife, she realizes that she has lived her human life in the hollows of the earth, and that her vision was obscured by physical persuasions and distractions (109c-e):

Socrates: Now we do not perceive that we live in the hollows, but think we live on the upper surface of the earth, just as if someone who lives in the depth of the ocean should think he lived on the surface of the sea, and, seeing the sun and the stars through the water, should think the sea was the sky, and should, by reason of sluggishness or feebleness, never have reached the surface of the sea, and should never have seen, by raising or lifting his head out of the sea into the upper world, and should never have heard from anyone who has seen, how much purer and fairer it is than the world he lived in. Now I believe this is just the case with us; for we dwell in the hollow of the earth and think we dwell on the upper surface; and the air we call the heaven, and think that it is the heaven in which the stars move. But the face is the same, that by reason of feebleness and sluggishness, we are unable to attain the upper surface of the air; for if anyone should come to the top of the air or should get wings and fly up, he could lift his head above it and see, as the fishes lift their heads out of the water and see the things in our world, so he would see things in that upper world; and, if his nature were strong enough to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the real heaven and the real light and the real earth.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo.*

Moreover, we are offered a double meaning for Socrates' death. Socrates is without fear, but also without certainty. He has lived in what he believes is the best way, governed by the needs of the soul, and so he can die without fear or regret. The implication is that one is required to live philosophically, and that this virtue is rewarded twice: in the human world, and again in the afterlife, if there is one. Likewise, those who do not live well, and live ruled by illusion can expect a corresponding death, tedium or misery. The actions and acquired virtues of in a human life are directly related to the afterlife, and dictate not only in what geographical river in the earth's center the soul will reside, but because the soul is immortal, therefore also the life into which it will be reborn (107d-e):⁷⁸

Socrates: But now, since it appears to be immortal there would be no other refuge for it from evil and no safety except by becoming as good and wise as possible. You see the soul approaches Hades with nothing but its upbringing and nurture, which are indeed said to bring the most benefit or harm to the one who has died at the very beginning of his journey

Phaedrus Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 374-377

ἡμᾶς οὖν οἰκοῦντας ἐν τοῖς κοίλοις αὐτῆς λεληθέναι καὶ οἶεσθαι ἄνω ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οἰκεῖν, ὡσπερ ἂν εἴ τις ἐν μέσῳ τῶ πυθμένι τοῦ πελάγους οἰκῶν οἴοιτό τε ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάττης οἰκεῖν καὶ διὰ τοῦ ὕδατος ὀρῶν τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἄστρα τὴν θάλατταν ἠγοῖτο οὐρανὸν εἶναι, διὰ δέβραδυτῆτά τε καὶ ἀσθένειαν μηδεπώποτε ἐπὶ τὰ ἄκρα τῆς θαλάττης ἀφιγμένος μηδὲ ἐωρακῶς εἶη, ἐκδὺς καὶ ἀνακύψας ἐκ τῆς θαλάττης εἰς τὸν ἐνθάδε τόπον, ὅσῳ καθαρώτερος καὶ καλλίων τυγχάνει ὢν τοῦ παρὰ σφίσι, μηδὲ ἄλλου ἀκηκῶς εἶη τοῦ ἐωρακῶτος. ταῦτόν δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμᾶς πεπονθέναι: οἰκοῦντας γὰρ ἔν τινι κοίλῳ τῆς γῆς οἶεσθαι ἐπάνω αὐτῆς οἰκεῖν, καὶ τὸν ἀέρα οὐρανὸν καλεῖν, ὡς διὰ τούτου οὐρανοῦ ὄντος τὰ ἄστρα χωροῦντα: τὸ δὲ εἶναι ταῦτόν, ὑπ' ἀσθενείας καὶ βραδυτῆτος οὐχ οἴους τε εἶναι ἡμᾶς διεξελεῖν ἐπ' ἔσχατον τὸν ἀέρα: ἐπεὶ, εἴ τις αὐτοῦ ἐπ' ἄκρα ἔλθοι ἢ πτηνὸς γενόμενος ἀνάπτοιτο, κατιδεῖν ἂν ἀνακύψαντα, ὡσπερ ἐνθάδε οἱ ἐκ τῆς θαλάττης ἰχθύες ἀνακύπτοντες ὀρῶσι τὰ ἐνθάδε, οὕτως ἂν τινα καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖ κατιδεῖν, καὶ εἰ ἡ φύσις ἰκανὴ εἶη ἀνασχέσθαι θεωροῦσα, γινῶναι ἂν ὅτι ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθῶς οὐρανὸς καὶ τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς καὶ ἡ ὡς ἀληθῶς γῆ.

⁷⁸ Dorter 1982, 168, Dorter further asserts that this is demonstrated by the daimon that one is guided by in the afterlife.

there. The story goes like this: When each individual has died, the spirit of each one that he was allotted when he was alive undertakes to lead him to some spot where those who are gathered together are compelled to submit themselves to judgment and then make their way to Hades with that guide with whom it has been ordained that those from this world are to go to the next.⁷⁹

Because the soul takes its education to the next life, if philosophy is ignored, then the soul takes the mediocre qualities it has cultivated and ends up in an analogous location and state in the afterlife (107c). One must have lived a good life in order to enjoy a good death. Thus, philosophy and care of the soul become even more important during human life, because of the potential consequences of dying with an uncultivated soul. *Phaedo's* myth of the afterlife further champions the maxim that the unexamined life is not worth living (*Apology* 38a). The outcome of the soul in the afterlife underscores Socrates' assertion that the disreputable are not rewarded by death. It also supports the ideal that philosophers are certainly better off both in this life and in the next, because living a good philosophical life matters most of all. The ideal philosopher is not possible however without correct education in this world, the soul will languish in a forgotten river, until it is able to overcome its self-destructive predilections (114c).

⁷⁹ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 370-371

νῦν δ' ἐπειδὴ ἀθάνατος φαίνεται οὔσα, δούδεμῖα ἂν εἴη αὐτῇ ἄλλη ἀποφυγὴ κακῶν οὐδὲ σωτηρία πλὴν τοῦ ὡς βελτίστην τε καὶ φρονιμωτάτην γενέσθαι. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἔχουσα εἰς Ἄιδου ἢ ψυχὴ ἔρχεται πλὴν τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφῆς, ἃ δὴ καὶ μέγιστα λέγεται ὠφελεῖν ἢ βλάπτειν τὸν τελευτήσαντα εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἐκεῖσε πορείας. λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἄρα τελευτήσαντα ἕκαστον ὁ ἐκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήχει, οὗτος ἄγειν ἐπιχειρεῖ εἰς δὴ τινα τόπον, οἷ δεῖ τοὺς συλλεγέντας διαδικασαμένους εἰς Ἄιδου πορεύεσθαι μετὰ ἡγεμόνος ἐκείνου ᾧ δὴ προστέτακται τοὺς ἐνθὲνδε ἐκεῖσε πορεύσαι.

Gotshalk asserts that another aspect of the afterlife metaphor is taking the philosopher's desire for death as metaphorical (64 a-b). This metaphorical death is one in which the philosopher leaves behind her former life, which was driven by her desire for pleasure, and is reborn in the best way as a philosopher (114c).

Philosophy is liberating both for the living and dying and one cannot expect to experience the rewards of the afterlife exactly as they are described by the living.⁸⁰ But the pursuit is worthwhile, because dying well means that one has lived well. And for Plato that requires the study of philosophy. Accordingly, we are instructed about how Plato wants us to use and understand myth. The myth is not exactly like Aesop's, though Aesop's moral lessons have value, nor are we meant to rely on Homer's ideas of the gods. Myth can be misleading, as words often are—especially if we are not careful to consider and analyze it as part of a larger project. But it is also reasonable to use one's imagination if it is for instructive, rather than purely rhetorical or emotional, motives. And it is reasonable to imagine intelligently about what we do not know about death and the afterlife.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Gotshalk, 2001, focuses on the metaphoric death and the philosophy of the drama and tragedy of *Phaedo*. missing page number! Zafiroopoulos, 2015, uses the figure of Aesop and the nautical theme to argue that death in part emphasizes a theme of liberation, since Aesop was a slave, Socrates was liberated through death, and the historical Phaedo also left his former life for philosophy.

Mcpherran, Mark L. "Socrates and Aesop in Plato's *Phaedo*." *Apeiron* 45.1 (2012) develops a thesis that focuses on a comparative analysis of Aesop's and Socrates' characters.

⁸¹ Dorter, 1982, One's life and vocation are consequently consistent with the description of the rivers in which souls wait, just as the animals whose souls are reincarnated reflect their character and deeds. In the case of the rivers, most souls or people are, to Plato, mediocre (113 d-e). Therefore, most souls will end up in Acheron, which is desolate and empty. Again, there is not enough consistency in the depiction of the souls and their rivers to support the claim that Plato is trying to

Finally, even if the afterlife does not await Socrates, he has lived well and this is the most important function of the myth of the afterlife: unless one cultivates the soul with the study of philosophy, and is able to rise above the mediocrity of the physical world, one can only expect a life of mediocrity. But if one lives as Socrates devises, then inquiry is only the beginning of the rewards one can expect.

Dorter asserts that myth is primarily symbolic and pleases our pre-rational thought. As a result, the myth of the afterlife and immortality is harmonious in the context of the timelessness typically perceived in a self-centered experience of events. Therefore, myth allows our vague, embodied sense of timelessness to become more explicit during our mortal, temporal existence. Dorter even goes so far as to assert that Plato has no doctrine of the afterlife, but rather is primarily concerned with an agent's choice and actions during her human lifetime—factors that generate actual outcomes.⁸²

V. Conclusion

It is unlikely that Socrates has described this afterlife to while away time. His remaining time is short, and he is going to do what he deems most valuable. Why

expound scientific truths or to describe a literal geography that the soul traverses. This depiction is further elaborated through Plato's depiction of repenting souls. In this case, only the victims of the crimes can forgive the wrong action (113a-b). What seems most likely then is that Plato believes that mercy is bestowed only by the injured party, releasing the agent from suffering through forgiveness. Finally, the myth also ranks philosophers above those who are habitually moral, or those who are not virtuous because their actions are grounded strictly in reason—a priority that asserts the importance of the agent's choice (114c2-4).

⁸² Dorter. 1982, 170-175. Gotshalk, 2001, and Rowe 2007 emphasize Socrates' ascetic ideals of the philosopher.

does Socrates choose to tell a myth in his last chance to discuss philosophy? The answer, I think, is that myth is the most efficacious way for Socrates to express his uncertainty about the afterlife, while simultaneously asserting that the human life is best spent pursuing philosophy. Cultivation of the soul requires habituation during our human existence. Plato offers no moment of salvation before death, or epiphanic, Zen-like experience. The soul is cultivated in the human form, with correct habituations that rely upon similarly correct methods of examination. If we are confused about what is valuable and make little effort to comprehend the distinctions between illusion and truth, then we will cultivate a life that reflects these incorrect values. For Socrates, this is a problem. Regardless of the uncertain nature (or existence) of the afterlife, we should cultivate a philosophical life as Socrates did. This lofty, idealistic process requires the courage to question authority and to accept the risk of meeting with derision.

Phaedo engages readers in the examination of what is valuable. We must ponder what breaks the bonds of illusion, so that we may live according to worthwhile values. The dialogue maintains that to recognize what is valuable, we must scrutinize things deemed beneficial, such as pain avoidance and pleasure. However, to achieve correct understanding and virtue by consequence, we must question what is our relationship to the divine, and subsequently determine what offerings we should make. Therefore, Socrates explores whether or not philosophy is divinely inspired music. These ideas are worth considering mostly because we are asked to engage with what we believe to be true, and to become aware of the limitations or failings of our beliefs. The senses and the body are not the primary

means by which we should pursue inquiry (81c); they are burdened by illusion and appearances. To do philosophy, we must rely on our minds, but even the mind has limits. So, we are left with *intelligent imagination*.

By using *intelligent imagination* as a means of inquiry, Socrates guards against overconfidence and dogmatism; there is a good deal of uncertainty in this project, but it still must be navigated intelligently. Therefore, it is not necessarily problematic to end in *aporia*; it may even be the best place for the philosopher to land: continuing to question the method and the outcome even after it has received penetrating examination. Ultimately, examining what we know leads us to acknowledge our ignorance. In this way, we are left in a state of not-knowing and may explore these limitations by imagining intelligently, as in the case of *Phaedo* and death, by way of myth. So, we return to where we began, with *Phaedo's* perplexity about his reaction to Socrates's death and his puzzling feelings of pleasure and pain.

Phaedo's myths argue that without being sure of the outcome of the afterlife, we can be sure that worldly cultivation of the soul and of a reflective and self-reflexive philosophical life in the human world has great value. The potential rewards of the afterlife only amplify the importance of living well. Living well is necessary for dying well (114c):

Socrates: But for all of these things which we have recounted, Simmias, we ought to do our best to acquire virtue and wisdom in life. For the prize is fair and the hope great.⁸³

⁸³ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 390-391

ὦ Σιμμία, πᾶν ποιεῖν ὥστε ἀρετῆς καὶ φρονήσεως ἐν τῷ βίῳ μετασχεῖν· καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἄθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη.

The use of contrasting reflective approaches, such as myth and argument, inspires the reader to remain critical of the method of examination, and to pursue intelligent inquiry in both this life and the next. As Socrates's afterlife illustrates, death is not an escape for those who live indulgently or tyrannically. We die as we live, and our actions correlate directly with our outcomes. The journey through the underworld's river system is circuitous; to arrive at the correct confluence of rivers, we must each appeal to others of a superior nature for guidance, and possibly for forgiveness (113d-e). Mired in our own misguided ways, we would not be able to change course. Therefore, the philosophical life requires reflective surfaces like myth and analysis, and guidance by the wise through dialogue (108a). Those who are successful chart a course governed by trust in the wisdom of others, while being brave enough to form new conclusions.

The *Phaedo* begins by asking us to consider the import of Aesop's method of myth-making. Using this method, we consider the nature of opposites and how things like pleasure and pain are muddled, as it is difficult to distinguish what Plato conceives is real from what is merely the misapprehension of perception. In scrutinizing our method of examination, we proceed by investigating what kind of language facilitates cultivating a mind capable of intelligent analysis and imagination. Socrates has lived inquisitively, and therefore truthfully, and so has nothing to regret or mourn at the time of his passing. And he will die as he lived, advocating a life of self-examination and scrutinizing assumptions, such as the gravitation to pleasure, and circumvention of pain. Thus, by reading myths, we examine literature, language and their creation; our relationship to the divine; and

the question of what being mortal entails. Ultimately, merely wishing for an instant of grace at death is the most foolish gamble to take with the soul and life. Philosophy is not a spectator's sport; it requires sustained training and cultivation, where the real value lies in the process of study, not the rewards that may be waiting.

While Plato's pursuits of the soul can seem so otherworldly that their relevance can be elusive, I believe that by using myth, Plato brings his concerns back down to earth. Reading his myths intelligently, we can follow his process of intelligent imagination, which emphasizes an autonomous authority based on examining what is known and acknowledging what is uncertain. In doing so, we can postulate the things that we cannot know with certainty: for example, how to realize a life that is valuable. We can then grasp that to accept authoritative information without rigorous examination will always be problematic. Myth reminds the philosopher that wisdom and knowledge are not a mere collection of facts and historical events, but rather the process of shedding light on customs and assumed authorities, so that knowledge is never limited, and instead becomes a living being continuously cultivated.

Chapter 3: Phaedrus and the Art of Loving

In this chapter, I propose two primary ways that myth operates in *Phaedrus*: through *intelligent imagination* and through the pursuit of self-knowledge.

According to the first thesis, *intelligent imagination*, myth is the fruit of thoughtful

philosophical speculation on elusive subjects. This framework is therefore used to explore such topics as the nature of the soul and the Forms and the philosopher's relationship to the intelligible world, which acknowledges intellectual limitations. As in the previous chapter, I endorse a non-literal reading of myths in *Phaedrus*. Throughout the dialogue, myths are tools that express Platonic concerns about the development of philosophy; the means of achieving correct insight into the nature of the soul; reality; and consequently, the best sort of life: one focused on the process of self-knowledge.

I will further argue that myth's secondary function in *Phaedrus* establishes the distinctiveness of the philosopher's mind, his eminently perspicacious nature, and his ability to cope with linguistic and human deficiencies. The *palinode* myth, and the structural use of myth, demonstrate that the philosopher experiences madness, memory, and the physical world very differently from those who are not philosophical.

My analysis will begin with a brief examination of the Boreas Myth, in which Oreithyia is said to be carried off by the winds of Boreas, to establish Socrates' standard of myth-making in the *Phaedrus*. But the body of this chapter will examine the *palinode*, and will emphasize the uniqueness of the philosopher's experience. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the Myth of Theuth, which like the *palinode* contributes to the self-reflexive design of a philosophical myth. In *Phaedrus*, as in *Phaedo*, myth frames the dialogue, beginning with the Boreas Myth (229b), proceeding to the bulk of the philosophical discussion in the Myth of the Charioteer (or, as it is more commonly known, the *palinode*) (259b), and finally concluding with

the Myth of Theuth (274c). *Phaedrus* begins with an unphilosophical myth, progresses to the *palinode* to define philosophical *eros* and madness, then finishes with Socrates' self-criticism, by reappraising writing and speech-making with the Myth of Theuth and the arts of rhetoric and writing (275a).⁸⁴

I. *Phaedrus* Source Research

My primary resource in this chapter is Charles Griswold's, *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (1986), the book in which he develops his *self-knowledge* thesis. His reading of the dialogue maintains that the form and organization of the dialogue is as intrinsic to its meaning as is the content, and that the structure relies on the multiple myths. Because of the dialogue's organization, a natural narrative and logical structure is clearly developed. Each myth is positioned to draw out important distinctions in the other so that we might ascertain what kinds of speeches incite self-examination: from the myth of Boreas (229b) to the speech against lovers of Lysias (230e), to Socrates' first speech (237a), to the *palinode*, to the cicadas (258d), and to the Myth of Theuth (279c).⁸⁵

Griswold rejects the suggestion that *Phaedrus* is a disjointed dialogue, or that certain sections of the text are more important or offer greater philosophical insight than others. Griswold's view aligns with Dorter's non-literal reading of *Phaedrus* (1982), Morgan's myth thesis (2000), and Rowe's views from (2007), which all

⁸⁴ I will not consider the myth of the cicadas (locusts) (258e) in much detail in this chapter, although it too contributes to the model of myth used in *Phaedrus*, which contributes to self-knowledge.

⁸⁵ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. 2

agree on dialogical unity as an overarching Platonic principle. Socrates' shift in topics and evaluation of rhetorical kinds is intentional and illuminates the limitations inherent in each speech. The Boras has limitations because it is not a topic that will bring about self-examination. The *palinode* project is concerned with self-knowledge, however as Theuth warns us, it is also limited by both the method of transmission the intellectual capacity of the one who receives it. Therefore, it is helpful to consider literary dimensions—such as myth, images, and irony—to understand Plato's dialogues. Griswold also dismisses any concern about *aporia*, asserting that uncertainty and perplexity are part of the overall design. The dialogue is not required to offer a positive solution to be considered successful. And finally, Griswold rejects the notion that Plato's dialogues are somehow interdependent, and require cross-reading. Instead, we can read *Phaedrus* on its own terms without thinking of it as a part of an "organic unity" of Platonic dialogues.⁸⁶

Like Morgan, Griswold describes two primary stages of philosophical recollection (*anamnesis*): the first is the erotic and physical thrall of the beloved, and the second a more refined love in which recollection is associated with the soul and ends in philosophy and self-reflection. These stages parallel the dialogue, beginning with myth and progressing to dialectic. The images in the myths function as aspects of a *psychagogic* process for philosophy, leading the soul to self-discovery through

⁸⁶ Griswold 1986, 138-140. As I noted in my first chapter on myth, there is no clear distinction between the speeches Plato will refer to as *myth* and those he will term *logos*. For example, Socrates' first speech is called both *myth* (237a9, 241e8, 243a4), and *logos* (241d, 242e3, 243c3). Likewise, the palinode is called *myth* at (253c7, 265c1), and then *logos* at (252b2, 265b8). Again, these are only a selection of references. Plato refers to the Myth of Theuth only as *logos*, and to the story of the cicadas as neither. These are just a few examples that Griswold has elucidated.

the image of the horses and charioteer, and ending with rational reflection on the dialectic.

Similarly, Daniel Werner believes that *Phaedrus* has a mythical structure patterned in such a way that major divisions and transitions are articulated by the ordering of myth. Myth is unifying because it allows Plato to explore issues of language, epistemology, knowledge, and philosophy. By repeatedly using similar imagery and language, Plato weaves important themes and topics are woven throughout the dialogue. This is executed by using a myth-theme throughout the dialogue. Werner describes his approach to *Phaedrus* as “holistic,” because it is concerned with the entire dialogue, and not just with the arguments and their conclusions. Therefore, his inquiry aims to consider the manifold aspects of the textual composition. These include myth, rhetoric, characters, the dialogical form, and how these tools interact to develop deep and interesting philosophical ideas.⁸⁷

According to Grisworld, the *palinode* myth is an expression of madness—one that prompts readers to reflect on the strangeness and limitations of madness. Myth/dialectic, and the lover/non-lover, have a relationship analogous to the connection between madness and wisdom. That is: all of these dyadic oppositions function in a similar way, drawing out a nuanced discussion of what unites and

⁸⁷ Werner, Daniel S. *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 23. Ultimately, Werner argues that mythology is subordinate to philosophy and truth. However, mythic form and Plato's cultural context contribute to maintaining a dynamic use of the text.

divides concepts and phenomena. It is the contrast and tension with a subject matter that initiates its analysis.⁸⁸

Moreover, Griswold argues that one of Plato's central reasons for using myth is that unlike typical syllogism, myth works more effectively as a complex mirror, capable of deepening self-understanding by leveraging personal experience and reflection. The language of myth appeals to the ordinary senses and to human experience. As a result, it creates idealized images that assist and inspire us to aim for truth and self-knowledge.⁸⁹ For example, the *palinode* is about the soul, and investigates the experiences of the embodied soul by describing it as tripartite, composed of a charioteer and two horses. The three are drawn to virtue or vice through the experience of love and madness. Love (*eros*), then, is a valuable personal experience that, according to Socrates, results in recollection of the Forms. Self-knowledge is therefore only attained by correctly understanding our humanness, which includes our emotions, as well as reasoned thought.⁹⁰

Werner asserts that myth and philosophy should together be taken as a mode of "intertextuality," in which two different discourses work in relation to each other. Werner wants to consider where Plato blurs the distinction between the forms of discourse in order to grasp a deeper meaning.⁹¹ By using myth throughout

⁸⁸ Griswold 1986, 150-160.

⁸⁹ Dorter 1982, offers a similar thesis which I have applied to *Chapter Two, On Phaedo*.

⁹⁰ Griswold 1986, 1-9.

⁹¹ Werner, 2012, 50-57. Werner rejects a purely *allegorical interpretation* of Socrates' use of myth in the dialogues. This is because allegorical interpretations posit a "rationalization" of these myths that essentially equates Plato's myth with mere metaphor. Traditional Greek myths are by their nature unverifiable and

the dialogue, Plato enables the reader to explore the limitations of language. There is a constant process of contrasting myth with argument, so that reflection upon their opposing qualities and truth-value is bound to occur. The whole text is self-critical because it juxtaposes myth and argument. Contrasting the two methods naturally turns the reader's mind to the process of analysis and self-criticism.⁹²

Frabotoni asserts that Plato uses myth to acknowledge that truth can be found in many places. It is not ancient or rhetorical authorities who establish truth; rather, reason is responsible for truth. Therefore certain kinds of myth (or poetry) possess inherent philosophical merit. In *Phaedrus*, Plato devises a brand of poetry and myth that offers courageous ideas that lead to truth. So, because the Boreas myth does not comment on important truth or self-knowledge and instead devolves into an allegorical analysis, it is, according to Socrates, a waste of time.⁹³

subject to flux, because of both repeated retelling and oral transmission. Allegorical interpretations place too much emphasis on the truth-value of the myth, therefore he asserts that they are too unstable. One becomes too concerned with the reliability and truth of the myth itself, rather than with its details and with when and how it is being used. The myth's truth-value is not what is critical to understanding Socrates' myths, but rather what matters is how it is being used in the dialogue.

⁹² Werner, Daniel S. *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 238-244

⁹³ Collobert, Catherine, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez. *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*. Leiden: Brill, 2012, 307-301. In this collection of essays, Frabotoni emphasizes the metaphysical importance of the *palinode*. The myth of the charioteer is useful for self-examination because it describes human nature (and the soul) as a combination of opposing forces. Moreover, the language of myth is useful to describe the world above, of the purely intelligible reality of the Forms. Myth, according to Frabotoni, aims to represent the true nature of reality. By way of the chariot, the soul's metaphysical existence is positively established and the whole truth is possible when myth and dialectic are combined. Griswold, Morgan and Rowe would disagree that the *whole truth is possible*. I, too, endorse the view that myth does not offer a complete understanding or grasp of reality. Instead, myth emphasizes a process of becoming aware of the

Phaedo qualifies the use of poetic language, passion and *eros*. Nussbaum argues that the good life and human goodness (*eudaimonia*) are affected by emotion. She even asserts that in *Phaedrus*, Plato is being self-critical of his dismissal of the subject of *eros* in earlier dialogues. Nussbaum focuses on the contrariness of the two main speeches about *eros*. First, Lysias defends passionless love, and subsequently Socrates' second speech defends passion and madness in *eros*. Lysias' speech defends ideas of *eros* that Plato describes in *Republic*: love governed by *logistikon* and not subject to involuntary actions. Conversely, mad, passionate love is subject to "causal forces," and is therefore less predictable and controllable.

While Plato shifts between criticizing and commanding madness, Socrates' second speech makes it clear that madness is necessary for deep philosophical insight. As such, *Phaedrus* appears, then, to counter Plato's earlier assertions, which promote insight through *logistikon*. Nussbaum believes that these unpredictable forces of madness and passionate *eros*—which lead one to new and advantageous philosophical insights—are promoted in *Phaedrus*. This speech about *eros* is therefore an example of fusing life and personal experience with logic, and it encourages the reader to engage personally with the all of the speeches in *Phaedrus* concerning *eros*. Ultimately, *Phaedrus* expresses a more emotionally mature author who uses the young *Phaedrus* and his mentor, Socrates, to represent Plato's own

limitations of knowledge about the sensible world, and an acknowledgment that full knowledge is absent.

philosophical development and process.⁹⁴ I find Nussbaum's revisionary approach an unlikely solution to the variation in dialogues, because it goes against Rowe's project, which acknowledges the variation. However, I do accept the premise that effectively consulting emotions is essential to understanding philosophical love and madness in *Phaedrus*. Rowe would likely agree that emotions are more correctly an aspect of Plato's artistic style, used to communicate complex ideas to his audience.⁹⁵

II. The Myth of the Boreas and the Charioteer

The kind of myth Socrates wants to spend time considering is established from the start with the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia (229c-230a):

Socrates: If I disbelieved, as the wise men do, I should not be extraordinary; then I might give a rational explanation, that a blast of Boreas, the north wind, pushed her off the neighbouring rocks as she was playing with Pharmaceia, and that when she had died in this manner she was said to have been carried off by Boreas. But I, Phaedrus, think such explanations are very pretty in general, but are the inventions of a very clever and laborious and not altogether enviable man, for no other reason than because after this he must explain the forms of the Centaurs, and then that of the Chimaera, and there presses in upon him a whole crowd of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegasus, and multitudes of strange, inconceivable, portentous natures. If anyone disbelieves in these, and with a rustic sort of wisdom, undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability, he will need a great deal of leisure. But I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things. And so I dismiss these matters and accepting the customary belief about them, as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself, to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Nussbaum 1992, 200-232.

⁹⁵ Partenie 2009, 134-147.

⁹⁶ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 420-423

Ἄλλ' εἰ ἀπίστοίην, ὥσπερ οἱ σοφοί, οὐκ ἂν ἄτοπος εἶην· εἶτα σοφιζόμενος φαίην ἂν αὐτήν πνεῦμα Βορέου κατὰ τῶν πλησίον πετρῶν σὺν Φαρμακείᾳ παίζουσιν ὥσαι, καὶ Δοῦτω δὴ τελευτήσασαν λεχθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ Βορέου ἀναρπαστὸν γεγονέναι. ἐγὼ δέ, ὦ Φαῖδρε, ἄλλως μὲν τὰ τοιαῦτα χαρίεντα ἠγοῦμαι, λίαν δὲ δεινοῦ καὶ ἐπιπόνου καὶ οὐ πάνυ εὐτυχοῦς ἀνδρός, κατ' ἄλλο μὲν οὐδέν, ὅτι δ' αὐτῷ ἀνάγκη μετὰ τοῦτο

So, the Boreas is a pretty myth with clever explanations written by clever men, but it does not discuss what is relevant to Socrates, which is self-knowledge. Therefore, to submit the Boreas to examination would take up valuable time, for which Socrates does not have leisure. Thus, the agenda is set for the kind of myths in which Socrates will invest his time: i.e., those that investigate the nature of the self, which is the only relevant topic of discourse.

Phaedrus is overly eager and not critical enough, consequently his character is readily persuaded by attractive things, as evidenced by his concern for and misinformation about Boreas (229b-c), as well as his investment in the sonorous speech from Lysias against the lover (230e). Like the Boreas myth, Lysias' speech is captivating and persuasive, but the discussion only appears worthwhile because the content is wanting. Lysias argues that lovers are untrustworthy because they are mad, and madness is irrational as such, favouring the beloved has negative consequences (230e-234c). Therefore, Socrates must redirect Phaedrus from Boreas, as well as Lysias.

τὸ τῶν Ἱπποκενταύρων εἶδος ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, καὶ αὖθις τὸ τῆς Χιμαίρας, καὶ ἐπιρρεῖ δὲ ὄχλος τοιούτων Γοργόνων καὶ Πηγάσων καὶ ἄλλων Εἰμηχάνων πλήθη τε καὶ ἀτοπία τερατολόγων τινῶν φύσεων· αἷς εἴ τις ἀπιστῶν προσβιβᾶ κατὰ τὸ εἶκος ἕκαστον, ἅτε ἀγροίκῳ τινὶ σοφία χρώμενος, πολλῆς αὐτῷ σχολῆς δεήσει. ἐμοὶ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὰ οὐδαμῶς ἐστι σχολή· τὸ δὲ αἴτιον, ὧ φίλε, τούτου τόδε· οὐ δύναμαί πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γινῶναι ἐμαυτόν· γελοῖον δὴ μοι φαίνεται, τοῦτο ἔτι ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν. ὅθεν δὴ χαίρειν ἐάσας ταῦτα, πειθόμενος δὲ τῷ νομιζομένῳ περὶ αὐτῶν, ὃ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, σκοπῶ οὐ ταῦτα ἀλλὰ ἐμαυτόν, εἴτε τι θηρίον τυγχάνω Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον, εἴτε ἡμερώτερόν τε καὶ ἀπλούστερον ζῶον, θείας τινὸς καὶ ἀτύφου μοίρας φύσει μετέχον. ἀτάρ, ὧ ἐταῖρε, μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων, ἅρ' οὐ τόδε ἦν τὸ δένδρον, ἐφ' ὅπερ ἦγες ἡμᾶς;

Socrates' recantation, the Myth of the Charioteer, or the *palinode* (243d-257b), begins with him acknowledging his shame at the speech he formerly gave against love (237a). Phaedrus compelled him to make it, in order to rival Lysias' speech against favouring the lover (230e). To make this speech, Socrates covered his head because he was so embarrassed. Contrariwise, when Socrates begins his *palinode*, he will honour Eros, god of love (243d):

Socrates: I therefore, because I am ashamed at the thought of this man and am afraid of Love himself, wish to wash out the brine from my ears with the water of a sweet discourse. And I advise Lysias also to write as soon as he can, that other things being equal, the lover should be favoured rather than the non-lover.⁹⁷

So, Socrates begins to make his sweet discourse to honour Eros. The *palinode* argues against the earlier speeches. The first two speeches argued that favouring the lover leads to discord because they do not act rationally (231 e-d), or that the lover will be ruled by desire (238e) and therefore this favour is harmful (240d-240c). Instead, the *palinode* will explain that love and madness (the fourth kind) can be a blessing from the gods. Socrates will explain that madness is the greatest gift from the gods, because it has the potential to lead to the greatest happiness (244a-b).⁹⁸

To vindicate the madness he endorses for philosophers, Socrates examines several forms of madness. And much like the myths of the dialogue, we must consider how these evoke self-knowledge, critical analysis, and imaginative

⁹⁷ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 462-465

Τοῦτόν γε τοίνυν ἔγωγε αἰσχυνόμενος, καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἔρωτα δεδιώς, ἐπιθυμῶ ποτίμῳ λόγῳ οἷον ἀλμυρὰν ἀκοὴν ἀποκλύσασθαι· συμβουλεύω δὲ καὶ Λυσίᾳ ὃ τι τάχιστα γράψαι, ὡς χρὴ ἐραστῇ μᾶλλον ἢ μὴ ἐρῶντι ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων χαρίζεσθαι.

⁹⁸ Socrates then establishes the immortality of the soul (245c-2456a). I am not going to take on the specifics of the metaphysics of the soul in this project. Ferrari, 1987, and Griswold, 1986, make detailed analyses of the immortality of the soul.

intelligence. Only once we have considered other perspectives of madness can we land on a position.⁹⁹ And we should believe only what the wise tell us, and not just words that are arranged attractively or persuasively (245b-c):

Socrates: We, on our part, must prove that such madness is given by the gods for our greatest happiness; and our proof will not be believed by the merely clever, but will be accepted by the truly wise.¹⁰⁰

Thus, Socrates will grant, as Lysias states, that lovers are mad. However, he will also argue why the kind of madness he speaks about in the *palinode* is from the gods, and is therefore a boon (244a). There are four kinds of beneficial madness, and the fourth kind is the greatest blessing for the philosopher. The first beneficial madness is from the prophetesses at Delphi and priestesses at Dodona, who use their insanity for the benefit of Athens (244a-b). The second kind is a boon from the gods to their supplicants (244e). The third madness makes great poetry, as it comes from the Muses, for madness is necessary to be a great poet—a fact of which most are not aware (244d-245a).

In contrast to Lysias or Phaedrus, Socrates admits that he is not the inventor of the ideas he will discuss (247c), nor is he the absolute authority of any knowledge. This confirms that he is not going to readily agree with popular ideas from popular men, and will reinterpret the divine, madness, and *eros*. Philosophers

⁹⁹ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr., 1986. 75-77

¹⁰⁰ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 468-496

ἡμῖν δὲ ἀποδεικτέον αὖ τούναντίον, ὡς ἐπ' εὐτυχία τῇ μεγίστη παρὰ θεῶν ἢ τοιαύτη μανία δίδοται· ἢ δὲ δὴ ἀπόδειξις ἔσται δεινοῖς μὲν ἄπιστος, σοφοῖς δὲ πιστή.

are not content to accept the ideas of others without scrutiny. As Socrates continues, he acknowledges that his knowledge of the soul is incomplete (246a).

Socrates is, according to Rowe, a *self-professed know-nothing*.¹⁰¹ Unlike Lysias and other orators and rhetoricians that he criticizes, he does not claim to have certain or objective knowledge of the soul or of the Forms. And he sets himself apart from the *hoi polloi*, and references the wise men of the past (235c-d):

Socrates: I cannot say, just at this moment; but I certainly must have heard something, either from the lovely Sappho or the wise Anacreon, or perhaps from some prose writers. What ground have I for saying so? Why, my dear friend, I feel that my own bosom is full, and that I could make another speech, different from this and quite as good. Now I am conscious of my own ignorance, and I know very well that I have never invented these things myself, so the only alternative is that I have been filled through the ears, like a pitcher, from the well springs of another; but, again because of my stupidity, I have forgotten how and from whom I heard it.¹⁰²

Accordingly, due to Socrates' limited ability to describe the soul (or any human for that matter) he will use an image of a chariot and horses (246a-b):

Socrates: To tell what it really is would be a matter for utterly superhuman and long discourse, but it is within human power to describe it briefly in a figure; let us therefore speak in that way. We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Rowe, C. J. *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 5-9

¹⁰² Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 436-439

Νῦν μὲν οὕτως οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν· δῆλον δὲ ὅτι τινῶν ἀκήκοα, ἢ που Σαπφοῦς τῆς καλῆς ἢ Ἀνακρέοντος τοῦ σοφοῦ ἢ καὶ συγγραφέων τινῶν. πόθεν δὲ τεκμαιρόμενος λέγω; πλήρῃς πως, ὧ δαιμόνιε, τὸ στῆθος ἔχων αἰσθάνομαι παρὰ ταῦτα ἂν ἔχειν εἰπεῖν ἕτερα μὴ χεῖρω. ὅτι μὲν οὖν παρὰ γὰρ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ἐννεόηκα, εὔ οἶδα, συνειδῶς ἐμαυτῶ ἀμαθίαν· λείπεται δὲ, οἶμαι, ἐξ ἀλλοτρίων ποθὲν ναμάτων διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς πεπληρῶσθαί με δίκην ἀγγείου· ὑπὸ δὲ νωθείας αὖ καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐπιέλησμαι, ὅπως τε καὶ ὧν τινῶν ἤκουσα.

¹⁰³ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 470-471

The gods only have horses of good and obedient natures, while humans have souls comprised of one obedient and one wild, untamed horse (246c). The soul is nourished by the sight of the Forms (realities or hyperuranian beings) of Beauty, Wisdom, Goodness, and when reminded of them, is compelled to move upwards and return to the heavens where the Forms exist. Wisdom is, however, visible only to the mind, which is the “pilot of the soul” (247c-d). Therefore, when the charioteer is able to guide the horses to the feast of the Forms, they remain there feeding upon their images like horses at a manger (247e).

The philosopher is possessed of a soul that has, in a past life, gazed upon the Forms for a long while. When these souls return to a corporeal body they are born as philosophers. It is for this reason that the philosopher has a relationship with reality: through his memory (248c-249c). It is because of the soul’s knowledge of reality that the philosopher is susceptible to the fourth kind of madness. For when the philosopher sees beauty on earth, his soul is warmed by the image and the wings of his soul begin to grow. The fourth kind of madness is therefore philosophical love, which awakens recollection of the Forms embedded in the soul (249c-d).

Beauty is unique because it shines brightest on earth, while sight is the sharpest physical sense. Images of the beautiful are uniquely important because only Beauty is available to be seen in the physical world by sight. We cannot perceive Wisdom with our eyes (250d-251a). The visage of the beloved is so

περὶ δὲ τῆς ἰδέας αὐτῆς ὧδε λεκτέον· οἷον μὲν ἐστὶ, πάντα πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος· ταύτη οὖν λέγωμεν. εἰκέτω δὴ ξυμφύτῳ δυνάμει ὑποπτέρου ζεύγους τε καὶ ἠνιόχου.

important for the philosopher because his image inspires the madness that makes the beloved godlike (253a-b) by awakening the latent memories of the soul's knowledge of real Beauty.

When the wild horse is uncontrolled, he pursues the beloved relentlessly and wants to sate his desire for physical pleasure (253d-254b). However, the charioteer that is a philosopher is reminded of Beauty and, though warmed by the excitement of the beloved, is controlled and does not act on these desires. Instead, he is guided by the better elements of the mind—those that lead to a well-ordered life, concerned with reality (256d):

Socrates: And at last, when they depart from the body, they are not winged, to be sure, but their wings have begun to grow, so that the madness of love brings them no small reward; for it is the law that those who have once begun their upward progress shall never again pass into darkness and the journey under the earth, but shall live a happy life in the light as they journey together, and because of their love shall be alike in their plumage when they receive their wings.¹⁰⁴

In Morgan's view, the *palinode* proposes that recollection occurs in stages. The first stage is intuitive: an unconscious and passive state of recollection initiated by the image of the beloved. The second stage is a conscious stage of gathering information of the Forms through sensible reminders (249c). Thus, the second stage is the philosophical and conscious stage of self-knowledge.¹⁰⁵ The *palinode* describes the process of becoming philosophical by means of the physical body, through the all-

¹⁰⁴ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 502-503

έν δὲ τῇ τελευτῇ ἄπτεροι μὲν, ὠρμηκότες δὲ πτεροῦσθαι ἐκβαίνουσι τοῦ σώματος, ὥστε οὐ μικρὸν ἄθλον τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας φέρονται· εἰς γὰρ σκότον καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ γῆς πορείαν οὐ νόμος ἐστὶν ἔτι ἐλθεῖν τοῖς κατηγομένοις ἤδη τῆς ἐπουρανίου πορείας, ἀλλὰ φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν μετ' ἀλλήλων πορευομένους, καὶ ὀμοπτέρους ἔρωτος χάριν, ὅταν γένωνται, γενέσθαι.

¹⁰⁵ Morgan 2000, 219-221

too-human experience of love (*eros*). The description of the soul's process in the *palinode* aids in understanding from whence the knowledge of Beauty comes, when it is manifest in the world. The lover sees the beloved and is reminded of Beauty. The physical and the irrational aspect of the soul (the Black horse) therefore participates in awakening conscious recollection, because it responds viscerally to an attractive image. In this way, the images of the myth spark latent memories of the Forms, just as the sight of beauty in the world awakens the soul's desire to know real Beauty. So, both the physical image of the beloved and the images of the myth inspire the philosopher's insight and, correctly understood, lead to examination¹⁰⁶ (246a-b):

Socrates: To tell what it really is would be a matter for utterly superhuman and long discourse, but it is within human power to describe it briefly in a figure; let us therefore speak in that way. We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer.¹⁰⁷

Unity and harmony are therefore crucial to guide the horses upwards to the feast of the Forms. All parts rely significantly on the quality of charioteer, charged

¹⁰⁶ Werner, Daniel S. *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2012. 104-107. Werner (2012) argues that Nussbaum and Gotshalk take a "Dogmatic View," in which Plato regards myth as substantially and philosophically true and as a vehicle to express his views. This perspective opposes the "Debunking View" of Griswold and Morgan, which asserts that Plato writes non-literal myths that he knows are not actually true—a view that I generally endorse. Werner endorses a more psychological view that encourages the reader to experience the dialogue and leading the soul (*psychagogia*) along with the interlocutor. For Werner, philosophy is not achieved through myth, but only inspires self-examination.

¹⁰⁷ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus* Plato. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 470-471

περὶ δὲ τῆς ιδέας αὐτῆς ὧδε λεκτέον· οἷον μὲν ἐστὶ, πάντα πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ὧ δὲ ἕοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος· ταύτη οὖν λέγωμεν. εὐοικέτω δὴ ξυμφύτῳ δυνάμει ὑποπτέρου ζεύγους τε καὶ ἠνιόχου.

with guiding the two horses. An unruly horse, uncontrolled, will stamp out any perennial growth that the soul might experience (248e, 249a).¹⁰⁸ The philosopher's memory is unique and, to the non-philosophical, appears to be a kind of madness, much like the philosopher's use of myth. Socrates privileges the philosopher's *mania*, or the fourth kind of madness; it is not destructive, as Lysias would have it, but rather it is a necessary experience to fertilize the latent seeds of the soul's memory.¹⁰⁹ Because the philosopher knows that there are many kinds of madness, he separates himself from the vulgar who rebuke him and has more qualities that are similar to the divine (249c-d):

Socrates: And therefore it is just that the mind of the philosopher only has wings, for he is always, so far as he is able, in communion through memory with those things the communion with which causes God to be divine. Now a man who employs such memories rightly is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect; but since he separates himself from human interests and turns his attention toward the divine, he is rebuked by the vulgar, who consider him mad and do not know that he is inspired.¹¹⁰

As Socrates explains, the fourth kind of madness is most valuable, and is an *unconventional* kind of madness. This madness comes from the recollections of the soul that are inspired through sight. The soul has the memories of its past life, where it once gazed upon the Forms (249c-d). This kind of madness is required to nurture

¹⁰⁸ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr., 1986. 94-98

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 112-13

¹¹⁰ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 480-483

διὸ δὴ δικαίως μόνη πτεροῦται ἢ τοῦ φιλοσόφου διάνοια· πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνοις αἰεὶ ἐστὶν μνήμη κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὦν θεῖός ἐστιν. τοῖς δὲ δὴ τοιούτοις ἀνὴρ ὑπομνήμασιν ὀρθῶς χρώμενος, τελέους αἰεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος, τέλεος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται· ἐξιστάμενος δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων σπουδασμάτων καὶ πρὸς τῷ θεῷ γιγνόμενος νοουθετεῖται μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ὡς παρακινῶν, ἐνθουσιάζων δὲ λέληθε τοὺς πολλούς.

latent memories aroused by *eros*. However, only souls that have, in a past life, looked upon the Forms thoroughly possess the potential to become philosophers in human form (248c-d). And these are the lovers of beauty or music or nature. Other souls that have not seen reality so distinctly will pass into lesser types of humans (such as gymnasts of tyrants) (248d).¹¹¹

The lover, his memory, and the wings of his soul all have to do with this fourth kind of madness. The philosopher however, knows this kind of madness is for his benefit. But, the philosopher is rare, because while all souls have seen the Forms, few can adequately recollect what the soul has seen. These memories arise when the philosopher beholds the beloved (250a).

As the *palinode* elucidates, sight is the sharpest sense. The sight of the beloved warms and moistens the soul, so the germs of the feathers of the wings grow. This knowledge gained by the vision of beauty cannot be unseen or forgotten, and so the lover yearns for his beautiful one (252a). So, when the soul sees the Beautiful in his beloved, he is overwhelmed, and thenceforth follows the beloved in reverence and awe. This madness then inspires the lover to seek improvement through thoughtful reflection.

In the *palinode*, Socrates has created a beautiful image with a myth, which imagines the condition of the soul and responds to wonder at the question of whence the drive for a higher purpose comes. That is, while the eyes may be inspired by the sight of beauty, it is actually the soul's memories that are awakened,

¹¹¹ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr., 1986. 75

having seen real Beauty. However, to be reminded of intelligible reality, the soul's latent memories must first be inspired by the image of Beauty on earth. Thus, Socrates begins with a myth as Socrates did (242c), which in the right soul (the philosopher's, in this case) will inspire self-reflection and lead to self-knowledge. With an image of beauty in sight of the philosopher, the soul grows wings. So, the soul follows the law of destiny, which follows God and obtains truth (248c) as it looks upwards, to see beyond the burdens of humanity.

III. Divine Ideals, and Human Actuality

Another image depicted in the *palinode* is one of divine beings, and the contrast of divine qualities with human ones. Gods, philosophers and other people are all evaluated. The gods do not suffer and toil the way humans do, while most humans are so mired in falsity that they do not experience love or madness in the discriminating way the philosopher does. These contrasts further demonstrate the unique nature and potential of the philosopher. Excellent charioteers, the gods remain in the higher realm, forever feasting on the Forms in perfect harmony.¹¹² Accordingly, they do not experience the same need for self-reflection nor do they need to be yoked by reason as humans do. This is not to say that the gods are purely rational, but rather that they are not human, and so cannot be philosophers, nor do they possess the potential (247b-c):

Socrates: But when they go to a feast and a banquet, they proceed steeply upward to the top of the vault of heaven, where the chariots of the gods, whose well matched horses obey the rein, advance easily, but the others with difficulty; for the horse of evil nature weighs the

¹¹² Werner, 2012, 92

chariot down, making it heavy and pulling toward the earth the charioteer whose horse is not well trained. There the utmost toil and struggle await the soul.¹¹³

Unlike the gods, human souls have a disobedient horse that must be controlled. It is the weight of the Black horse that drags the soul further away from the divine banquet (247b-c). The gods do not need to make decisions for the benefit of the soul, because they do not need to acquire reason. Their godliness is such that they are already interested only in reality and truth; they have no place toward which to ascend.¹¹⁴ The lives of the gods is such that they never descend, but remain at the feast of the eternal Forms (248a).

Socrates then articulates nine vocations, and the god that each character is associated with (252e1-3). Socrates establishes the hierarchies of personalities and characters that affect the potential progress of a soul. Griswold asserts that this suggests that there is much about human nature that cannot be explained historically or socially, but that is largely dependent on unknown categories and events. Accordingly, one's propensity for philosophy very much depends upon having endowments that allow *anamnesis* of the Forms. Certain characters and charioteers will preclude a soul from achieving sufficient potential to move upward. Again, this is a distinctly human problem: the gods are not troubled by an inability

¹¹³ Plato. *Plato Volume I Loeb Classical Library 36 Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus Plato*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Vol. 1. Harvard UP, 1914. Plato. 474-477

ὅταν δὲ δὴ πρὸς δαῖτα καὶ ἐπὶ θοίνην Βίωσιν, ἄκραν ὑπὸ τὴν ὑπουράνιον ἀψίδα πορεύονται² πρὸς ἄναντες· ἢ δὴ τὰ μὲν θεῶν ὀχήματα ἰσορρόπως εὐήνια ὄντα ῥαδίως πορεύεται, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα μόγις· βρίθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάκης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων, ὃ μὴ καλῶς ἢ τεθραμμένος τῶν ἠνιόχων· ἐνθα δὴ πόνος τε καὶ ἀγὼν ἔσχατος ψυχῆ πρόκειται.

¹¹⁴ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr., 1986. 99-100

to perceive truth (247d).¹¹⁵ This makes the philosopher all the more distinct. Humans face many variables that will preclude them from becoming philosophers; they are the exception, not the rule, and quite distinct from the gods.

Man is therefore his own greatest obstacle, and his soul needs to ascend to see reality beyond the corporeal interferences. The Forms do not misrepresent themselves, but their comprehension is distorted by our humanness. The *palinode* thus portrays the human struggle that occurs in the process of self-knowledge because our human existence is the cause of many obstacles for the soul and consequently philosophy. We pursue self-knowledge because it is what we lack, and with self-knowledge our lives become more valuable, or more like those of the gods. But it is because we are not divine that we cannot obtain perfect knowledge or find words to perfectly express reality. Our descriptions will always fall short of the reality (of the Forms), so Socrates relies on myth-making, and acknowledges his limitations, as he did before he began his *palinode*.¹¹⁶

The *palinode's* description of the soul as a charioteer with two horses demonstrates the fundamental differences between gods and humans, ultimately illustrating both the human's inherent limitations, and the philosopher's unique abilities to accrue knowledge in the corporeal world. So, all her actions contribute to the development of a philosophical mind and life. But it is because the philosopher is uniquely gifted and attuned to her soul's memory that she is not hampered by the

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 103-104

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 106

intellectual limitations of the physical world, and is able to overcome them and to apply herself so that she can gaze upon truth.

The soul and mind of the philosopher are revealed to be not only superior, but also distinct from those of others because of her unique comprehension of madness, and her ability to use her senses (particularly vision) correctly. The philosopher can theoretically and imaginatively examine the sensible world, and enjoys a superior grasp of language and its imagistic qualities. Moreover, the talents of the philosopher allow her to develop an appropriate relationship to her corporeal self, which is grounded by knowledge.

III. The Myth of Theuth and Critique of Writing

The *Phaedrus* shifts from the *palinode* to conclude with a critique of the written form in the Myth of Theuth (274e-275). This myth draws attention back to the beginning of the dialogue, which reaffirms that all speeches have limitations and that neither authority nor legitimacy are ensured by the simple fact that a piece of writing exists. We are meant not just to accept Socrates' words and commit the details to memory, but to read, discuss and analyze. As we have learned from the Boreas, Socrates is interested only in knowing himself. Just as we may understand this myth as a hermeneutical task that is intentionally complex and self-reflective, so too may we discern its appropriate philosophical style of rhetoric.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Collobert, Catherine, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez. *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 305-310
Annas, Rowe, 2002, 173-187

In his argument, Christopher Moore stresses the connection between *pharmakon* (medicine) and *grammata* (writing). Phaedrus is knowledgeable about medicine (227a, 268a, 270c) and understands that it works only when applied correctly. Writing used incorrectly is harmful. Writing can promote the appearance of wisdom through the act of memorization and imitation. One could appear to have knowledge or to be wise, without necessarily understanding.

Memorizing is thus not recollecting Beauty; having correct memory must instead follow from understanding. Understanding, however, results when a teacher and interlocutors pose questions that expose errors. Ultimately, understanding emerges within community and is not mere mimicry. Alternatively, conversation accommodates multiple views, rather than keeps our views in isolation. Successful conversation is a continuous project (266b-c, 265d). *Grammata*, by contrast, can cause a dearth of self-knowledge because of another party's failure to carefully consider matters.¹¹⁸ Theuth therefore reminds us to be wary of the provisional nature of language and of those who are concerned not with seeking truth, but merely with persuading others (as in Lysias' speech). In this way, Theuth criticizes a rhetorical method that promotes memorizing for posterity and the desire to appear wise.¹¹⁹

Language and memory, like *pharmacopeia*, are not essentially good; rather, they are good only so far as they are applied for the right reasons. So, medicines are beneficial only when expertly administered, just as speeches are valuable only when

¹¹⁸ Collobert 2012, 291-300

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 279-284. Brisson 1998, is useful on the problem of the persuasive nature of words and myths.

they lead to self-examination, offering information that perforates the blinders installed by illusion. Memory, like myth, is valuable only if it is connected to knowledge. Like the Boreas myth, the wrong myth fails to access truth or self-knowledge, and the wrong images fail to access the memory of the soul. Yet there are images and words that can access the memories of the soul (258d).¹²⁰

Werner maintains that the Myth of Theuth is a reminder that dialectic is epistemically superior to myth. Plato thus criticizes the new technology of writing that reduces the need for a literary community and increases isolated thought. Writing is inferior to discourse because it is not necessarily part of the self-critiquing method of conversation. Moreover, philosophy cannot be reduced to words only; it is a way of being. Writing therefore lacks the features of a “substantive philosophical inquiry.”¹²¹ Any words can be misused and misunderstood. Neither writing nor memory are inherently bad. However, to proceed philosophically, one must engage the right questions and have the correct intentions: one must, for instance, examine both the process of speech-making and the speech-maker. Socrates does not claim to have certainty or doctrinal truths. On the contrary, he alerts us to our confused perceptions of reality, which distort our values and make it is easy to misinterpret madness and love—just as it is easy to misinterpret what is real.¹²² We can surmise, then, that the method of examination

¹²⁰ Collobert 2012. 295. Buxton, R. G. A. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 254

¹²¹ Werner 2012, 181-194, Burger 1980, Nicholson, *Plato's Phaedrus: The Philosophy of Love*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1999.

¹²² Rowe 2007, 272-276

is more important than arrival at clear conclusions. That is, a good method inspires a continuous process of questioning, so to end in uncertainty is not necessarily a problem.

V. Conclusion

The philosophical lover's experience of the beloved is like an experience of the divine and so the beloved becomes godlike to the philosopher. This form of madness inspires the lover in turn to be godlike. The myth develops an image that allows for an individual phenomenology of love and madness, ultimately inspiring introspection through the lens of the myth. The image of the horses and their charioteer inspires examination of both our character and soul. It also conveys a synoptic view of the soul, which through a multitude of hindrances and experiences aims at a coherent unity, in order to achieve harmony of all its parts, lest the Black horse weigh the soul down.

Accordingly, the sequence of myths compels us to critique all speech-making, as is the case with myth-making; not all speech is created equal. Myth insists that

Michellini, Ann N. Brill, 2003. 175-196. Shefer focuses on the "*epopteia*" (the unspeakable or indescribable experience), which she asserts plays an essential role in philosophical achievement. Plato's emphasis on the oral transmission of philosophy, and on the continued use of myth, contributes to the need for "religious experience of the true mysteries." Shefer stresses the relationship with philosophy, the soul and what is unspeakable or religious experience. The "unspeakable experience" is developed by way of the significance Plato places on mystery in the dialogues, and specifically in *Phaedrus*. Thus, mysteries are unspeakable visions, which are a part of the religious experience and connection to the gods in the dialogues. Rhetoric, therefore, is imbued with religious context because it connects us to words, actions, myths and rituals. Plato deems all these to be necessary aspects of the developmental process of philosophy.

the method of analysis is more important than simply coming to conclusions.

Phaedrus relies on myth to discuss the power of speech, and the dangers of placing too much trust in unexamined thoughts. The myth of the Boreas, the *palinode*, and the Myth of Theuth, all problematize language serially, so as to remain in a self-aware state of philosophizing throughout reading the dialogue.

The *palinodic* structure reminds the reader of the inherently provisional nature of all discourse. Because of the structure that myth provides the text, the entire dialogue has a *palinodic* structure.¹²³ The structure, language, imagery and characters all draw the reader in, guiding the reader through a *psychagogic* process. We follow *Phaedrus*' *psychagogic* development through the speeches of the dialogue. He begins by fetishizing pretty speeches and ends by engaging in good rhetoric. Thus, as Werner will attest, the *palinode* works on two levels: both within the text, and within the reader. Myths are thus a key to dialogical movement that *shows* rather than tells the reader how to examine the soul.

Moreover, myth is used in conjunction with the dialectic, and the variation indicates two different forms of analysis: dialectic, which Morgan describes as a long divine road to accurate discourse, and myth, which is short, intuitive, and human, and relies on recollection or Socrates' inspired insight.¹²⁴ Neither form of speech can produce the actual Forms; however, both produce images that promote recollection. The creative image of the horses and the charioteer has a rational basis that bridges what is known from the ordinary world and what cannot be clearly expressed. To

¹²³ Werner, 2012. 244

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 234-251

know how to care for the soul, humans need the chariot image. Gods, conversely, do not need complicated images. The distinction demonstrates the utility of myth for human education.¹²⁵

Myth then functions to create an image that inspires the soul's memory, then one sees in the world the potential for what is real, i.e. the Forms. Manifesting imagery is necessary, and is achieved through myth, allowing one to work in proximity of the Forms. Memory is best to access the Forms, because it relies on the image of the beloved to evoke these latent ideas. Philosophy is written on the soul, and all speech pales by comparison. However, the dialogues can get close, and represent a good effort at understanding the realm of the unseen. Socrates uses the myth of the charioteer to evoke images that remain on the soul. Myth works in part because of its use of imagery, which then allows the image of the beloved to awaken this philosophical desire.

To some extent, the *palinode* works effectively because it is followed by the typical dialectic form of Socratic dialogue and the dialectic facilitates analysis of the *palinodic* structure and content. The dialogue shifts from the *palinode* to the *techne* of dialogue and the critique of the written form with the Myth of Theuth. Thus, the *palinode* itself can be read as an expression of madness; one needs also to reflect on its strangeness and limitations. Thus, myth and dialectic, as the lover and the non-lover, just so the relationship between madness and wisdom function in similar ways to draw out a nuanced discussion of what unites and divides these concepts.

¹²⁵ Partine 2009. 144

The contrast and the tension allow for the analysis of one another, and examine when madness becomes wisdom.

Ultimately, all forms of philosophical discussion must be called into question, including Socrates' speeches. And as one continues to explore the limitations of self-knowledge, one becomes more aware of the knowledge of ignorance. It is a discourse of the soul, and is invested in the individual experiences of the embodied soul. This is why Socrates argues for the value of the lover and Eros: our embodied experiences are essential for awakening memory of design concepts that are embedded in the soul.

Platonic Myths, as I have discussed in the previous chapters, are on the whole not literal, and not interested in naturalistic reductionism or fact-checking or exclusively allegorical explanations. Socrates uses myth to serve his own philosophical ends, thereby taking a *quietly radical stance* towards traditional myths.¹²⁶ Plato writes myths that portray common images with uncommon messages.¹²⁷ He is not interested in these myths unless they can be used to offer insight into the soul: not just *any* myth is acceptable. Instead, we must examine which myths are acceptable through comparative analysis, which requires using our minds and senses in the best possible way.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr. 1986. 151-156

¹²⁷ Dorter 1976. This article discusses *Phaedo* but I think the same applies to *Phaedrus*.

¹²⁸ Griswold, Charles L. *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven: Yale U Pr. 1986. 37-39

In writing *Phaedrus*, Plato composes an original myth and creates Socrates, his own Greek hero. There is nothing verifiable or historical about the dialogue. The characters may have been real people, but they are indeed fictionalized versions of these historical people. Griswold believes that Socrates can be compared to Odysseus. Like Odysseus, Socrates is independently spirited, and faces many trials and conflicts. Instead of facing monsters and sea beasts, Socrates takes on philosophical and moral concerns. His battle is with the souls of his interlocutors and the readers.¹²⁹ So Plato's heroes are not on quests with magical creatures, but grapple with the far more elusive quarry of self-knowledge.

¹²⁹ Werner, Daniel S. *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 254

Conclusion

I have argued that myth in Plato's dialogues works with dialectic to order reach philosophical conclusions. As I demonstrated with myths from both *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, although not all myths are distinctly philosophical, they are all a part of a process that is philosophically oriented. It is through reading each dialogue as a unit and then examining overarching themes in other dialogues (i.e. *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*) that it becomes evident that Plato is always making conscious narrative choices to further his project.

I settled on *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* largely because of the many similarities they share in terms of self-examination and philosophical cultivation, while coming at these fundamental matters from vastly different narrative points by way of unique myths. Moreover, the broad concern for the treatment of the soul nicely bookends each dialogue; *Phaedo* deals with the treatment of the soul in the afterlife, while *Phaedrus'* concerns are oriented in the present life. *Phaedrus* takes place at a high point of Socrates' philosophical engagement when he is actively involved with his world and inquiring youths, such as Phaedrus. *Phaedo* on the other hand recounts Socrates' final conversation with his dearest friends before he drinks the hemlock. In both myth frames the dialogues in a similar fashion, we deal with myths in the beginning to middle and end and, each myth roughly broken up by propositional examination. This allows us to view the soul's cultivation as an everlasting project, in life and in death. Thus philosophy becomes the eternal project which can be effectively approached with myth as well as dialectic.

The *Phaedo* uses death and the afterlife to demonstrate the significance of a life governed by philosophy and the potential rewards of such a life. The philosophical life is juxtaposed with the non-philosophical life, which mistakes the relationship of pleasure and pain, and truth with illusion. Legendary myth-maker Aesop begins the conversation of myths in relation to philosophical analysis. The myth of pleasure and pain then establishes a primary concern of the philosopher, i.e. truth versus illusion, by establishing that a philosopher views both her life and death in a singular way. Reading the afterlife myth non-literally allows it to function as both a warning of the suffering that the non-philosophical participate in, while emphasizing that the philosopher has an alternative focus than most as he is not concerned with pleasure seeking the way that most are. The river system in the hollows is then a metaphor for the consequences of living an unexamined life which leads to meandering about, wasting one's life. The philosophical life is thus portrayed as a life of action which requires correct behavior as there are negative consequences for the lack of philosophical development. Thus one needs to be self-critical so that she may see beyond the manifold of illusions the physical world produces.

Likewise, *Phaedrus'* use of myth draws attention to the confusing nature of speeches and language and the need to establish what are the best kinds of speeches, as well as myths. Plato contrasts the Boreas Myth, which does not lead Socrates to self-reflection because it concerns irrelevant content, with the *palinode* which examines the nature of the tripartite soul, contrasting speeches that can lead to worthy philosophical discovery. *Phaedrus* concludes with the Myth of Theuth

which further emphasizes the inherent problem of speech making, language and the philosopher's need to remain vigilant, thus demonstrating that no words are inherently self-reflective and worth spending time on. As in *Phaedo*, not all myths are made equal, however useful myths such as the *palinode* and Theuth offer valuable subject matter for consideration.

In my investigation of myths there are two primary treatments of it that I have come to understand. The first is that no one tradition or discipline interprets myth in the same way, which means contextualizing myth is absolutely essential for its understanding. The second is that myths are not necessarily a designation synonymous with lies or falsehoods, consequently truth is available from narrative forms. While myths do not depend on empirical or historical data to support them, as is part of the function of the fictitious construction of a myth, there is still great potential to obtain important truths from these fictions. What truths are available will depend a great deal on context, as is the case with Platonic myth. Sometimes understanding requires thoughtful consideration of the dialogical unit by charitably engaging with bazaar ideas.

As I have stressed, Plato's use of myths in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* draws attention to the importance of the dialogical unit and the narrative structure of a specific dialogue. Considering myth in context of a dialogue further emphasizes the relevance of the form and content of myth. That is, the myth is not independently relevant, but amasses value and meaning from the way that Plato organizes a given dialogue. Each dialogue is designed to engage the reader and to lead her to philosophical examination. As such, Plato employs more than one way to examine

ideas, and for the reader to experience self-examination. Myth thus demonstrates not only Plato's philosophical agenda and process of analysis, but also his command of language and artistic style.

I had hoped to better understand how Plato uses myth, narrative and ultimately his variety of dialogical technique. As a consequence, this project would benefit greatly from a close examination of *Republic*, with particular consideration of the concept of a noble lie and the Myth of Er in *Book X*. The examination of *Republic* would offer further evidence to support my belief that myth is a form of speech which is useful philosophical tool when used correctly. Additionally, that the correct use of myths (and all linguistic tools) are only ascertained through careful examination which requires context and narrative unity.

Most importantly, Plato's myths illuminate the limits of our knowledge when we explore subjects beyond the available physical facts. By emphasizing what we do not know we can explore the limits of our ability to examine and uncover truth and we are often left with more questions (of human nature, our purpose, and how to live a valuable life). To argue for the value of this kind of speculation I offered the concept of *intelligent imagination*, which acknowledges the playful use of language and narrative without the pretense of historical or empirical fact. *Intelligent imagination* embraces the idea that we have a limited capacity to understand the world and ourselves. We might better understand ourselves if we are removed from our familiar territories and allow examination to take place in the unfamiliar, as Plato does with the afterlife in *Phaedo*, and the image of the soul as tripartite in *Phaedrus*. Moreover, the language of myths and narratives also demands the use of

our imagination so that we might glean some fantastic truth about ourselves from the abundant mundane. As *Phaedrus* illustrates, if we were gods we would not need to examine our souls or our nature, because to be divine is to be in a state of perfection. However, as Plato duly acknowledges we are not divine, we are flawed and by embracing this fact we may be better able to cultivate a superior knowledge of ourselves.

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