CHAPTER 2

Pseudos, *Kalos* and *Eikōs Mythos* in Plato and Film

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Abstract

Myths and films do more than serve as prompts for reflection and critical thinking. They also engage us in unique and visceral ways as audience members and philosophers. Understanding that experience is essential to defending their philosophical value. In this paper, we offer an account of that value by describing three ways Plato utilizes myths in his dialogues before showing how those three uses suggest an account of the way we experience film that is broadly Platonic in spirit. In Part 1 we focus on different ways Plato constructs and uses images and myths in his dialogues, distinguishing them into three rough categories of *pseudos*, *kalos,* and *eikōsmythos*. We argue that each category directs our attention to certain general forms of life. In Part 2, we describe four kinds of existential experience we can have through our engagements with imagery in Plato and contemporary film: self-reflexive or intra-personal experience, relational or interpersonal experiences,*phantastic*or world-view experiences and finally, erotic experiences or experiences of a motivating desire toward a form of life. We provide multiple brief descriptions of films that offer viewers each of the three types of existential experience. We conclude that these experiences show how images and myth making in Plato and on the screen point to the philosophical value in our experience of them.

Keywords

Plato – Myth – Film Criticism – Moral Motivation – Aesthetic Experience

1 Introduction

Regardless of the controversies surrounding Plato's criticisms of image-making in the *Republic*, no reader of the dialogues can deny that Plato had an amazing gift for crafting and telling stories. One need only think of the Ring of Gyges (*Republic* 359d–360b), the Promethean theft of fire (*Protagoras* 320d–323a), the erotic narrative of the "split-aparts" (*Symposium* 189d–193d), Athens' war with

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the ideal city of Atlantis (*Timaeus* 26e4), the metallic distribution of citizens in Socrates' infamous Noble Lie (*Republic* 414b–415d), the eschatological myths of the *Gorgias* (523a–527a), the *Phaedo* (107c–115a) and the myth of Er (*Republic* 614a–621d), the tragic descent and struggle of the winged soul (*Phaedrus* 246a–249d), Theuth and the unfortunate invention of writing (*Phaedrus* 274c–275e), the reign of Cronos in the *Statesman* (268–274e) or the *Laws* (713c–d), even the entirety of Timaeus' cosmology which focuses on the creation of the cosmos from the mixing bowl of a divine craftsman is an *eikōs mythos* or likely story (29d).[1] Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to argue that Plato's myths and intoxicating imagery are superfluous to his craft or just pretty window dressing meant to liven up his philosophical discourse. Rather, most contemporary scholars of Plato eagerly defend the philosophical value of Plato's myths and images, emphasizing, amongst other tropes, the idea that a well-constructed myth or narrative can assist auditors in understanding the philosophical arguments being made. For example, the eschatological myth of Er elucidates the superiority of justice over injustice and the Allegory of the Cave clarifies the differences between the sensible and the intelligible worlds.

In this approach to Platonic myth, the images utilized within the dialogues become invitations to the philosophical life, goading us to evaluate and analyze the shadows on the wall for their meaning and veracity. What do these illustrative images mean? What do they help us understand? How do they inspire us to think differently about the arguments at stake in the dialogue? What are they enticing us to scrutinize, reevaluate and wonder? Similarly with the "moving image" of film we realize that their value may lie in their ability to prompt dialogue and analysis.[2] Films, like Plato's myths, may help us to think through ideas and therein are pedagogically accommodating for motivating

1 For a thorough breakdown of all the various myths in Plato, see Partenie (2009). Partenie analyzes all of Plato's uses of the term *mythos* and further expands the category to include *akoē* (*Phaedrus* 274c1), traditions/oracles or *phēmē* (Laws 713c2) and even analogies like the Allegory of the Cave, insofar as they are all unified as kinds of images employed by Plato in the dialogues. Morgan's (2000:37) definition of myth is also useful for our purposes: "By mythological material, I mean story patterns (such as quest, *anabasis*, *katabasis*), motifs, or narrative characters, which transgress the format of standard philosophical argument and explanation." For myth as non-verifiable narrative, see Brisson (1999). See Couturat (1896) or Zaslavsky (1981) for a more conservative approach to myth, arguing that only that which is explicitly referred to as *mythos* can be deemed Platonic myth. Further, refer to Morgan (2000: 155–185), Most (2012) as well as Brisson (1998) for an analysis of some of the standard features of Platonic myth. Also, Collobert, Destrée and Gonzalez (2012) is a useful anthology for discussions on a variety of Platonic tropes in myth-making in general alongside detailed readings of particular myths.

■Please confirm whether the citation "Brisson (1998)" refers to "Brisson (2004)" or not.

2 To be sure, such a philosophical approach to the reading of images in Plato fits neatly with recent efforts in the philosophy of film to defend the philosophical value of cinema by focusing on what Peter Kivy calls the "reflective afterlife" of a work of fiction. See Kivy (1997: 131).

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critical thinking.[3] In this way, both myth and film become media not merely to be enjoyed but also mined for ways they can stimulate reflection and analysis.

Now, having extoled the merits of this intellectual approach to the value of myth or film, namely they encourage or support critical thinking, in this paper we want to look in a different direction by focusing our attention on how we *experience* imagery or the ways certain images *engage audiences* versus the mere value of images as that which stimulates critical thinking *post factum*. Here, it should be noted that we are decidedly rejecting the idea that myth in Plato was meant to be addressed to either (1) the irrational part of the soul[4] or (2) the less philosophically inclined so as to clarify the arguments. This latter view is best represented by Partenie, who repeatedly insists: "Myth appears then (in some dialogues) as being a part of Plato's complex strategy of writing aimed at luring the less philosophically inclined audience into his philosophical territory [...]".[5] Morgan calls this the "honeyed-cup" reading whereby "myth adds colour to dry, technical, and forbidding material. It softens the unforgiving contours of philosophy, but is essentially separable from the content of philosophical discourse".[6] While myth can be, and is, used by Socrates to help individuals accept the consequences of the argument, e.g. Socrates' elaborate eschatological myth in the *Phaedo* (107c–115a) in response to Simmias' persistent doubts about the immortality of the soul, we should be reminded of the fact that myth has value even for the most philosophically dexterous. Many of the auditors of Plato's myths, such as Phaedrus, Glaucon and even Socrates himself in the *Timaeus*, *Statesman*, *Symposium*, *Protagoras* etc., are perfectly adept at understanding the arguments without the *mythos*. In this, Plato may be suggesting that *mythos* has powers beyond being a helpful means of persuasion. As we will suggest in the following, myth and image-making may in fact cause us to *experience* versus merely understand the value of the arguments, giving us hope to live lives accordingly. Morgan, supporting this view, emphasizes the dynamic nature of myth, arguing that myth "makes us look at our lives and our intellectual task differently, it is precisely the disjunctive effect of myth that produces the vertigo necessary for converting earthly and prudential rationality into something more."[7]

In tune with approaches such as Morgan's, we want to argue that there is something to the way the image-making arts, from Platonic myth-making to contemporary film, that kindle or confirm distinct ways of life by interacting

3 See Partenie (2009:8) for myths as teaching tools.
4 Destrée, et. al. (2012).
5 Partenie (2009:10).
6 Morgan (2000: 3).
7 Morgan (2000: 6).

■ Reference "Destrée, et. al. (2012)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

with audiences' projected self images and current worldviews. In short, we will address how an audience relates to the images conjured in the construction of the myth or the sights seen on the silver screen. Certainly, myths and films are something we *undergo* in unique and visceral ways and as such understanding that *experience* is essential to a defense of image-making in Plato and, as a consequence, the experience of viewing films today.

To develop this account of the value of experiencing images, both narrative and cinematic, we discuss three different ways Plato utilizes myths in his dialogues before showing how these different approaches to Plato's narrative images can help us develop an account of the way films are experienced that is broadly Platonic in spirit. Our goal in this essay is to examine Plato's use of myth and images in his dialogues so as to develop an account of the philosophical value of how images engage audiences in particular, concrete, and existential ways. More than just serving as resources for reflection and thought, mythical and cinematic images can confirm or frustrate our way of life. Myths can lull us into a sense of complacency or invite us to transformation and conversion to a radically different and, perhaps, infinitely more difficult way of living. In this, Plato, regardless of dismissing traditional image-making in his ideal city, seemed to understand that certain kinds of myths could assist us in becoming virtuous or, even more rarely, allow us to come into contact with realities that cannot be captured to their full extent in rational *logos*. Due to this, the first part of the essay focuses on how Plato constructs and utilizes a variety of images and myths in his dialogues, which we deem *pseudos*, *kalos,* or *eikōs mythos*. We argue these competing genre of myth direct our attention to certain general forms of life. In the second part of the paper, we flesh out how *pseudos*, *kalos* and *eikōs mythos* in both Plato and contemporary film initiate us to experience and engage (1) ourselves, (2) others, (3) the world and (4) the good in existential or lived ways, therein emphasizing the power that images both mythic and cinematic may have for all people regardless of whether one participates in critical analysis of the film or myth.

2 *Pseudos*, *Kalos* and *Eikōs Mythos*

We can observe at least three broad genres of image-making or myth in Plato's dialogues, each of which explicitly engage the auditor's form(s) of life in particular and in seemingly intentional ways.[8] First, there are those myths in

8 To be clear, this is not an exhaustive taxonomy of types of myth in Plato. Furthermore, the three forms advanced here are not defined in the dialogues themselves but are descriptors

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Plato's dialogues that invite auditors to live lives contrary to what some may regard as the Platonic position. To give these myths a name, one may best describe them as *pseudos mythos* or a myth that may be described by a Platonist as *dissembling* or *perverting* the good life.[9] We have in mind here myths like Aristophanes' illustrious image of the unfortunate split-aparts (*Symposium* 189d–193d) and Glaucon's Ring of Gyges (*Republic* 359d–360b). These myths are advanced by Plato through characters like Aristophanes or Glaucon, not merely as foils to be rejected but as real temptations, as live threats to the good life. Aristophanes' and Glaucon's images are not *pseudos* because they are obviously wrong and/or incoherent, but because they are highly seductive and largely convincing to audiences insofar as they do not challenge their auditors to rethink their immediate assumptions. They rather lull auditors into experiencing themselves as justified in their own self-interest and/or tendencies toward caring only for physical satiation and pleasure. This is why certain types of myth are dangerous for Socrates in the *Republic* and must be censored. If we thoughtlessly imbibe certain images of the gods, we may come to think that reality is ever-shifting, deceptive and fickle and therein come to feel justified in cultivating the life of appearance versus the truly just life. Ultimately, what is *pseudos* for a Platonist is that these myths invite audiences to validate their own commonplace assumptions and self-interested desires.[10]

To see how this description of *pseudos mythos* works in the dialogues, let's take a closer look at Aristophanes' myth and Diotima's main criticism of it. For Diotima, Aristophanes' myth valorizes not love of the Good but love of the self insofar as what we are seeking is only our other half, our own completeness (*Symposium* 205e). The persons we pursue in Aristophanes' myth

loosely based on Platonic vocabulary and his usage of the terms throughout his dialogues. For alternative categorizations of myth, see Frutiger (1930) who separates between allegorical, genetic and parascientific myth, Partenie (2009) who separates between myths intended to (1) persuade and (2) teach as well as myths that are explicitly (3) creation stories or (4) philosophical allegory and Morgan (2000) who delineates between traditional, educational and philosophical myth (2000:162). As noted earlier, it is this later form that we stress, agreeing therein with Rowe (1999: 265) and the more radical understanding of the identity between myth and philosophy, whereby myth does not merely augment arguments but may perhaps be the fundamental condition for human truth-telling. Arguably, the distinction in Plato between *logos* and *mythos* is necessarily blurred as there is a real sense that the construction of narratives gesture towards the imagined, the fictional, the story, even in the midst of rational argument. See Partenie (2009:20).

9 By deeming these myths *pseudos*, we are following Plato's condemnation of traditional myth, particularly Hesiod and Homer at *Republic* 377d5–9.

10 See Morgan (2000) who argues that from Plato's perspective sophistic use of myth tends to "reflect unexamined communal belief, even while [sophists] work at manipulating it" (154).

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are not wholly other (they are merely ourselves) and, more importantly for Diotima, our other self, just like our hand or foot, may not necessarily be good. So, ultimately Aristophanes' myth is a *pseudos mythos* for a Platonist because it tempts auditors to feel warranted in their simplistic understanding of human desire. Aristophanes' myth is stylistically beautiful and charming but, as we will discuss below, it is dangerous, as it merely reflects our own immediate desires and unexamined intuitions regarding the nature of love.

Glaucon's Ring of Gyges (*Republic* 359d–360b) is another good example of a possible *pseudos mythos* in the dialogues as Plato seems to advance this myth to show the real existential temptation to live the Thrasymachean ideal that "justice is the advantage of the stronger" (338c2–3). Glaucon, both in relating the myth of Gyges (359b–360d) and in his short speech explaining his motivation for introducing it (359a–b), challenges the simplicity of Thrasymachus' vision that might-is-right while supporting the overall desirability of the unjust life, a life where one can act with impunity so long as one's deeds appear just. In contrast to Thrasymachus' unsophisticated arguments that merely reinforce a limited conception of juridical power, Glaucon's myth strategically highlights the invisibility of power and its consequent ability to manipulate the appearance of things, controlling individuals both in the public and private spheres (as is evidenced by Gyges' seduction of the queen and consequent ascent to the throne). What the Ring of Gyges illustrates and causes auditors to experience is the ubiquity and almost imperceptibility of power alongside the lure of the unjust life just so long as it remains invisible, so long as it remains behind the veil of justice. Once again, this clever image invites auditors to take the least reflective route insofar as it authenticates the desirability of wielding power that seeks to serve its own self-interest. This myth, like Aristophanes' myth, ultimately reinforces the ideology of the masses, therein tempting them to remain complacent in their affairs and satisfied by their intuitions regarding, in the case of the split-apart myth in the *Symposium*, matters like love or in the case of the *Republic*, assumptions about justice both of which are set in a radically self-interested framework. With Aristophanes, love is reduced to an unsophisticated hope for completion expressed in insatiable sexual desire and for Glaucon, justice is an illusion of the weak. Here, the key characteristic is that these myths advance images of the human condition that, if accepted by the auditor, would make the pursuit of the good life, namely the examined life, seem futile.[11]

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11 Another possible contender for *pseudos mythos* in Plato's dialogues is the Promethean theft of fire insofar as it tempts auditors into confirming their unexamined views regarding the nature of justice in Athenian society. See Morgan (2000:132), who argues that the

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We will call the second type of myth utilized by Plato *kalos mythos* or noble myth. These myths are often employed by Socrates as a method of assisting auditors to experience the good of a well-ordered life, to help us experience hope that such loves are indeed worth while. Typically, these myths seem to be "moralizing" insofar as they appeal to the veracity of living virtuously. In other words, these myths are not arguments *per se* but images of the rewards of virtue meant to motivate listeners to love virtue and/or the examined life, giving readers a chance to hope for the good.[12] The most evident example of this type of myth is, of course, Socrates' Noble Lie. This myth's value does not derive from its ability to stimulate philosophical reflection. Rather, the metallic distribution's ostensible target is to allow us to embody the well-ordered city so as to compel us to order our souls in a similar manner. The value of *kalos mythos* is confirmed in the *Republic* by the Myth of Er, an eschatological myth that emphasizes that the just life is indeed good in itself but also for its consequences. While myths like this are often elucidations of preceding or forthcoming arguments, these images are rarely "convincing" for persons who are more inclined to philosophical argument, those who prefer abstract arguments. Rather, these myths are meant to cause an experience in listeners; they demand transformation and conversion. Think here of the harsh visual of the soul being stripped naked in the eschatological myth of the *Gorgias* (523a1–526d2).[13] Those listening or reading the myth momentarily experience such nakedness and the shame one may feel before the judge of the dead. This provides the opportunity to not only *understand* the importance of living virtuously but, further, it invokes the *desire* to live virtuously. In other words, these images cause individuals to embody the good life according to the Platonic commitment to virtue versus appealing cognitively to the sense of things. In these myths, Plato is indeed hoping to appeal to even the most lay of auditors

Protagoras myth is advanced in order to disguise the commonplace inability of citizens to account for justice. As Morgan writes, "Protagoras' manipulation of myth is designed to keep his audience from examining the assumptions on which they base their daily life" (147). See also Calame (2009). ■ Reference "Calame (2009)" is referred to Calame (2012) or not?.

12 See Schofield (2009) and Morgan (2000), who argue that myths like the Noble Lie "have an educational and moral, rather than intellectual purpose" (163). See also Most (2012: 18), where it is argued that myths "supply [auditors] with a strong motivating impulse towards performing action, one capable of surpassing any form of rational persuasion."

13 See Annas (1982) for her now classic reading of Plato's eschatological myths and Edmonds (2009) for a thorough analysis of why the *Gorgias* myth does not merely "supplement a deficient argument for the philosophical life; rather, Plato makes use of the narrative and the traditional aspects of the myth to depict the examination of the examine life in the here and now." In other words, the myth gives auditors an image of the immediate benefits and potential scars one can receive in joining Socrates in his practice of the *elenchos*.

■ Reference "Edmonds (2009)" is referred to "Edmonds (2012)" or not?.

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but he is also helping the philosophically adept step outside the all-important field of *logos* and into the concreteness of their lives. In *kalos mythos*, Plato is not trying to utilize myth because he thinks his audience is too senseless to accept a rational argument. Rather, these myths highlight the value, the good, of the arguments, which is more than intellectual insofar as the value of the arguments radically orients lives and the existential choice to live justly or unjustly. To be sure, one of the most stunning examples of *kalos mythos*, whereby the goal is to get auditors to change their way of life, is so succinct that readers could forget its effective power, namely the myth of the cicadas in the *Phaedrus* (259b–e). Here, Socrates' simple creative gesture whereby the cicadas become messengers or servants of the muses inspires Phaedrus and Socrates to *live* or *act* in accordance with the *values* of the examined life. In other words, these fine or noble myths don't simply stir up emotions or merely persuade those who can't be persuaded by argument. Instead, they are intended to be therapeutic, protreptic and psychogogic, as they help convince auditors that living just lives is worth the cost insofar as they stimulate the experience of imagining consequences, of experiencing the good or ill of certain ways of life.[14] They appeal to all people (not just the philosophically disinclined), not by irrationally invoking seductive images but by constructing myths that invite hopeful conversion and change.[15]

A third and final type of myth, which we call *eikōs mythos,* consists of images advanced by Plato that attempt to do the impossible by disclosing realities that are difficult, strange and even hostile to narration.[16] Recognizing that things like the soul can never appear as soul, since soul is not a phenomenal object of

14 See Dixsaut (2012:44), where she writes on the nature of Plato's eschatological myths: "Their purpose is less to make us believe that just retribution exists than to give us a way to perceive the crushing absurdity in the way men live their lives.… It is therefore a matter of describing with exactitude what men do with their souls and with their lives, the way they imprison themselves in ignorance, the tortures their foolishness inflicts on others and themselves."

15 Overall, this form of myth abounds in Plato but is most prevalently seen in the eschatological myths of dialogues like the *Phaedo* or the *Gorgias*. See Inwood (2012) for an excellent analysis of these myths in Plato.

16 Once again, we should remind readers that we are taking liberties with Platonic vocabulary, utilizing the phrase *eikōs mythos* so as to articulate a broad category of myth in Plato whereby auditors are invited to imagine a fitting or appropriate "likeness" which would assist in imagining the intelligible or the original, e.g. the nature of the soul, its education and ascent, the Good, the birth of the cosmos from divine reason, etc. In calling these types of myths *eikōs*, we are further appealing to terms like *eikôna, eoika* ("to be like") and *eikōn* ("likeness"). See also Collobert (2012:87), who also asserts a similar category of myth based on the four main words for image used in Plato's dialogues: *eikôn, eikasia, eidolon* and *phantasma*.

appearing, Plato utilizes *eikōs mythos* to reveal or disclose such realities in order to advance fitting or appropriate images of the imageless. We contend that these myths bear with them truth, not in the literal sense of corresponding to something out there in the world but in the sense of grasping the essential features of the imageless original. Overall, this type of Platonic myth centers on providing an *eikôn*, an image, that aspires to reveal the divine realities or *a priori* conditions undergirding all things, be it the coming-into-being of the sensible living cosmos or the struggles of the soul in its ascent/return to its origin.[17] These myths give us models, *paradeigmata,* of what cannot be expressed more directly. Obviously, an example of this form of myth is Timaeus' own *eikōs mythos* (29c),[18] which is concerned with offering a fitting image of the creation of the cosmos from a divine, intelligent and loving deity, but, as our previous example suggests, other contenders for *eikos mythos* are Socrates' Myth of the Charioteer (*Phaedrus* 274c–275e), the *analogon* of the Good (*eikôna Rep*. 509a9, 515a4) and the Allegory of the Cave (*eikôn Rep.* 515a4, 517a8, d2).[19] In this form of myth, readers are invited to experience the wonder of what lies beyond the sensible cosmos and phenomenal experience. Timaeus' likely story reveals the divine origin, the reason laid out in the soul of the cosmos; Socrates in the *Phaedrus* discloses the beauty and erotic nature of the soul in his illustration of the charioteer and his struggles to tame the dark, unruly horse of desire,

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17 See Morgan (2000: 179), who offers a concise summary of authors who see Plato's overall use of myth as concerned with expressing first principles, the world of Forms, axioms that can't be verified and even associates myth with intuition. She writes: "Platonic myth is symbolic and non-analytic narrative. It has been seen to advance themes which are addressed by philosophical method in the same dialogue, achieving results which are either insufficiently dealt with in the discussion or which are necessary additions. It gives us a 'knowledge of theory' and 'engenders the natural movement of the soul that enables it to see the theater of Ideas.' Its synoptic view of reality delivers the soul straight to the truth. Or there is the theory that myth expresses Plato's indemonstrable first premises. Since dialect fails to yield sufficient conditions for certain knowledge, myth is a way of overcoming these shortcomings."

18 For a clear and convincing analysis for why Timaeus calls his cosmology an *eikōs mythos*, see Burnyeat (2009), where he emphasizes that *eikōs* is better translated as that which "fits" or is "appropriate" and therein that this myth is a *reasonable* or fitting image of what in some sense is ungraspable. While discussing why Plato can use the terms *eikōs mythos* interchangeably with *eikōs logos*, Burnyeat writes: "It is not that *mythos* is equivalent to, and no different from *logos*, but that an *eikōs mythos* is a *logos* as well as a myth. Timaeus' myth, unlike Hesiod's, is as well reasoned as any of the Pre-Socratic cosmogonies in the *peri phueōs* tradition. But unlike your typical Pre-Socratic, who Plato tends to regard as an atheistic materialist (*Laws* X), Timaeus' cosmogony will be a theogony too." See Cornford (1937), Brisson (1998), Rowe (1999) and Morgan (2000) for alternative interpretations.

■ Reference "Cornford (1937)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

■ Please confirm whether the citation "Brisson (1998)" refers to "Brisson (2004)" or not.

19 See Rowe (2009:135) for an analysis of the myth of the charioteer as a kind of *paradeigmata*.

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while in the *Republic* the philosopher struggles to capture the elusive but absolute power of the Good, the conversion of the soul from the life of illusions to a desire for the warmth of truth and being, etc. We should be mindful that in some sense an *eikōs mythos* is experienced paradoxically insofar the myth inevitably fails to capture the fullness of the reality in question, the images are likenesses and not the thing itself.[20] However, they are still *eikōs* insofar as the myth's imagery is "fitting" or "like" and thus allows the audience the chance to come into contact with the elusive reality. As such, in such myths we paradoxically experience that which cannot absolutely be experienced, e.g. the origins of the cosmos, the divine, the soul, the good, the beautiful, etc. Due to this, we come to engage in the wonder and awe, or the perplexity and confusion, that characterizes the transcendent or incorporeal aspects of life.

3 The Four Existential Experiences of Myth/Film

Having laid out three different genres of myth in Plato's dialogues, we should be clear that we aren't advancing an exhaustive taxonomy of types of myth for the sake of categorizing the reality of these types in Plato's dialogues. Rather, these three types of myth are functional paradigms for evaluating the experience one might have of images in Plato and, correspondingly, for our purposes in this section, for experiencing particular films as invitations to live in certain ways. Correspondingly, in applying these different types of myth to our analysis of film, we should be clear that we are not interested in merely classifying particular films as *pseudos*, *kalos* or *eikōs mythos*. Rather, we would like to emphasize four different existential experiences or ways these particular kinds

20 See Morgan (2000), who focuses on the Platonic and philosophical myth's ability to bring to the fore the distorting tendency of language and philosophy in general. See (2000:184), where she writes: "If the status of the arguments 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 the Platonic dialogue. 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." See also Collobert (2012: 89), where she emphasizes that "an image consists of partially capturing its object and of isolating some aspects of it … an image copies something that cannot be fully there. In this regard, it is necessarily an incomplete copy … an image is an imperfect mirroring or reflection of an actual object and thus impoverishes it; on the other hand, an image must be incomplete for otherwise it would no longer be an image but the object itself. Impoverishment, imperfection, and incompleteness are the hallmarks of images."

of cinematic and mythical images may be engaged.[21] We offer the following non-exhaustive list from a broadly Platonic perspective:

1. Self-Reflexive (Intrapersonal)
2. Relational (Interpersonal)
3. Phantastic (Interrelation with Ideological Worldview)
4. Erotic (Motivating Desire to a Form of Life)

Once again, these are four different existential experiences versus cognitive categories for analysis. In every image that we experience, whether *pseudos*, *kalos* or *eikōs*, we are invited to experience and engage (1) oneself, (2) onself with others, (3) oneself as being in a certain type of world and (4) the particular *desires* that motivate us to live in specific ways. In arguing thus, we do not suggest that the films described or analyzed below are always experienced according to these four parameters. Rather, each film is appealed to as an example that may help us understand how certain images engage viewers in the concreteness of their lived experiences versus merely cognitively.

(1) *Self-Reflexive*

Beginning with the self-reflective component of mythic/cinematic images, such formats engage audiences in experiencing a kind of temporary self-knowledge.[22] This component is intrapersonal insofar as the object of experience is the self. In other words, certain images, whether the myths of Plato or the films of contemporary directors, allow us to experience a certain image of oneself. In *pseudos mythos*, we saw how such stories aim to venerate human self-interest, ultimately failing to challenge status quo assumptions about the good. For instance, Glaucon's Ring of Gyges deludes auditors into seeing humanity as power hungry and self-interested and therein validates that experience in the life of the reader. Like Aristophanes' myth of the split-aparts, these myths merely mirror what we already think to be true about the human condition without analysis or critical investigation. Films that someone of the Platonic persuasion might offer audiences as advancing a "*pseudos* self" are

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21 Here, we should qualify that none of the films we describe or analyze in the following are experienced in such ways universally. Each film will only be appealed to as an example that may help us understand how certain images engage viewers in the concreteness of their lived experiences versus merely cognitively.

22 See Dixsaut (2012: 35–38), who argues that a proper interpretation of myth depends on the auditor already knowing oneself. Here we are suggesting that myth allows us to experience ourselves as a certain type of being, therein engaging with ourselves in ways that allow us to momentarily experience self-knowledge.

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diverse and can be seen in such a spectrum of films from *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) to *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003). *Mean Girls* invites moviegoers to experience the simplistic and "natural" pettiness of human nature, tempting audiences to reaffirm status quo assumptions about themselves or, more dangerously, sexist assumptions about young women and their relationships. In the case of *Lost in Translation*, the depiction of the self is one of barren meaninglessness. Through Bill Murray's eyes we experience our individuality as meaning nothing, realizing that all our pursuits or desires are simply futile attempts to forget this fact therein confirming to audience members that they can and ought to live as they *please* as there is no good, no *telos*, no point. To be sure, like Plato's dialogues wherein a *pseudos mythos* was not plainly wrong or worthless, but a genuine temptation to be addressed, films that proceed in or through *pseudos mythos* are not necessarily bad films. Like Aristophanes' myth, these films are typically beautiful, funny or seductive and, as such, better able to appeal to a certain image of ourselves that we wish to see confirmed. The reflexive character of a *pseudos* film is that it allows audiences to experience themselves as uncomplicated and simple. Overall, such films permit the audience to experience a mundane revelation about the self as if it were a deep and provocative truth when in actuality it merely reflects back to us what we want or think we already know about oneself.[23]

■ Reference "Mark Waters, (2004)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.
■ Reference "Sofia Coppola, (2003)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

Considering the reflective component of *kalos mythos*, one can argue that these cinematic and/or mythical images are intended to be therapeutic insofar as they act as a kind of *pharmakon* or medicinal remedy to the mirror-image or narcissistic self of *pseudos mythos*.[24] A *kalos* image allows for the experience of the self as capable of producing the good and the beautiful and is thus corrective of the *pseudos mythos* that typically valorizes traits like self-interest and individualism. The therapeutic aspect of the *kalos mythos* is that it explicitly attempts to restore a sense of morality, allowing auditors to experience the self as one who can live virtuously, who should hope for the good of the virtuous life. For example, *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) lets us experience ourselves as fighters in a resistance, helping viewers experience themselves as capable of defending the marginalized. More preeminently, films like *Selma* (Ava DuVernay, 2014) that advocate for social justice evidence that the noble life is

■ Reference "George Lucas, (1977)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

23 We might consider this an experienced counterpart to Peter Kivy's well-known "banality of literary truths" version of the no-argument argument found in Kivy (1997–1998).

24 Here we are drawing from Socrates' repeated association of his activities with being a kind of *pharmakon* in dialogues like the *Charmides* (155e8–156a, 157b1–c6), a prescription in the *Phaedrus* (294a–297b) and/or a healing charm in the *Phaedo* (114d).

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worth the cost. Such films cause us to experience how we ought to live and that living such lives is worth the cost. The stories in these films oftentimes are not fully satisfying intellectually. They may make the self too simple and the protagonist always seems to win. Ultimately, such films intend to provide an experience to viewers, however momentarily, of what it would be like to know oneself as being valued for one's good or noble deeds.

■ Reference "Ava DuVernay, (2014)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The reflexive character of *eikōs mythos* goes beyond either confirming human self-interest (*pseudos*) or possible virtue (*kalos*). These films address a more complex nature of being human, reminding the viewer of human finitude and transcendence. Like Diotima's myth of the origin of *eros*, such films allow us to experience the erotic nature of the human being as needy but also resourceful, as lack and surplus, as knowing and not-knowing. In other words, through these films and myths we come to see ourselves as both one and many, as stable and disordered, as creatures always on the way, therein recognizing both the difficulty and the simplicity of the task of self-knowledge. In fact, unlike *pseudos mythos*, which goads one into seeing oneself in a self-aggrandizing way, or *kalos mythos,* which paints a simple picture of the value of human virtue, *eikōs mythos* stimulates an understanding of the complexities and confusions related to self-knowledge. In *eikōs mythos* the good is not so readily apparent as a virtue, such as justice, temperance or piety. Rather, they demand moviegoers see themselves as multivalent and diffusive, as ones who both do and do not know themselves. Consider some more examples from the *Phaedrus*, particularly Socrates' own confession that he does not know whether he is "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." (229e–230a.) (trans. H. Fowler). Later, in Socrates' myth of the charioteer, we again see this complex divide, the pull between the light and dark horse, between ignorance/hubris and the desire to reunite with the divine. We are invited to experience in this struggle the confusion and the value residing in the complexity of human suffering and overcoming. In other words, through *eikōs mythos* we come to see the good of the erotic finite human being. These images are inherently self-reflective in ways that are complex, finding ways to permit the audience to experience the limiting nature of the film's imagery itself, the limited view it can provide. It never explicitly gives us the answer to the question "Who am I?" but, rather, gives us an image that is both true but also distorting, sometimes even true in its distorting. In such films, despite being unable to define the transcendence of the human being, we *experience* the human being in transcendence, as struggling to be more than human and in that struggle appearing beautiful, and already transcendent, and otherwise than the impoverished and fallen beings they also are.

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An example of this interesting aspect of *eikōs mythos*' self-reflexive aspect can be seen in films like the acclaimed *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015), where the main character comes to know herself as broken, conflicted, and torn. She recognizes that she cannot be the woman she has always been if she is to pursue her desires. She is in conflict. Nevertheless, she reveals to us the situation of human love and its transcendent value. Carol is portrayed neither as a simple character who exudes the good in virtue, nor as one who is merely self-interested. This would correspond to a simple *kalos mythos* or *pseudos mythos* respectively. Instead, Carol can and does act deplorably, but in this we are invited to experience the rupture in our heroine's personality, a rupture that allows herself and the audience members to know oneself as erotic beings capable of loving oneself and the good. Rather than being a simple portrayal of a female same-sex relationship, the movie demands we experience ourselves as lost and broken, but as somehow still worthy of love and capable of loving others.

■ Reference "Todd Haynes, (2015)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

(2) *Relational*

The second existential quality of cinematic and mythic images is the relational or the interpersonal, i.e. these images demand individuals to experience themselves with others in various ways. *Pseudos mythos* tends to be strategic in its design insofar as it allures auditors with the promise of a sexier, happier, more pleasurable life in which our preferred but not necessarily healthy desires are sated by a self-serving other. In this, it seduces audiences into unstable relationships and consequently normalizes the view that such instability and narcissism is a natural and inevitable part of all relationships. Think here of how Aristophanes' *pseudos mythos* tempts listeners to see the other as merely an extension of one's self, something that will sate my desires if consumed and held tightly; the other needs only to be grafted into my world. In other words, the sweet lie behind Aristophanes' myth is that the other is not another at all, and is in fact not something distinct from oneself, remaining a mere mirror of one's own desires. Here, the cinematic counterpart is the romantic comedy with its shallow plot structure of a chance encounter, an obstruction or complication and a reunion which reinforces the myth that each person is destined to find their other half who will complete them and make them whole again. Along these same lines, a *pseudos mythos*, such as Aristophanes' myth, is comforting to audience members because it allows those who imbibe it to skirt responsibility for the failures of their relationships with others. Recall how Aristophanes' myth allows its followers to excuse themselves from doing the work requisite of healthy erotic relationships. Similarly, in the Ring of Gyges, we no longer have to accept responsibility for injustice, the suffering and pain inflicted upon the weak, the poor, the marginalized. All of these maladies are

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not our fault; they are merely part and parcel of the human condition as we are by nature prone to act in ways that are ultimately self-gratifying. Films like *The Purge* (James DeMonaco, 2013) similarly reinforce the idea that if given the opportunity, given the release from punishment, we would all descend into a chaotic and violent world where trust between neighbors is exposed as mere illusion.

■ Reference "James DeMonaco, (2013)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The main threat concerning the relational aspect of *pseudos mythos* is that there is a normative component to these images. These myths and films strategically shape the body politic in ways that produce desires that accord with the myth. Put otherwise, these myths are productive, generating individuals who feel justified in treating others as merely extensions of the self who serve one's own impulses. For example, Woody Allen's *Matchpoint* (2005) or *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989) both glorify anti-heroes in their narcissism and their sociopathic relationship toward others, thereby normalizing such behavior for the audience, allowing them to feel that such films are "more realistic" in terms of human behavior with others. Such films validate future selfish behavior as socially acceptable and therein encourage and (re)produce narcissistic and selfish subjects in the concrete world.

The relational aspect of a *kalos mythos* is that it intentionally attempts to correct the self-serving aspect of *pseudos mythos*, calling audiences to virtue and the care of the self and the soul through serving and tending to others. Think again of the Noble Lie's intent to foster relationships with others oriented toward the just or healthy city/soul. The myth is told to the citizens as children so that they will believe vehemently in the possibility and good of justice and its presence in the order of the city/soul. Again, this myth is *pharmakonic* or therapeutic in its concern for relationships with others as it invites us to turn from an isolated life, fearing the injustice of the other, to a communal life in which we hope for the good of the other. Such myths foster trust and companionship and therein normalize and make possible the actuality of such a world. Films that are relational in the *kalos* type include sports and military genres like *Band of Brothers* (David Frankel et al., 2001) and *Breaking Away* (Peter Yates, 1979). These films invite viewers to see the good in trusting their comrades in arms or their hardworking teammates. We experience ourselves as better together, comforted by the saving nature of friendship, teamwork, and sacrifice.

■ Reference "David Frankel et al., (2001)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

■ Reference "Peter Yates, (1979)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

Eikōs mythos goes beyond *kalos mythos* insofar as the relationships fostered between individuals is transcendent or something beyond our corporeal embodied day-to-day lives, or for Plato, the Good beyond Being or the Soul. In other words, *eikōs mythos* sees the other as a window to that which seems "more than human", to what is beautiful, perhaps divine, which is paradoxically

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revealed through the finitude and struggle of the person(s) before us. As Plato's *Alcibiades* emphasizes, by comparing the Delphic injunction "Know Thyself" to the command one might give to an eye to "See Itself," *eikōs mythos* offers us a reflective mirror into viewing the "divinity" or "beauty" in the persons and the world before us, a divinity or beauty that touches us in such a way as to reveal the reality of transcendent beauty or good. *Eikōs mythos* must reveal the difficulties of human relationships while also showing how they allow us to touch or commune with others regardless of who they are and/or what they do, enabling the viewer to experience the paradox of seeing the Good even in the wretched. They must make real the possibility that even in the vicious, those who appear far from the good, relationships of transcendence, of becoming good and seeing beauty in the other, are indeed possible. In other words, *eikōs mythos* reveals the real struggle of souls to ascend, to train the unruly horse of desire or to emerge from out of the cave. Moreover, such images can help show how our struggles are always done with others, others who have the potential to both frustrate that ascent and to paradoxically support that ascent in the very ways that they frustrate us. Think here of Wim Wender's *Wings of Desire* (1987), a film that explores the longing of an angel who wishes to fall to Earth for the sake of mortal love. The intimacy the angel experiences with his beloved is notably appealed to through the lack of touch insofar as the main character lacks physical sensation. In that lack of touch, viewers witness the power of being with others that transcends mere corporeal touch and thus they experience authentic contact with others. In other words, the film invites audiences to experience a kind of divine "touch" through the very absence of touch.

(3) *Phantastic*[25]

Moving to the next existential experience of cinematic and mythical images, the *phantastic* concerns how audiences imagine the world. Typical questions that such images produce include: Does the world have meaning or is it meaningless? Does the world operate on the basis of deterministic laws or is there room for freedom? Are human beings by nature self-interested and is virtue, therefore, a mere empty pretense or do we all desire the good and find ourselves drawn by nature to look for ways to assist, support and nurture the good

25 We are retaining the Greek transliteration of phanstastic versus the modern fantastic to appeal to the image producing faculty that undergirds how we interpret the appearance of things in the world. Fantasy appeals to consciously constructing images that aren't real, such as elves, dragons, etc. The phantastic are images or ideas human beings produce about the world even while not knowing it and, more importantly, the images shape how we interpret the appearance of things in our world.

life in oneself and others? Overall, this experience is concerned with the frustration or confirmation of one's ideological images or phantasies that become the framework for experiencing the world.

In *pseudos mythos* the *phantastic* is best described as those images, both mythical and cinematic, that intentionally eliminate the details which complicate or frustrate our orientation to the world. Ultimately, the film or myth confirms our assumptions or biases, in many cases through omissions, inviting plot wholes, and narrative simplicities designed to be filled in by the expected worldviews of the audience. This tactic reinforces the audience's bias by inviting them to play an active role in the engagement with the images and therein the myth or film allows audiences to play out their phantasies about the world. For example, the jump cuts and time splicing in the film *American Sniper* (Clint Eastwood, 2014) allow audiences to attempt to draw on overly-simple conceptions of Mideast politics to make sense of the narrative events and character developments. The jump cuts add a veneer of realism that covers over the dramatic political oversimplifications of the world it creates onscreen. The perceived ability of one's biases to make sense of the battle scenes generates the illusion that those assumptions and biases can successfully unpack the complexities of the Mideast conflict. Often these films and myths "prime" us to "phantasize" in ways that assist audiences in actively reintroducing the foreshadowed worldview. For example, in Plato's Ring of Gyges the myth is primed by Glaucon's foreboding *phantasy* of human nature as always under threat, as always having to fear suffering from the injustices of others. This priming leads auditors to actively engage the Gyges myth with a threatening worldview, wherein we actively view Gyges' invisibility and corresponding power as something to fear, something that threatens our freedom. Gyges becomes the man of strength who would not submit to the laws, whose freedom is unchecked by any threat to his appearance or reputation. Glaucon's primer thus causes auditors to view the myth as confirming the worldview that injustice hidden under the veil of justice is better than justice that suffers from perceived injustice.

■ Reference "Clint Eastwood, (2014)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The *phantastic* element in *kalos mythos* offer images that allow audiences to imagine better worlds, images of possibility and transformation as, for example, Socrates' image of Kallipolis emphasizes and as the Noble Lie tries to support. To be sure, *kalos mythos* films are often political or even didactic as they tend to elicit a concrete end. For instance, Spike Lee films are designed to enable audience members to experience their own racism so as to elicit a change in prejudice. In other words, the *kalos mythos* can cause us to experience our current worldviews (phantasies) as problematic, as being out of accord with the good of the world. In the *Republic*, the three waves of paradox are explicitly intended to address issues that would frustrate Socrates' interlocutors and

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challenge their preconceived notions about their image of a utopian world. Correspondingly, films like *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) cause audience members to question their assumptions about altruism and its relation to self-interest and profit, inviting viewers to alter their assumptions about the world in which they live. Once again, the *kalos mythos* is corrective or acts as a *pharmakon* insofar as they intend to help viewers believe in the good, allowing them to imagine the possibility of nobly contributing to the world and its beauty. Like *pseudos mythos,* the phantastic element is often primed by the speaker of the myth so as to invite auditors to engage actively with the myth. Consider the eschatological myths follow the arguments in the *Gorgias*, *Republic* and the *Phaedo*. These myths are not a passive imagining of why it is better to live the virtuous life. Rather, the arguments have primed auditors to engage actively in imagining the repercussions of the good life showcased in the myths. In cinema, this priming is most easily observed in the use of trailers that already elicit the moral of the story, i.e. the trailer already explicitly connotes the fact that an everyman character will undergo a dramatic change and become the virtuous hero whose adventures are both meaningful and beautiful.

■ Reference "Steven Spielberg, (1993)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The phantastic element in *eikōs mythos* films is that they go beyond the self-serving aggrandizement of *pseudos mythos* or the moral prescription of *kalos mythos* insofar as they allow us to imagine that the world is saturated with a "more than" such that despite the appearances of things, there is mystery, freedom, beauty or transcendence. Ultimately, an *eikōs mythos* allows audiences to momentarily experience the grace of reality, a beauty that is irreducible to its virtue. Rather, it is the experience of the beauty of the world replete with seeming contradiction and chaos. The main take away from such films is philosophical wonder or awe. We are left wondering about the world in which we live, fascinated by its mystery and order despite (or especially because of) the ugliness and disorder we observe. These are films which point to what we cannot see or hear in the film, to the divine or transcendent. These films are emancipatory; they bring us beyond the worldviews or phantasies we bring to the film. They break up the monopoly of established reality. Think here of films such as Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1973) or *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), films that reveal the beauty of an implacable world that overwhelms human ambition, whether located in the goal of finding Eldorado or moving a steamship through a jungle to reach a river. We might also think here of wordless films like Geoffrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* or Ron Fricke's *Baraka* (1992). The absence of words in these films suggests that the complex relations of thoughts and experiences resist articulation,[26] a point that is reinforced by the central

26 In an interview, Reggio (2002) explains, "What I tried to show is that the main event today is not seen by those who live in it. We see the surface of the newspapers and the

role played by the musical score.[27] Both films attempt to reorient our experience of the world; in particular, they confront the view that technology is something we use on the world versus realizing it is the world we now occupy. Such an aim parallels the efforts we find in the *Timaeus*, where Timaeus attempts to reorient materialists by drawing on the materialistic philosophies of the Pre-Socrates only to confront listeners with the world's immaterial origin, its birth from both Necessity and divine freedom/creativity. Audiences in both cases (Plato's myths as well as certain films of this variety) are invited to bring their worldviews to bear, but in the processes of following the myth or film those worldviews are engaged in order to be broken and reimagined. Further, like *pseudos* and *kalos mythos*, the *eikos mythos* is primed with a worldview, e.g. the Myth of the Charioteer begins with the short but dense argument for the soul's self-movement while Timaeus' *eikōs mythos* begins with the explicitly stated thesis that the world is good. Similarly, *Koyaanisqatsi* opens with a contrast between an alternating sequence of smokestacks and misting trees, a sequence that elicits the very idea of a clear contrast between nature and technology that the film goes on to disorient.

(4) *Erotic*

The fourth and final existential experience is the *erotic*. Alongside the phantastic experience that confirms or reorients our view of the world, the erotic is that aspect of films or myth that arouse us to live certain sorts of lives. The erotic aspect of a myth or film entices the hopes and desires of audience members, motivating them to live in concrete ways. In a *pseudos mythos* the erotic element often centers on the use of particular characters and imagery that is explicitly seductive and alluring, transforming shallow ideology into something worthy of attention. In film, this often involves expensive visuals or a superstar who attracts our attention while in myth it can involve charismatic heroes or alluring imagery. In the case of the superstar or Hellenic hero, such images are persona driven as opposed to character driven. Think of the difference

obviousness of conflict, social injustice, the market, the welling up of culture. But for me, the greatest and most important event of perhaps our entire history has fundamentally gone unnoticed: the transiting from old nature – or the natural environment as our host of life for human habitation – into a technological milieu, into mass technology, as the environment of life." ■ Reference "Reggio (2002)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

27 Note, for example, that Phillip Glass continues to perform his score for the film alongside screenings in concert halls around the world. Morris (2007) offers an extended account of the special status of Phillip Glass's score for the film. He argues that the usual causal and narrative connections that bind a score to a film are reversed in this film, resulting in a meditative experience that can be best understood in terms of Reggio's commitment to Catholic mysticism and the writings of Teilhard de Chardin.

between Thrasymachus' argument and Glaucon's mythical Ring of Gyges, which adapts the well-known lore surrounding the rise of the historical king of Lydia.[28] By using this persona, rather than merely making an argument or utilizing an unknown character, the audience is seduced into seeing themselves or identifying with Gyges. The same can be said for a film like *Lost in Translation*. Would the film and its corresponding intent to emphasize the meaninglessness of existence be as enticing without Bill Murray, a presence reinforced by his character in other films, like *Broken Flowers* (Jim Jarmusch, 2005), and *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993)?

■ Reference "Harold Ramis, (1993)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

■ Reference "Jim Jarmusch, (2005)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The erotic in *kalos mythos* is what compels audiences to the virtuous life, i.e. in the case of the Noble Lie, the desirability of a well-ordered life is clearly imagined and contrasted with the disordered city/soul. Put otherwise, the "star" of these myths or films is the moral that causes us to see the good life as not only possible but also desirable. For instance, *kalos mythos* might use famous actors or heroes in its telling but instead of that being what compels the audience, we are drawn to the moral of the story. In other words, in the film the moral, as opposed to the character, is placed front and center. Think here of films like *Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994). We have many fine and attractive actors in this film but ultimately it is a story of friendship, struggle, hope and justice, and when one leaves the theatre one is enticed by the moral of the story, tempted by the possibility of being good or hopeful in a world that is often dangerously indifferent to human suffering.

■ Reference "Frank Darabont, (1994)" is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

The erotic element or the seductive "star" of *eikōs mythos* is a kind of transcendent beauty or grace. In other words, *eikōs mythos* is in some sense explicitly self-aware of the inherent limits of what it intends to bring forth in the myth or the film, its "star" is elusive and cannot be made fully present. Myths and films of this variety allow the ideas to be part and parcel of what constitutes the backbone of the story but, ultimately, the ideas are independent and not self-contained. These stories resist closure and dogmatic readings.

28 Herodotus, *Histories* 1.7–13. See Partenie (2009: 2) and Brisson (1999: 153–155), where they each note Plato's adaptation of traditional myth. Examples of this include the Promethean theft of fire (*Protagoras* 320c–323a), the Noble Lie's appeal to the Hesiodic myth of ages and the Cadmeian myth of autochthony (*Republic* 414c). Partenie (2009:3) also notes that Plato appeals to traditional mythology even in his own original constructions, citing the use of the androgyne in the *Symposium*, the Isles of the Blessed, notions of eschatological judgment, etc. Here, one could appeal to Morgan (2000) to show how Plato transforms the use of these "stars" for philosophical purposes insofar as she clearly shows how sophists would establish authority via appealing to characters like Nestor or Odysseus but that "Socrates speaks in his own voice, but in so doing he becomes assimilated to and rewrites heroes of the past." (133) In other words, the dialogues as kinds of myth, are transforming the image of the hero as one stimulates thought and a pursuit of the good life.

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For example, the *eikōs mythos* of the *Timaeus* intentionally offers an image of the Demiurge's creative work that resists closure and even repeatedly starts over from different vantage points, imagining creation from the perspective of "Reason" and then later from the perspective of "Necessity." Think also of the *Phaedrus* and the Myth of the Charioteer or the Allegory of the Cave from the *Republic*. Both myths cause us to experience the journey of the soul, momentarily allowing us to ascend, grow our wings or struggle toward the sun. Nevertheless, the images resist full articulation. What does it mean to ascend? What is the role of the other in (re)growing our wings or escaping the cave? What are our wings? The images will never definitely answer these questions, rather they invite audiences to engage them again and again so that the experience of ascent is continuously relived anew each time we read it. To be sure, finding examples of the erotic in films deploying *eikōs mythos* is difficult, as the ideas that grace films are intentionally hard to pinpoint. Again, one can return to *Carol*, where the idea of love graces the film but is never completely exhausted. This film, unlike *Shawshank Redemption*, does not clearly tell us how we should live, does not clearly spell out the meaning of the film, so as to suggest that one way of life is better than another. Rather, in its ambiguity it causes us to experience love in its paradoxical form whilst inviting us to engage and question what love is, cementing the viewer's ability to experience love as paradoxical.

4 Conclusion

It is natural to presume that Plato's relationship to film would be a simple one of dismissal, that, at best, for Plato films can serve as illustrations for philosophical arguments. In contrast we are suggesting that the moving imagery of film and/or the images of myth initiate us to live lives beyond mere critical reflection. Rather, in unpacking the self-reflective, relational, phantastic and erotic aspects of various types of images deployed by Plato, i.e. *psuedos*, *kalos* and *eikōs* we hope to have shown how his images demand that we experience ourselves and the world in unique and visceral ways. This is why, on the one hand, for Plato myth could be so dangerous and intoxicating, tempting us to lead lives far from virtue (*pseudos mythos*). On the other hand, Plato utilized myth because it could also instill in us hope and faith in the virtuous life, healing us from our own self-interest and narcissism (*kalos mythos*). Yet, beyond this, Plato used mythical imagery like the Charioteer of the Soul or the Demiurge to show how such imagery possesses the paradoxical ability to reveal that which transcends corporeal, embodied life. These images highlight and cause us to momentarily experience the beauty and transcendence of the lives we

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inhabit (*eikōs mythos*). In sum, the images we experience, both mythic and cinematic, whether they are *pseudos*, *kalos* or *eikōs*, no longer just prompt philosophical reflection, but they can truly touch us, directing us toward ways of life we may never have even thought possible.

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