**Plato on *Pistis*: Belief and Trust -** **Jessica Moss, NYU[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**I. Plato’s *Pistis***

The *Republic* distinguishes four cognitive conditions corresponding to the four levels of the Divided Line. Three have been much studied and much debated. My focus here is on the most neglected: *pistis*.

*Pistis* has a good claim to be an important player in Plato’s system. It is one of two kinds of *doxa* (it and *eikasia* (imaging) “together are *doxa,*”[[2]](#footnote-2) *Republic* 534a) and it is the superior kind, being clearer and set over truer objects (511d-e).As the best kind of *doxa* it should be be of interest in its own right. Moreover, studying it should illuminate Plato’s epistemology more generally, by showing the limits of *doxa* and the border between *doxa* and *epistêmê*. Thus we might expect Plato to tell us a fair amount about *pistis.* But he does not.

The only explicit description the Divided Line passage givesis that it is set over ordinary visible objects: animals, plants, and manufactured things (510a), i.e. the things which cast the shadows and reflections that are the objects of *eikasia*.

Nor do we get any elaboration in the Cave allegory. If we follow Socrates’ instruction to match up the stages to those of the Divided Line (517a-b with 534a), the chained cave-prisoners who are observing and identifying shadows symbolize *eikasia,* and *pistis* should be symbolized by those who are one level up, attending to the puppets. But we hear very little about this level, or arguably even nothing at all:

When one was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his neck around, walk, and look up toward the light, he would be pained by doing all these things and *unable to see the things* whose shadows he’d seen before.[[3]](#footnote-3) (*Republic* 515c, emphases mine)

Presumably there is a later time where the prisoner’s eyes adjust and can attend to the puppets; we do hear about such adjustment at the next levels, when the prisoners leave the cave. For *pistis* to be analogous to the other levels, then, and to be “clearer” than *eikasia*, it would have to be the condition in which one can look steadily at the statues; but Plato moves on to the next level without even mentioning this condition.

Beyond the Line and Cave passages it is not obvious where to look. The word ‘*pistis’* occurs only twice more in the *Republic*, and although I shall argue below that one of these is very illuminating – Book X’s use of ‘*pistis*’ for the mental state of the making-craftsperson (601e) – it is certainly not obvious that Plato intends either in any technical sense, as a reference back to the condition he named on the Divided Line, nor how this would work if he did.

Perhaps Plato thought the nature of *pistis* too obvious to need explication. If so, he was wrong, as witnessed by the variety of interpretations we find.

Some hold that it is a widespread condition: “everyday belief” (Annas 1981, 250), “the normal condition of the average uneducated mind” (Adam 1902, 158), or something slightly superior, “commonsense” (Cross and Woozley 1964, Smith 1996, 28) – presumably because it is correlated with ordinary perceptible objects, the things to which ordinary people confine their attention. But this seems to conflict with Plato’s claim that it is the chained cave prisoners – those who can only see shadows, i.e. who are in *eikasia* rather than *pistis* – who are “like us”, i.e. like people who have not yet started their philosophical education (515a).

Others thus think it a more elevated state, one which only a few people achieve. Among these is Reeve, on whose view *pistis* is “folk-wisdom,” attained through training in a craft, or in music and gymnastics: those “whose unnecessary appetites have been curbed” through such training – that is, oligarchic soul-types – “have their intelligence focused by their ruling necessary appetites” onto the better class of perceptibles (1988, 51 and 56-57). Crombie too attributes *pistis* to trained craftspeople (1962vol. 2, 86). Storey argues that *pistis* differs from *eikasia* in being stable and also “sensitive to the difference between appearance and reality” (cf. Moss 2014), and holds that *pistis* about ethical matters requires a process like the musical education of the guardians and auxiliaries (2022, 301-2).

This variety of interpretations reflects a lack of consensus not just about *pistis*’s nature, but alsoabout methodology: what should guide us in figuring out what it is? Since there is no extended discussion of *pistis* in the Line passage, arguably none at all in the Cave passage, and no clear indication that it is under discussion elsewhere, it would seem that interpreters are mostly left to their own devices.

Plato does however provide us with one notable guide: the name. ‘*Pistis*’is not at his time an established word for a doxastic condition. Thus by using it in this way he is innovating – or at the very least, firming up something suggested by a few Presocratics (see below). He must then have had some special reason for choosing this as a label – he must have wanted to evoke some connotation of the word.

In Plato’s time and before, *pistis* is the standard word for trust or confidence in a person, god, or object, and it later becomes the standard Christian word for faith. Some translators of the *Republic* do pay special heed to these connotations, giving ‘faith’ or ‘conviction,’ and a few interpreters elaborate: for Annas “the word suggests confident belief” (1981, 248); for Crombie *pistis* is “the condition in which we are entitled to be confident because we can actually see the thing about which we are judging”(1962vol 2., 76).

This is a promising strategy, but I want to show that we can go further: the name in fact gives us a lot to go on. By looking at how Plato uses ‘*pistis*’ elsewhere in the *Republic*, and also at how both he and his predecessors use not only the nounbut also its cognate verb and adjective, *pisteuô* and *pistos*, we can derive a fleshed-out account of this condition which fits with Plato’s broader usage, as well as with the specifics of the Divided Line.

On the account that I will defend, *pistis* is belief constituted by trust in an informant’s testimony.[[4]](#footnote-4)

 I show how this account emerges from uses of *pistis, pistos* and *pisteuô* up to Plato’s time. I then show that this account licenses us in leaning heavily on *Republic* X’s use of ‘*pistis’* to illuminate *pistis* on the Divided Line. I end by arguing that the Divided Line’s *pistis* should be understood as belief constituted by trust in the reports and commands of experts – including, most importantly, the expert philosophical rulers of the good city or soul.

**II. *Pistis* before Plato**

What does ‘*pistis*’mean before Plato presses it into service on the Divided Line? Lexica give a variety of meanings for the word, without showing systematic connections between them. We can however discern a clear pattern, and it is one that can explain and illuminate Plato’s use. In this section I lay out evidence for four main meanings, which form two pairs; in the next section I show how the pairs are connected, with the result that *pistis* as belief is an instance of *pistis* as trust.

(i) Pledge and trust:

‘*Pistis*’starts its recorded life in Hesiod and Theognis, in passages where it is usually translated as ‘trust’:

Let the wage promised to a friend be fixed; even with your brother smile—and get a witness; for *pisteis* [plural] and *apistiai* [the opposite] alike ruin men.[[5]](#footnote-5)  (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 370-72 trans. Evelyn-White)

For them there is no *pistis* in their deeds,[[6]](#footnote-6) but they love treachery, deceit, and craftiness. (Theognis, I.66).

*Pistis* is also frequently used in a closely related way, to denote something that generates trust: a pledge, guarantee, or assurance. These are often oaths or vows, and sometimes physical acts or objects. For example:

They make use of this kind of *pisteis*:[[7]](#footnote-7) each gives his hand for the other to drink from, and drinks from the other’s hand. (Herodotus, *Histories* 4.172)

So here we have a pair of uses, which following convention we may call objective and subjective: the object that produces trust (the pledge or guarantee), and the mental state, trust, that it produces.[[8]](#footnote-8) (It is worth noting that despite standard translations, ‘*pistis*’ in the passages from Hesiod and Theognis are arguably ambiguous between these two uses.) *Pistis* continues to be used for this pair throughout its history.

(ii) Proof and credence

At some point, we start seeing the wordalso being used for what might look to be a quite different notion: *proof* or *evidence*. This use is particularly widespread in the orators. Antiphon speaks of witnesses offering *pistis saphestatê*, translatable as “clearest evidence” or “clearest proof” (*On the Choreutes* 28), Demosthenes speaks of *pistis* coming from witnesses and signs (*tekmêria*) (*Against Aphobus* 2.23; cf. “it is a *tekmêrion* and *pistis*,” *Against Aphobus* 40), and Isocrates explicitly classifies signs and probabilities (*eikota*) as species of *pistis* (*Antidosis* 15.279).[[9]](#footnote-9) A *pistis* in this sense is often although certainly not always something spoken, a *logos* – an argument, verbal proof. This sense of *pistis* is well-known to us from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, but we see it earlier too:

Those very same *pisteis* by which, when speaking, we persuade others, we use when we deliberate.[[10]](#footnote-10) (Isocrates, *Antidosis* 15.256)

Plato would clearly have been aware of this use, then, and indeed we find instances of it at *Phaedo* 70b and *Laws* 966c.[[11]](#footnote-11)

It might seem that we are still quite far from belief. But we have in fact come into the neighborhood: for just as pledges produce trust (when they function as they should), so proof and evidence produce belief – or something closely related: credence, or conviction. That is, just as pledges are the objective counterpart of trust, evidence is the objective counterpart of belief or credence. And indeed there are a few instances of *pistis* in Plato’s predecessors which seem to have this meaning, although none unambiguously. The most famous come from Parmenides:

...the opinions (*doxai*)of mortals, in which there is no true *pistis.*[[12]](#footnote-12) (Parmenides B1.30)

For never from what is not will the strength of *pistis* allow anything to come to be apart from it.[[13]](#footnote-13) (Parmenides B8.12)

It is unbeginning and unstopping, since generation and perishing have wandered very far off, and true *pistis* pushed them away.[[14]](#footnote-14) (Parmenides B8.28).

Some take these as objective uses, translating as ‘assurance,’ ‘evidence,’ ‘persuasive force.’[[15]](#footnote-15) Others take them as subjective, translating as ‘conviction’ or ‘belief.’[[16]](#footnote-16) We find similarly ambiguous uses in Empedocles and Democritus:

If *pistis* about these things is at all feeble for you,[[17]](#footnote-17) how from the mingling of water, earth, aether, and sun arose the forms and colors of mortal things… (Empedocles B71, trans. based on Graham)

Wretched mind, you take your *pisteis* from us [the senses], and yet you overthrow us?[[18]](#footnote-18) (Democrtius B125, trans. Based on Taylor; cf. B 115)

Arguably these uses, along with many others,[[19]](#footnote-19) are genuinely indeterminate between the objective and subjective.[[20]](#footnote-20) None give unambiguous evidence of ‘*pistis*’ denoting a doxastic mental state, such as we find in the *Republic*’sDivided Line passage. Nonetheless they clearly bring us closer to that. *Pistis* in these passages is something closely related to the mental state of belief or conviction: either it is that state itself, or it is something that tends to produce that state – evidence, proof, something that convinces us and makes us believe.

Here then we have a strong precedent for Plato’s use in the Divided Line: plausibly he chose *pistis* because it already had an established, or at least inchoate, doxastic use. But this answer only raises further questions. Why did the orators, and the Presocratics, take a word that means either *pledge* or *trust* and put it to work to mean something apparently quite different, *proof*, and then arguably also *conviction* or *belief*? And why did Plato, in labeling the mental phenomena on the Divided Line, choose that particular word, rather than some more established term?

**III. Belief as trust**

So far I have been speaking as if *pistis* is ambiguous: there are two pairs of objective-subjective senses, first guarantee/trust, and then evidence/belief. I want to show, however, that the two pairs are closely related, as genus and species. Looking at how both Plato and his predecessors use *pistis,* and especially its cognate verb and adjective, *pisteuô* and *pistos*, we will see that theguarantee/trust meanings are basic. As to evidence and belief, these are just specific applications of the basic meaning. *When a guarantee is a certain kind of object in a certain role – namely, a logos or other representation, in the role of representing reality – it amounts to evidence, and trust in it amounts to belief.*

A note before I begin: in broad outlines, my project here and the conclusion I reach are very indebted to

Mourelatos’ discussion of *pistis* and *peithô* in Parmenides and predecessors.[[21]](#footnote-21) But the differences are

important. First, Mourelatos assimilates *pistis* and *peithô*, based on their close etymological connection (where *peithô* is primary). But *peithô* and its cognate *peithomai* are used mainly for verbal interactions (hence the standard translations ‘persuade’ (viz., with an argument) and ‘obey’ (viz, a command), while *pistis* and *pisteuô* have much wider application. Indeed, the notion of trusting is wider than that of being persuaded. In particular, it is difficult to explain the notion of persuasion independently of the notion of belief: plausibly, as Plato puts it, “to persuade someone is to make them believe (*doxasai*)” (*Theaet.* 201b), where this defines persuasion. Trust on the other hand is more general than and in principle independent of belief.[[22]](#footnote-22) Thus I think it fruitful to isolate out *pistis/pisteuô/pistos* as a distinctive group in considering their connection with belief. Second, Mourelatos presents his account as one of historical development: on his view this family of words starts out meaning trust , and only later comes to mean belief.[[23]](#footnote-23) I find evidence of much earlier and more widespread doxastic uses of the *pistis* family than he does, however (largely by looking at the verb, and by looking beyond uses with *hôs/hoti*), and my account is less an etymological or developmental one than an argument about patterns of use. I point out that the same authors use the same words in ways we could translate as both ‘trust’ and ‘believe,’ often in the same sentence, and therefore that we should try to – and can – find a univocal interpretation. Finally, I trace the connection between interpersonal trust and belief via a route Mourelatos does not mention: trust in informants and testimony. This in turn influences the conclusion I reach: while he characterizes belief as trust in a fact, I will argue that the evidence supports a conception of it instead as a trust in a claim or other testimonial representation.

**IV. Trust in informants**

To see the connection between the two uses of *pistis,* we can begin with a general point: trust is usually, perhaps always, had in an object in some particular role, context, or domain.[[24]](#footnote-24) When Hesiod speaks of *pisteis* and *apistiai*, we know he has in mind trust and mistrust of people *qua* partners in some enterprise. When Homer speaks of a *pistos hetairos* (e.g. *Odyssey* 15.539) there is obviously an implicit appeal to a specific role: a trusty comrade is someone trusty *as* a comrade (rather than say, as a doctor or cook). Or to take an example with the verb:

Arion…wished to sail to Italy and Sicily....Having *pistis* in no-one more than the Corinthians (*pisteuonta…Korinthiosi*), he hired a Corinthian vessel.[[25]](#footnote-25) (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.24.2)

Arion clearly trusted the Corinthians in a particular role: as people who would carry him safely to Italy.

Now consider one particular role in which someone can be trusted: as an *informant* or *source*. The verb often appears in this context. For example, from Herodotus again:

The Greeks did not have *pistis* in them (*autoisi…episteueon*) although they spoke the truth.[[26]](#footnote-26) (Herodotus, 2.120.5)

Compare among many other instances:

If you don’t hear from yourself that just things are also beneficial, don’t have *pistis* in someone else saying it (*allôi ge legonti mê pisteusês*).[[27]](#footnote-27) (Plato, *Alcibiades* I 114e; cf. *Cratylus* 400e and others).

Grammatically these look very like the example of Arion trusting the Corinthians: *pisteueô* with a dative object. In these instances, however, the object is modified with a participle: *legonti*, ‘speaking’. The effect is to specify that the *pistis* is had or lacked in someone in a particular role or context: *qua* speaker or informant.

How should we translate these last two passages? “The Greeks did not *trust* them” and “Don’t *trust* them when they are speaking” work well. But it is equally idiomatic to translate “The Greeks did not *believe* them,” “Don’t *believe* them.” Why should this be? Because, very plausibly, *to trust someone in their role of informant just is what we call believing them*: being guided by their testimony, accepting their word. Hence the use in English of “Trust me” to mean “Believe me” – as in “Trust me, the answer is 42.” As Anscombe puts it, believing someone is “trusting them for the truth” (1979, 151).[[28]](#footnote-28)

We also see this pattern where the informant is not another person, but one’s own mental faculties. For example, in Plato:

[Pleasure] is farther behind than the third place, if I should at all have *pistis* in my own mind at present (*tôi emôi nôi dei pisteuein*). - Certainly, Socrates, it seems to me/I believe (*emoige dokei*)that pleasure has fallen ...[[29]](#footnote-29) (*Philebus* 22e)

Socrates trusting his mind that pleasure has fallen is here treated as parallel to Protarchus believing that pleasure has fallen, and we can see why: one’s mind (or senses, or memory, or reasoning) can be an informant, and therefore to trust it in this role is to believe it.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**V.** **Trust in claims**

Just as we can trust an informant, so too we can trust the kind of things informant tell us: their testimony, or claims. There are many instances of *pistos* and *pisteuô* with things that fit this category, arguably including the oldest: Homer and Hesiod both often mention *pista horkia*, where *‘horkia*’ sometimes refers to physical pledge-objects but sometimes to oaths – verbal items. We also often find *pistos* and *pisteuô* with unequivocally verbal items, especially *logoi* – accounts, claims; literally, things spoken. Do *pistos* and *pisteuô* change their meanings when they are used with verbal items rather than friends or gods? There is very strong reason to think that they do not. Consider the following passages:

I wish that you, having *pistis* in (*pisteusanta*)both the gods and my *logoi*[[31]](#footnote-31)would sail from this land with me… (Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 1374)

They are instructing you to not have *pistis* in (*apistein*) the witnesses, but they say it’s necessary to have *pistis* in (*pisteuein*)the *logoi* which they themselves speak.[[32]](#footnote-32) (Antiphon, *On the Choreutes* 28)

These sentences don’t look zeugmatic: the idea seems to be that one can bear the very same attitude toward a *logos* (account, claim) as toward a god, witness, or horse. If the word means trust when applied to people, then our default assumption should be that it means trust when applied to *logos* as well.

And indeed we could very aptly translate as ‘trust in’ throughout. For what is it to trust an account or claim? In principle one could trust it to do any manner of things, e.g. entertain, deceive, distract – just as one could trust a person to be disruptive, vicious, or boring. But these passages suggest that just as there is a default way to trust a person, the way we should infer a speaker has in mind when they do not state or imply otherwise, so too there is a default way to trust a claim: by letting it guide one’s behavior or judgment (obey the exhortation to sail away, in Sophocles; accept the prosecution’s version of events, in Antiphon).

Why would trusting a *logos* entail letting it guide one’s thought and behavior? I suggest the following account.

First: *Logoi* are claims or representations, that is, things that purport to show us how things are. So this is their main function. Just as trusting a car’s brakes means trusting them to do a good job of what brakes do (stopping the car), so trusting a representation means trusting it to do a good job of what representations do – representing reality.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Second: For a representation to do a good job of representing reality is for it to be *true*. Indeed, the Greeks sometimes spell out the notion of trusting a *logos* as trusting it to be true. For example:

These are things [claims made in a myth] which, Callicles, I, having heard, *pisteuô* to be true.[[34]](#footnote-34) (*Gorgias* 524a)

Another passage in Plato provides particularly clear evidence not only that there is a correlation between trusting a *logos* andtaking it to be true, but also that Plato was very aware of these connections, and wanted to draw attention to them. I have in mind the famous misology passage from the *Phaedo*, which draws an extended analogy between trusting a person and trusting a *logos*:[[35]](#footnote-35)

Misology and misanthropy arise in the same way. For misanthropy arises from having *pistis* in (*pisteuetai*) someone strongly without *technê* [viz., of people]. *You think (hêgêsasthai) the person is in every way true and sound and* *pistos*, and then a while later you find him base and *apistos* [opposite of *pistos*] and then the same with another person…*Logoi* are similar to people in this way: if someone *has pistis in* (*pisteuêi*) *some logos to be true,* without having the *technê* about *logoi*,and then after a while it seems (*doxêi*) to him to be false**,** whether it is so or not, and this happens again and again; then, you know, especially those who have spent their time in debaters’ *logoi* in the end think that …there is nothing sound or stable either in things or in *logoi…* [[36]](#footnote-36) (*Phaedo* 89d-90c, emphases added)

The parallels here very strongly suggest that ‘*pisteuô*’ denotes the same relation both when applied to people and when applied to *logoi*. If it means trust in the former case, as it clearly does, it should mean trust in the latter case too. Moreover, the implication is that in both casestrusting somethinginvolves taking it to be true, where this is at least closely connected to taking it to be trustworthy, *pistos*.[[37]](#footnote-37) When we trust a person we regard them as true, i.e. loyal and decent and reliable. When we trust a *logos* we regard it as true – that is, as an accurate account of reality.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Third: This means that the default way to trust a claiminvolves regarding it as true, and therefore relying on it to guide one’s judgment and behavior.

Finally: This is a good account of what we mean by *believing* a claim. (Consider the equivalence in English between “Do you trust the rumor?” “Do you think the rumor is true?” and “Do you believe the rumor?”)

Indeed, in many other passages in Plato, and elsewhere, we see *pisteueô* paired with *logos* or with other terms for representations,where these phrases are closely correlated with terms for ‘believe’. For example:

– Well, then, do we have *pistis* in (*pisteuomen*) the earlier *logoi*, in which we said that [music imitates characters]…? Or how [do we think about this]? – Our *dogma* is in no way other than that.[[39]](#footnote-39) (*Laws* 798d-e)

Trusting *logoi* which say that *p* is equivalent to having the *dogma* that *p*. Consider also:

From the evidence (*tekmêriôn*) that I find I can have *pistis* in (*pisteusai*)…I judge (*nomizô*) that earlier events were not on the same scale.[[40]](#footnote-40) (Thucydides, I.1.3 – I.2.1, trans. based on Mynott)

Now the state of affairs in early times I have found to have been such as I have described, although it is difficult in such matters to have *pistis* in every piece of evidence (*panti tekmêriôi pisteusai*). For people accept from one another hearsay reports of former events, neglecting to test them just the same even though these events belong to the history of their own country. Take the Athenians, for example; most of them think that (*oiontai*)Hipparchus was tyrant when he was slain by Harmodius and Aristogeiton....[[41]](#footnote-41) (Thucydides I.20.1, trans. based on Mynott)

Trusting evidence(*tekmêria*)is equivalent to believing (*nomizô, oiomai*)that what the evidence shows is true. Thus just as to have *pistis* in a person *qua* informant is to believe them, so to have *pistis* in an account, claim or other representation *qua* representation is to believe it.

I hope to have shown in this section that even if Plato innovates in using ‘*pistis*’as a name for belief, he is working within an established tradition that uses ‘*pisteuô*’to mean believe. I have also argued that the doxastic sense of the ‘*pisteuô*’ is not distinct from its main sense. Instead, ‘*pisteuô*’always means trust, but to trust a *logos* (or other representation) as such is to believe it.

We can easily extend this account to explain how the noun *pistis* in its subjective sense, trust, can take on the meaning of belief: it does so when it refers to the specific kind of trust we have in a *logos* or other representation as such. We can also use the account to explain why the adjective *pistos* can mean both trustworthy and convincing: just as a *pistos* comrade is trustworthy *qua* comrade, a *pistos logos* is trustworthy *qua logos* – in other words, it is such as to merit the kind of trust we have in *logoi*, namely beliefs. And we can also use the account to explain why the noun *pistis* in its objective sense can refer both to a pledge and to a proof. Both are guarantees, things whose function is to elicit trust. A pledge is something that elicits interpersonal trust, while a proof is something that elicits the kind of trust we have in *logoi,* namely belief.

I want now to show that this account of doxastic *pistis* is strongly supported by Plato’s use of the word. For, with the sole exception of the Divided Line passage, whenever he chooses ‘*pistis*’as a label for a doxastic condition, he makes explicit that the *doxa* in question is a response to a claim made by an informant. The informant is not always a person, and the claim is not always a *logos*, but there is always an informant and always a claim. Given what we have seen, it is very reasonable to infer that Plato uses ‘*pistis*’ for beliefs when he wants to emphasize that the beliefs result from trust in an informant’s testimony.

**VI. Plato’s *pistis***

Unlike any author before him, Plato uses ‘*pistis*’in an unambiguously doxastic way.

We have already seen him using it to name a species of *doxa* on the *Republic*’s Divided Line: *pistis* and *eikasia* “together are *doxa*” (534a, in recapitulating the Line; the implication is that they are both species of *doxa*).

There are only three other instances where he uses ‘*pistis*’to mean belief. (There is one other which I think is ambiguous between the subjective and objective senses, but which in any case fits my account well, at *Philebus* 50c.[[42]](#footnote-42) And there is one use which is often translated as ‘belief,’ but I think wrongly so, at *Republic* 505e.[[43]](#footnote-43)) They all fit well with the hypothesis that Plato uses ‘*pistis*’ for beliefs that result from trusting an informant’s testimony.

The most obvious fit comes from Book X of the *Republic*, long after we have heard about *pistis* on the Line:

The flute-player reports (*exangellei*)to the flute-maker about flutes, which ones serve in flute-playing, and will order the kind that he should make, and the other will serve him...Then the one, having knowledge, reports about good and bad flutes, and the other, having *pistis* (*pisteueôn*) will make them... Then about the same apparatus the maker will have correct *pistis* about its excellence and defects, from associating with the knower and being compelled to listen to the knower, but the user will have knowledge...And will the imitator have knowledge from use about the things he draws, about whether they are beautiful and correct or not? Or [will he have] correct *doxa* from associating with the knower from necessity, and receiving orders about what kind of things he must draw? (*Republic* 601d-602a, trans. mine)[[44]](#footnote-44)

Here *pisits* is explicitly said to be produced by the testimony of a trusted authority. The fluteplayer issues *logoi:* he reports (*exangelei*) what makes for a good flute, and gives orders (*epitaxei*) about how to make the flutes. The flutemaker complies, “trusting (*pisteueôn*).” Plato does not explicitly state the object of this trust, but it must be either the fluteplayer or the reports and orders – the informant or their testimony. (Plato may well see no need to draw a distinction here, for if we trust an informant *qua* informant, we will therefore trust their testimony.) The flutemaker’s resulting mental state is called “correct *pistis*,” and then a few lines later “correct *doxa*.” The clear implication is that this trust-based mental state is a belief: ‘*pistis*’is here either equivalent to ‘*doxa*,’ or – perhaps with appeal to the Divided Line classification – names one kind of *doxa*.

We find another instance of doxastic *pistis* in the *Gorgias*’ discussion of rhetorical persuasion:

Do having learned and having acquired *pistis* (*memathêkenai kai pepisteukenai*)*,* or learning (*mathêsis*) and *pistis*, seem to you the same, or different?...Is there, Gorgias, a false and a true *pistis*?...Yes….But now, is there a false and a true knowledge (*epistêmê*)?...Then it is clear again that they are not the same…And yet both those who have learnt and those who have acquired *pistis* (*pepisteukotes*) have been persuaded (*pepeismenoi*)…Then shall we posit two kinds of persuasion (*peithous*), one providing *pistis* without knowledge, and the other providing knowledge? (*Gorgias* 454d-e)[[45]](#footnote-45)

Elsewhere when Plato contrasts learning with being persuaded, he calls the result of the latter *doxa* (see *Theaetetus* 201a-c and *Timaeus* 51d-e).[[46]](#footnote-46) His use of ‘*pistis*’ here instead might suggest that it is just a synonym for ‘*doxa*’*.* Alternately, perhaps he means that *pistis* is the kind of *doxa* that results from persuasion, leaving open that there are other kinds of *doxa* (perhaps, for example, *doxa* based on sense-perception, or conjecture, would not count as *pistis*).

In either case, the *Gorgias* clearly presents *pistis* as something that results from persuasion (*peithô*) by an orator, and this fits well with our account. An orator is an informant, and his *logoi* are his testimony; the belief formed by accepting this testimony – trusting it – is thus precisely the kind of thing we should expect Plato to refer to as *pistis*.

The final instance comes from the *Timaeus*’ discussion of the World-Soul’s cognitions. When the World-Soul comes into contact with anything,

it says (*legei*)...what the object is the same as and from what it is different.... And this *logos* that is alike true about the different and about the same, being carried through the self-moved without voice or sound, whenever itarises about the perceptible, and the circle of the Different going straight proclaims it to the whole soul, *doxai* and *pisteis* arise stable and true; but whenever in turn it is about the rational, and the circle of the Same, circling smoothly, reveals these things, *nous* and *epistêmê* are necessarily accomplished. (*Timaeus* 37a-c)[[47]](#footnote-47)

Arguably here ‘*doxai*’and‘*pisteis*’are meant as synonyms (with the ‘*kai*’ epexegetical): Plato gives no indication about how they might differ.[[48]](#footnote-48) Alternately perhaps *pistis* is one kind of *doxa* (a superior kind which can be stable and true, by comparison with some inferior kind – perhaps an allusion to the Divided Line’s distinction between *pistis* and *eikasia*). In either case, *pistis* is clearly something akin to *doxa,* a belief, and here again itis a response to an informant’s *logos*: this time, to a silent *logos* uttered by the World-Soul to itself.[[49]](#footnote-49)

In these three passages then, our prediction is borne out: when Plato chooses to refer to a beliefas ‘*pistis*’, he is plausiblyemphasizing that it results from trust in an informant’s claim. (Notably this is one function of the English ‘belief’ and ‘believe’: in ordinary speech ‘think’ is more common than ‘believe,’ but ‘believe’ is more natural when we are emphasizing trust in testimony, as in “Do you really believe he’ll be there?” when he said that he would.)

There is only one other context in which Plato clearly uses ‘*pistis*’ to name a doxastic state: the Divided Line. I turn back now to that discussion, to see if the account of *pistis* we have derived can help us understand what he has in mind.

**VII. *Pistis* on the Divided Line**

Our account predicts that when Plato chooses ‘*pistis*’ as a label for a mental state on the Divided Line, he means to indicate that it is a belief resulting from trust in an informant’s testimony. Might this indeed be his view?

There is certainly no explicit corroboration. In his brief discussions of *pistis* in the Line passage, and in his reference back to it in explaining how the Line and Cave fit together, he tells us explicitly only that it is set over ordinary visible objects (510a), that it is higher than *eikasia* and thus greater in clarity (511d-e), and that it is a species of *doxa* (534a). Unlike in the passages from *Republic* X, the *Gorgias*, and *Timaeus*, there is no mention of any *logos*, or of anything that announces or reports or persuades – no reference to testimony, nor to an informant.

Nonetheless there is an obvious candidate for a relevant kind of informant and testimony. The natural

place to turn is to *Republic* X’s discussion of “correct *pistis*”, for this is almost the only other occurrence of the noun *‘pistis*’ in the dialogue,[[50]](#footnote-50) and here too *pistis* is associated with *doxa*. In this passage, as we saw, *pistis* is trust in expert testimony: the maker has correct *pistis* because he trusts the orders and commands of the knower. Perhaps then we can generalize: all *pistis* results from trust in expert testimony, and this is what sets it above *eikasia*, which is not guided by expertise at all.

This fits well with the idea that *pistis* is the best kind of *doxa*. Indeed in one other passage in the *Republic* whenPlato mentions a good kind of *doxa*, albeit without calling it *pistis*, he suggests that it results from deference to expert testimony. The courageous auxiliaries’ *doxa* about what is to be feared and not comes from obeying or being persuaded (*peisthentes*) by the laws (430a), where by the terms of the city-soul analogy the laws are parallel to what is proclaimed (*paraggelthen*) by *logoi* tothe courageous spirited part of the soul (442c). In other words, the soldiers, just like the flutemakers, get their good *doxai* by trusting experts’ proclamations.[[51]](#footnote-51)

What about the Divided Line’s central and arguably even definitional claim about *pistis*, that itis set over ordinary perceptible objects by contrast with their shadows? One might think this a poor fit with the present account: what does deferring to experts have to do with having beliefs about ordinary objects rather than shadows? In fact, *Republic* X suggests a close connection. Just as the carpenter makes a real visible bed, inferior to the Form of the Bed but superior to the painter’s image of the bed (596b-597d), so the flutemaker makes a real flute, by contrast with the poet or painter’s image: the makers, i.e. those with correct *pistis*, attend to ordinary perceptible objects by contrast with mere images. We can understand Plato’s idea as follows: although trust in one who knows the Form is not enough to give us that knowledge – *epistêmê* is gained not through testimony, but through difficult intellectual labor – it is enough to put us in touch with the best likeness of Forms available in the perceptible realm: to focus our beliefs on perceptible originals, rather than their images.

Altnerately, or additionally, we might take the *eikasia/pistis* distinction to concern value-beliefs.[[52]](#footnote-52) In the Cave the ontological divide is between “shadows of justice and the statues of which they are the shadows” (517d) – that is, between sensible instantiations of Justice, and imitations of these. So Plato’s idea would be that trusting expert testimony about value, as do the musically-educated soldiers in the *kallipolis*, puts one in touch with the best likenesses of value Forms available in the sensible world: actions and people that genuinely partake of Justice, for example, rather than the kind that the poets teach us to regard as just.

This is the beginning of a sketch of *pistis* as trust in expert testimony, in need of considerable further development and defense. There are also other ways to flesh out the account of *pistis* as trust in testimony, ways worth exploration: perhaps itis trust in the testimony of the senses (see 524a where the senses make reports (*paraggellei*, *legei*); perhaps it is trust in measurement and calculation (see 603a, where superior *doxa* results from having *pistis* in (*pisteuon*) these). I hope however to have shown that the specific account I sketched here is promising, both textually and philosophically.

More generally, whoever the relevant informant might be, I hope to have made a strong case that Plato thinks of *pistis* as belief based on trust in testimony. He chooses ‘*pistis*’ as his label for the superior form of *doxa* on the Divided Line because he wants to show that those who lack knowledge are not limited to contact with images and shadows, and therefore not doomed to murky, unstable beliefs with minimal hold on truth. Instead, by putting our trust in the right kind of testimony, we can become acquainted with the truest things available in the sensible realm, and thereby come to have beliefs that are as stable, true, and clear as *doxai* can be.

**Works Cited**

J. Adam (1902), *The* Republic *of Plato*, 2 vols., Cambridge

J. Annas (1981), *An Introduction to Plato’s* Republic, Oxford

G E.M. Anscombe (1979) “What is it to Believe Someone?” in Cornelius F. Delaney (ed.), *[Rationality and Religious Belief](https://philpapers.org/rec/DELRAR),* Notre Dame, 141–151

J. Bryan (2012), *Likeness and Likelihood in the Presocratics and Plato*, Cambridge

A. H. Coxon (2009), *The Fragments of Parmenides*, Las Vegas

I.M. Crombie (1962),*An Examination of Plato’s Doctrines*, 2 volumes, London

R.C. Cross and A.D. Woozley (1964), *Plato’s* Republic, *a Philosophical Commentary*, London

B. McMyler (2011), *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, Oxford

T. Miller (2015), “Socrates’ Warning against Misology,” *Phronesis* 60: 145-79

A. Mourelatos (1970), *The Route of Parmenides*, Yale

J. Moss (2014), “Plato’s Appearance-Assent Account of Belief,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 114: 213-39

C. Thi Nguyen (2023), “Trust as an Unquestioning Attitude,” *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* 7: 214-244

C.D.C. Reeve (1988), *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s* Republic, Princeton

N. Smith (1996), “Plato’s Divided Line,” *Ancient Philosophy* 16: 25-46

D. Storey (2022), “*Dianoia* and Plato’s Divided Line,” *Phronesis* 67: 253–308

G. Vlastos (1945), “Ethics and Physics in Democritus,” *The Philosophical Review* 54: 578-592

1. David Reeve’s book *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s* Republic was my introduction to systematic, detailed, creative thinking about *pistis,* the Divided Line, and many, many other topics in Plato, and has remained a touchstone for me ever since, later joined by the wonderful essays in *Blindness and Reorientation.* His translations of Plato and Aristotle have guided me deftly through many thorny passages, and made teaching these texts to my students a pleasure.I am honored and delighted to dedicate this paper to him. Thanks are also due to many people for comments and discussion, including audiences at the New England Symposium of Ancient Philosophy, the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, the World Congress of Philosophy, the University of Michigan, Binghamton University, Queen’s University, and NYU, and also to Damien Storey, and to the editors of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. συναμφότερα μὲν ταῦτα δόξαν. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. All translations from Plato’s *Republic* are based on Reeve’s unless otherwise noted. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Compare Miller 2015, with a focus on the *Phaedo*: he arguesthat *pistis* differs from *doxa* in always having an “interpersonal nuance,” i.e. deriving from trust in another’s testimony (2015, 149). I think this is mostly correct, but, drawing on mnay resources beyond the *Phaedo,* will add that ‘*pistis*’ is sometimes used when there is just an analogy between one’s attitude toward a *logos* or other representation and trust in a person, and is sometimes used for trust in the testimony of something other than a person (e.g. of one’s own senses or mind). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. πίστεις δ’ ἄρα [†](https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/help/BetaManual/online/P.html) ὁμῶς καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὤλεσαν ἄνδρας. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. σφιν ἐπ’ ἔργοισιν πίστις ἔπ’ οὐδεμία. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. πίστισι δὲ τοιῃσίδε χρέωνται. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For this terminology see among others Havelock 1963, 250-51 on objective and subjective senses of *doxa* (reputation or appearance vs. opinion); Vlastos 1945 applies the distinction to *pistis* with regard to the second pair of senses (see quotation below). Compare the English ‘assurance,’ which is similarly ambiguous. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. τὰ μὲν εἰκότα καὶ τὰ τεκμήρια καὶ πᾶν τὸ τῶν πίστεων εἶδος. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ταῖς γὰρ πίστεσιν αἷς τοὺς ἄλλους λέγοντες πείθομεν, ταῖς αὐταῖς ταύταις βουλευόμενοι χρώμεθα. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In both passages it is clear that ‘*pistis’* means evidence/proof, and plausible that the proof in question is verbal, an argument. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. βροτῶν δόξας, τῇς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.  [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. οὐδέ ποτ᾿ ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς γίγνεσθαί τι παρ᾿ αὐτό. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ἔστιν ἄναρχον ἄπαυστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὄλεθρος / τῆλε μάλ᾿ ἐπλάγχθησαν, ἀπῶσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθής. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See for example Bryan 2012, 92, who endorses this interpretation and offers a good discussion of the debate. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See for example Coxon 2009, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. εἰ δέ τί σοι περὶ τῶνδε λιπόξυλος ἔπλετο πίστις ...   [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Τάλαινα φρήν, παρ’ ἡμέων λαβοῦσα τὰς πίστεις ... [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For instance, when Antiphon speaks of accusations (*katêgoriai*) that are worth neither gratitude nor *pistis* (De Choreuta 10.2), one could translate as ‘trust’, but since accusations are propositional items, one could also translate as ‘belief’ or ‘credence’ (just as *pisteuô* a few lines below could be ‘trust’ or ‘believe’). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Vlastos argues that in the Presocratics *pistis* means “evidence, both in the subjective sense of confidence that one's belief is true and in the objective sense of reliable signs which justify such confidence” (1945, 590 n.60). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mourelatos (1970), *The Route of Parmenides*, Yale, 136-63. Mourelatos concludes that “The use of the πειθ- words in Parmenides suggests that the cognitive concept of ‘belief’ (at least in Greek thought) depends on a paradigm of ‘faith’ and ‘trust.’ …The paradigm case is that of a relationship between agents…But it is natural that the usage should extend to cover relationships between agents and instiutions…and eventually between agents as *thinkers* on the one side, and *facts* or *objects* in the world on the other” (p.163). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Contemporary philosophy offers many “doxastic” accounts of trust and faith, on which they reduce to or involve believing *that* something is the case, but there are also promising ones that make trust or faith

distinct from belief (or from close cousins of belief like acceptance). See especially Nguyen on one kind of trust as an “unquestioning attitude” (2022), and D’Cruz on trust as an “unguarded stance” (2020, and forthcoming.) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For the developmental claim see also, briefly, Miller 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. There is a debate in the philosophy of trust as to whether trust is fundamentally a two-place relation between a truster and a trusted object, or fundamentally a three-place relation between a truster, trusted object, and role: *S* trusts *x* to f. I will not try to settle that question. I need only the claim that there is at least *sometimes* some salient role in which a thing is trusted, whether explicitly specified or not. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. πιστεύοντα δὲ οὐδαμοῖσι μᾶλλον ἢ Κορινθίοισι μισθώσασθαι πλοῖον ἀνδρῶν Κορινθίων. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. οὐδὲ λέγουσι αὐτοῖσι τὴν ἀληθείην ἐπίστευον οἱ Ἕλληνες. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. καὶ ἐὰν μὴ αὐτὸς σὺ σαυτοῦ ἀκούσῃς ὅτι τὰ δίκαια καὶ συμφέροντά ἐστιν, ἄλλῳ γε λέγοντι μὴ πιστεύσῃς. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Contemporary work on trust-based theories of testimony (e.g. McMyler 2011), with its focus on normative questions about how trust in a person justifies believing what they say, takes the connection between trusting a person and believing them as a starting-point. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. πορρωτέρω δ᾽ ἐστί τῶν τριτείων, εἴ τι τῷ ἐμῷ νῷ δεῖ πιστεύειν ἡμᾶς τὰ νῦν. Ἀλλά μήν, ὦ  Σώκρατες, ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ νῦν μέν ἡδονή σοι πεπτωκέναι. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Compare *Phaedo* 83a-b on trusting the soul rather than anything else, where the salient competitor is the senses. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. θεοῖς τε πιστεύσαντα τοῖς τ’ ἐμοῖς λόγοις. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. τοῖς μαρτυροῦσιν ἀπιστεῖν ὑμᾶς διδάσκουσι, τοῖς δὲ λόγοις οἷς αὐτοῖ λέγουσι πιστεύειν ὑμᾶς φασι χρῆναι. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cf. Ngyuen 2023 on trust and function. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ταῦτ’ ἔστιν, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ἃ ἐγὼ ἀκηκοὼς πιστεύω ἀληθῆ εἶναι. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For interesting discussion of this passage, and a good overview of talk of trusting and mistrusting logoi in the *Phaedo*, see Miller 2015.. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. … ἥ τε γὰρ μισανθρωπία ἐνδύεται ἐκ τοῦ σφόδρα τινὶ πιστεῦσαι ἄνευ τέχνης, καῖ ἡγήσασθαι παντάπασί γε ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ ὑγιῆ καὶ πιστόν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἔπειτα ὀλίγον ὕστερον εὑρεῖν τοῦτον πονηρόν τε καὶ ἄπιστον, καὶ αὖθις ἕτερον … ὅμοιοι οἱ λόγοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις … ἐκείνῃ, ᾗ, ἐπειδἀν τις πιστεύσῃ λόγῳ τινὶ ἀληθεῖ εἶναι ἄνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης, κἄπειτα ὀλίγον ὕστερον αὐτῷ δόξῃ ψευδὴς εἶναι, ἐνίοτε μὲν ὤν, ἐνίοτε δ’ οὐκ ὤν, καὶ αὖθις ἕτερος καὶ ἕτερος· —καὶ μάλιστα δὴ οἱ περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες οἶσθ’ ὅτι τελευτῶντες οἴονται σοφώτατοι γεγονέναι καὶ κατανενοηκέναι μόνοι ὅτι οὔτε τῶν πραγμάτων οὐδενός οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς οὐδὲ βέβαιον οὔτε τῶν λόγων … [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Alêthês* applied to people can mean sincere, truth-speaking (as in Aristotle’s virtue of *alêtheia* – see e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1108a20), but it is not a common use of the term, and Plato here contrasts the true not with the deceitful but with the base, implying that he has in mind a more general virtue. (Notably the English ‘trust’ and ‘true’ are closely related etymologically – hence “be true to me,” i.e. be loyal, trustworthy.) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The *logoi* most salient in context are not individual claims, but multi-step arguments, such as the arguments for the immortality of the soul Socrates has been discussing. But trusting an argument to be true and sound (*hugiês* – the word translated in Latin as validus, valid) *is* taking it as an accurate representation of reality. ‘Account’ is perhaps the most neutral translation of *logos* here, spanning both individual claims and multi-step arguments. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις πιστεύομεν .... Οὐδαμῶς ἄλλως πως τό γε παρ’ ἡμῖν δόγμα ἔχον ἂν εἴη. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ... ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει οὐ μεγάλα νομίζω γενέσθαι ... [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ τοιαῦτα ηὗρον, χαλεπὰ ὄντα παντὶ ἑξῆς τεκμηρίῳ πιστεῦσαι. οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγενημένων, καὶ ἢν ἐπιχώρια σφίσιν ᾖ, ὁμοίως ἀβασανίστως παρ᾿ ἀλλήλων δέχονται. Ἀθηναίων γοῦν τὸ πλῆθος Ἵππαρχον οἴονται ὑφ᾿ Ἁρμοδίου καὶ Ἀριστογείτονος τύραννον ὄντα ἀποθανεῖν ... [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The ambiguous one occurs at *Philebus* 50c: “Now why do you particularly suppose I pointed out to you the mixture of pain and pleasure in comedy? Was it not for the sake of *pistis* (οὐ πίστεως χάριν), because it is easy to show the mixture in love and fear and the rest, and because I thought that when you had made this example your own, you would relieve me from the necessity of discussing those other conditions in detail, and would simply accept the fact?” (trans. Fowler) This is easy to accommodate to my account: if ‘*pistis*’ does mean belief, the context makes clear that it is belief resulting from an informant’s *logoi* (Socrates’ persuasive speech). I am inclined however to interpret *pistis* here as objective: proof, rather than conviction. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Socrates says that the soul “cannot use any stable *pistis* (οὐδὲ πίστει χρήσασθαι μονίμῳ)”about the Good. This is often translated as ‘belief’ (Reeve’s translation here is typical: the soul “cannot acquire...stable belief” about it). This would be an exception to my account, since there is no explicit reference to a *logos* or informant*.* But I think the standard translation is wrong: there is no precedent for *chrêsasthai* with subjective-sense *pistis*, and very clear precedent for *chrêsasthai* with objective-sense *pistis,* pledge or assurance, in a passage we saw above from Herodotus: “They make use of this kind of *pisteis*” (Πίστισι δὲ τοιῃσίδε χρέωνται), namely drinking from one another’s hands (*Histories* 4.172). Socrates is saying that people cannot find any stable assurance, evidence, or proof. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. οἷον αὐλητής που αὐλοποιῷ ἐξαγγέλλει περὶ τῶν αὐλῶν, οἳ ἂν ὑπηρετῶσιν ἐν τῷ αὐλεῖν, καὶ ἐπιτάξει

οἵους δεῖ ποιεῖν, ὁ δ’ ὑπηρετήσει...Οὐκοῦν ὁ μὲν εἰδὼς ἐξαγγέλλει περὶ χρηστῶν καὶ πονηρῶν αὐλῶν, ὁ δὲ πιστεύων ποιήσει;  ...Τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἄρα σκεύους ὁ μὲν ποιητὴς πίστιν ὀρθὴν ἕξει
περὶ κάλλους τε καὶ πονηρίας, συνὼν τῷ εἰδότι καὶ ἀναγκαζόμενος ἀκούειν παρὰ τοῦ εἰδότος, ὁ δὲ

χρώμενος ἐπιστήμην.  ...Ὁ δὲ μιμητὴς πότερον ἐκ τοῦ χρῆσθαι ἐπιστήμην ἕξει ὧν ἂν γράφῃ, εἴτε καλὰ καὶ ὀρθὰ εἴτε μή, ἢ δόξαν ὀρθὴν διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀνἀγκης συνεῖναι τῷ εἰδότι καὶ ἐπιτάττεσθαι οἷα χρὴ γράφειν; [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Πότερον οὖν ταὐτὸν δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι μεμαθηκέναι καὶ πεπιστευκέναι, καὶ μάθησις καὶ πίστις, ἢ ἄλλο
τι; …. Καλῶς γὰρ οἴει· γνώσῃ δὲ ἐνθένδε. εἰ γάρ τίς σε ἔροιτο·

[“](https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/help/BetaManual/online/Q.html)Ἆρ’ ἔστιν τις, ὦ Γοργία, πίστις ψευδὴς καὶ ἀληθής…Τί δέ; ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶν ψευδὴς καὶ ἀληθής; …Δῆλον
ἄρ’ αὖ ὅτι οὐ ταὐτόν ἐστιν. .. Ἀλλὰ μὴν οἵ τέ γε μεμαθηκότες πεπεισμένοι εἰσὶν καὶ οἱ πεπιστευκότες. … Βούλει οὖν δύο εἴδη θῶμεν πειθοῦς, τὸ μὲν πίστιν παρεχόμενον ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι, τὸ δ’ ἐπιστήμην;  [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Notably while in the *Gorgias* he counts teaching as a superior form of persuasion, in these other passages he contrasts teaching and persuasion. In all cases however he contrasts the product of teaching with the product of (inferior) persuasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. λέγει ὅτῳ τ' ἄν τι ταὐτὸν ᾖ καὶ ὅτου ἂν ἕτερον … λόγος δὲ ὁ κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἀληθὴς γιγνόμενος περί τε θάτερον ὂν καὶ περὶ τὸ ταὐτόν, ἐν τῷ κινουμένῳ ὑφ' αὑτοῦ φερόμενος ἄνευ φθόγγου καὶ ἠχῆς, ὅταν μὲν περὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν γίγνηται καὶ ὁ τοῦ θατέρου κύκλος ὀρθὸς ἰὼν εἰς πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν διαγγείλῃ, δόξαι καὶ πίστεις γίγνονται βέβαιοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς, ὅταν δὲ αὖ περὶ τὸ λογιστικὸν ᾖ καὶ ὁ τοῦ ταὐτοῦ κύκλος εὔτροχος ὢν αὐτὰ μηνύσῃ, νου̂ς ἐπιστήμη τε ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀποτελεῖται. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. At *Tim*. 51d–e we hear that all *doxa* arises through persuasion (*peithô*); read together with *Gorgias* 454d-e, this arguably strengthens the synonymy reading. So too does the parallel with “*nous* and *epistêmê*,” which appear as a pair both here and at 46d, with no sign anywhere in the dialogue of a difference between them. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. There is one other instance of *pistis* in the *Timaeus*, also associated with *logos*: in arguing that *logoi* are like what they propound, so that while a *logos* about unchanging reality will be stable and true while a *logos* about a changeable likenessmust itself be only likely (*eikôs*), Timaeus says that “as Being is to Becoming so truth (*alêtheia*) is to *pistis*” (29c). *Pistis* and truth here are most naturally interpreted as properties of the *logoi*, since it is these, not mental conditions, which are here correlated with their objects. Thus *‘pistis*’ does not mean belief here (although it is often translated that way), but instead has an object-sense: convincingness. (Compare Bryan 2012, among others.) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The other occurence, at 505e, is more naturally taken as an objective use than a subjective, doxastic one – see note 42 above. If it is in fact meant in the doxastic sense, it neither confirms nor undermines my account: Plato certinaly *may* have in mind stable belief caused by trust in testimony, but there is no explicit indication. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Storey 2022 for different arguments, compatible with mine, that *pistis* is the result of the musical education. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See Storey 2020 for one version of this view, on which *eikasia* is of evaluative perceptual appearances, and for discussion of other versions of it on which *eikasia* is of beliefs about value (see e.g. Adam 1902); although the focus of all these discussions is on *eikasia*, theyentail that *pistis* is of the ontologically best worldly instances of value. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)