

Opinion et Savoir: the distinction between Knowledge and Opinion in Plato's Republic

Cours interactif en visioconférence proposé aux partenaires du Projet *Europe, Éducation, École*, destiné plus spécialement aux élèves anglophones des sections européennes et internationales, le 20/12/2012, 14h-15h par Marion Durand, doctorante à l'Université de Toronto

<http://melies.ac-versailles.fr/projet-europe/direct/>

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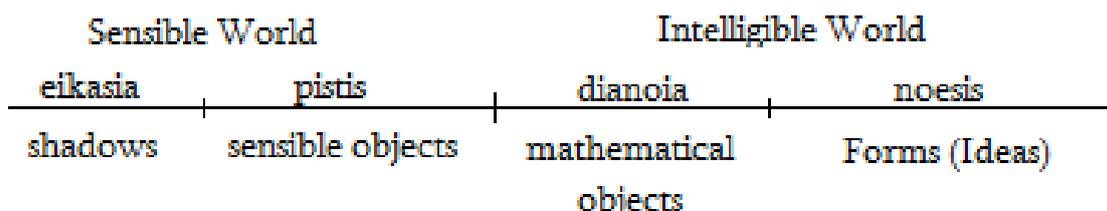
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What can I know? What does it mean to know something? In the analogy of the divided line, Plato assigns different objects to different capacities of cognition. Knowledge, it seems, belongs to the intelligible realm and opinion to the sensible. The distinction begins earlier, in Republic V, where Plato argues only philosophers should rule the state, because only they have knowledge when others merely have opinion (or belief). He opposes the philosophers to the “lovers of sights and sounds”. He presents the latter as “like dreamers”, insofar as they confuse things which are alike with things which are identical. He asserts that knowledge can only be had over what is (unconditionally), whilst belief lies between knowledge and ignorance and is of “what is and isn’t”. How does this fit in with the line? What does it entail? How convincing is it? With these questions in mind, we will run through the first argument, before delving into the image of the line, in an attempt to understand Plato’s distinction between Knowledge and Opinion, and the path to be taken by the philosopher.

Texts:

1. Plato, *The Republic* VI 509d-511e (Translation by C.D.C Reeve, 2004) – Analogy of the line
2. *For Reference*: Plato, *The Republic* V 475d-479b (Translation by C.D.C Reeve, 2004)

Image of the divided line:



“eikasia” = imagination (sometimes also translated conjecture or trust)

“pistis” = belief

“dianoia” = thought (sometimes also translated mathematical reasoning, or understanding)

“noesis” = understanding (sometimes also translated dialectic or intellection)