Tampere University

KATARIINA KÄRKELÄ

Supernatural Knowledge

Literary and Philosophical Approaches to Epistemology in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium

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> I am surprised and delighted to find from numerous letters that so many people, both in England and across the Water, share my interest in this almost forgotten history; but it is not yet universally recognized as an important branch of study. It has indeed no obvious practical use, and those who go in for it can hardly expect to be assisted. (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 26.)

This is what J.R.R. Tolkien wrote about those who show academic interest in his fantasy world and its stories. Luckily, Tolkien's prediction failed at least with respect to this study. Completing this work took far longer than it should have, but that most certainly is not because of lack of help, and thanks are in order. First and foremost, I must thank my supervisors, Professor Sari Kivistö and Hanna-Riikka Roine, for their guidance, constant support, insightful comments and endless patience; thank you for having faith in this work and accepting it as it is, even though it is neither fish nor fowl. Thank you also to my former supervisor, Docent Teemu Ikonen for helping me to get started, and to Professor Leena Eilittä for her encouragement in the very beginning.

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what is said in this thesis is built on their work. Thank you in advance to Professor Kuisma Korhonen for agreeing to be the opponent of this work; I am looking forward to the discussion with curiosity and dread, in equal measures.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother Anne who bought me my very first copy of *The Lord of the Rings* and bravely faced the consequences of the obsession that followed, including the entire process of writing this dissertation. Kiitos.

Niinikoski, 19.3. 2022
Katariina Kärkelä

ABSTRACT

The dissertation studies J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium as an epistemic system and seeks to determine what kind of supernatural forms of knowing the laws of the fantasy universe allow. The study brings together literary theory and philosophy, particularly epistemology, and presents interpretations about the ways in which Tolkien's fantasy universe is composed simultaneously as a metaphysical and as an epistemic whole. The preliminary hypothesis behind the readings is that the laws of the fictional world broaden the justified use and extension of the concept of knowledge.

The dissertation examines Arda, Tolkien's fantasy world, and studies not only books that were released during the author's lifetime but also posthumously edited and published works. The primary textual corpus includes *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *Morgoth's Ring*. The study approaches the epistemic world of Arda from three main viewpoints. The first aspect focuses on the metaphysical structure of the fictional universe and its epistemic accessibility; the second viewpoint examines the role and workings of supernatural elements in knowledge-formation processes, whereas the last one studies the supernatural anomalies of sensory perception and problems of reliability. The readings presented in the study join the tradition of preceding Tolkien-studies in which Tolkien's myth-building has been examined side by side with Plato's philosophical theory that is rich with mythological and literary tools and material. While Plato's philosophy forms the vastest and the most fundamental part of the theoretical basis of this study, it simultaneously provides a literary counterpart for the works of fiction that are of interest: the analysis positions Plato's philosophical writings on the same level with Tol-

kien's fantasy books and examines their epistemic principles adopting an approach that focuses on the relationship between the literal and the figurative.

In addition to Plato's philosophy, the dissertation relies on possible world theories that have been much discussed in speculative fiction scholarship, and on earlier Tolkien-studies, particularly interpretations about the complex light-motif. The supernatural elements of knowledge-formation processes are approached with the help of medieval dream theory, modal philosophy, and theories about the causal chains of perceptual knowledge. The extension of the concept of knowledge and the limits of its justified use within the fictional world are pondered with respect to the cooperation of imagination and reason, sensory perception and divinity.

The study shows that the questions of worldbuilding and, in the context of Tolkien's work, sub-creation, so very central in the analyses of speculative fiction are not restricted to the formation of the fictional world construction alone but extend to the formation of its epistemic laws and systems. In Tolkien's fantasy universe, the metaphysical and the epistemic systems are in constant interaction, and the supernatural elements of knowledge-formation come to the fore especially in situations in which the metaphysical hierarchy of the world is broken and borders between different levels are crossed. Tolkien's complex fantasy universe partakes in philosophical conversation about the questions of knowledge both directly and indirectly, using literal means as well as figurative.

Key words: epistemology, J.R.R. Tolkien, knowledge, literature and philosophy, medieval dream vision, Plato, supernaturality

TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirja käsittelee J.R.R. Tolkienin legendariumia episteemisenä järjestelmänä ja pyrkii selvittämään, millaisia yliluonnollisen tiedonmuodostuksen tapoja fantasiamaailman lainalaisuudet mahdollistavat. Tutkielma yhdistelee kirjallisuudentutkimuksen ja filosofian, erityisesti epistemologian, teoriaa ja käsitteistöä ja esittää tulkintoja siitä, miten fantasiamaailma rakentuu samaan aikaan paitsi metafyysisenä myös tiedollisena kokonaisuutena. Luennan lähtökohtana on hypoteesi siitä, että fiktiivisen maailman lainalaisuudet laajentavat tiedon käsitteen oikeutettua käyttöalaa ja sovellettavuutta.

Tutkielma tarkastelee Tolkienin Arda-fantasiamaailmaa ja siitä kertovia teoksia, sekä postuumisti editoituja että kirjailijan elinaikana julkaistuja. Ensisijaisen tutkimuskohteen muodostavat teokset *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* ja *Morgoth's Ring*. Työ lähestyy Ardassa rakentuvaa tiedollista maailmaa kolmesta päänäkökulmasta, joista ensimmäinen keskittyy fantasiamaailman metafyysisen rakenteen ja episteemisen saavutettavuuden suhteeseen, toinen tiedon yliluonnollisten elementtien rooliin ja toimintaan tiedonmuodostusprosessissa ja kolmas havaintoperäisen tiedon yliluonnollisiin anomalioihin ja luotettavuuden kysymyksiin. Tutkielmassa esitettävät luennat liittyvät aiempaan Tolkien-tutkimuksen traditioon, jossa Tolkienin myytinrakennusta on tarkasteltu rinnan Platonin kaunokirjallisen, allegoriaa ja myyttejä hyödyntävän filosofisen teorian kanssa. Vaikka Platonin filosofia muodostaa työn laajimman ja painavimman teoreettisen pohjan, se tarjoaa myös kaunokirjallisen vastinparin tutkielman kohdeteoksille: analyysi asettaa Platonin filosofiset kirjoitukset ja Tolkienin fantasiateokset samalle tasolle ja tarkastelee niissä muodostuvia episteemisiä periaatteita kirjaimellisen ja figuratiivisen esittämisen suhteen kautta.

Platonin filosofian lisäksi tutkielma tukeutuu spekulatiivisen fiktion tutkimuksessa paljon hyödynnettyyn mahdollisten maailmojen teoriaan sekä aiempaan Tolkien-tutkimukseen, erityisesti valomotiivista esitettyihin tulkintoihin. Tiedonmuodostuksen tapojen yliluonnollisia aineksia lähestytään keskiaikaisen uniteorian, modaalifilosofian sekä tiedonmuodostuksen kausaliteettia käsittelevän teoreettisen keskustelun avulla. Tiedon käsitteen oikeutettua käyttöalaa fantasian maailmassa pohditaan mielikuvituksen ja järjen, aistihavainnon ja jumalallisen elementin yhteistoiminnan kautta.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että spekulatiivisen fiktion analyyseissa keskeiset maailmanrakennuksen ja Tolkien-tutkimuksen kontekstissa etenkin alemman tason luomisen (*sub-creation*) kysymykset ulottuvat paitsi itsensä maailmakonstruktion myös sen episteemisten lainalaisuuksien muodostumiseen. Tolkienin fantasiamaailmassa metafyysinen ja episteeminen järjestelmä ovat jatkuvassa vuorovaikutuksessa, ja tiedonmuodostuksen yliluonnolliset elementit nousevat esiin erityisesti tapauksissa, joissa maailman metafyysisen hierarkian rajoja ylitetään. Tolkienin kompleksinen fantasiauniversumi osallistuu tiedon kysymyksiä koskevaan filosofiseen keskusteluun suorasti ja epäsuorasti hyödyntäen sekä kirjaimellisia että figuratiivisia keinoja.

Avainsanat: epistemologia, J.R.R. Tolkien, keskiajan näkykirjallisuus, kirjallisuus ja filosofia, Platon, tieto, yliluonnollisuus

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Key Questions and the Problem of the Supernatural

In this dissertation I analyse the fictional universe of Eä created by J.R.R. Tolkien (1892–1973), an English writer, Oxford professor, philologist and medievalist. I study the fictional world as an epistemic system pursuing to unearth both the restrictions and the liberties that effect knowledge in a world of fantasy. The complicated relations between literature and philosophy, their structural, aesthetical and thematic characteristics, their differences and similarities have evoked vivid discussion and enjoyed wide attention both in literary studies and philosophy alike (Mikkonen 2011, Swirski 2000, Cornelli 2016). One prominent perspective is that of knowledge in fiction, often treated alongside truth. This segment, in my thesis specified to knowledge with some necessary, definitional reference to truth, is what this study concerns itself with aiming to find the ways in which knowledge is formed, what it concerns and what it does not and how it can be received in a fictional universe that in many ways transcends the laws of nature. That being said, one of the most crucial problems of the following analysis is indeed the very concept of knowledge, especially its justified application to a world of fiction. There are three main questions my study seeks to answer: Firstly, I ask how Tolkien's fictional universe is structured metaphysically and how these different levels are accessible to knowledge. The second question concerns the problem of placing the supernatural element: Where does the supernatural occur with respect to knowledge? Does it reside in perceptual experience, language or imagination or is it embedded in the modal restrictions of fantasy? Finally, I ask what is the role of

perceptual knowledge in the epistemic system and causal processes of the fictional world, attempting to find out what perceptual knowledge concerns, how its reliability can be assessed and how it cooperates with memory, innatism and imagination.

The starting point of this thesis is my preliminary assumption that the metaphysical structure and laws of the fictional universe have a significant impact on its epistemic issues, such as knowledge-formation. Therefore, even though I am primarily interested in questions of knowledge, also the underlying ontological rules of the fantasy world must be discussed before entering deeper into epistemological problems. The discussion revolving around knowledge in fiction has a long tradition and its problems have been approached from several literary and philosophical perspectives (see for instance Mikkonen 2011, 10–12). I wish to participate in this conversation by including in it the hypothetical possibility of *supernatural knowledge*: the literature I study in my thesis is set in a fictional universe with laws and logic of its own, and it is my assumption that while natural restrictions are broken in several ways and that which in the actual world is impossible becomes possible, the same can also happen when it comes to knowledge-formation and comprehending the surrounding reality. Approaching Tolkien's rich, multi-layered literature from this partly philosophical, partly literary perspective has another motivation, too: speculative fiction[1], that also Tolkien's work represents, has been largely disregarded

[1] The vast umbrella category of speculative fiction encompasses various genres such as fantasy, science fiction, horror, utopia, magical realism et cetera. These and other sub-categories share certain common characteristics, the element of the supernatural being one of the most notable denominators: works of speculative fiction include things and phenomena that do not exist in the actual world. As Roine (2016, 14–15) outlines, works of speculative fiction in general include speculative premises and often ask questions in the form of *what if* or *imagine if*; the two major branches, science fiction and fantasy, are often separated from one another by their differing treatments of the premise, science fiction adopting the more systematic, fantasy the more experiential approach.

Speculative fiction is no doubt too broad a category to be studied in depth, including all of its branches in the analysis; my main focus is in Tolkien's fiction. The aforementioned experientiality of fantasy surfaces in various studies: Farah Mendlesohn (2008, xiii), for instance, while stressing that it is not her purpose to provide a definition of the genre, writes that "the fantastic is an area of literature that is heavily dependent on the dialectic between author and reader for the construction of a sense of wonder, that it is a fiction of consensual construction of belief." Other notions tightly intertwined with fantasy literature – and attitudes and processes linked to it – include suspension of disbelief and Tolkien's secondary creation, sub-creation, that will be discussed later in more detail.

when discussing the relevance of fiction in general, presumably because of its association with generic patterns and alleged lack of depth (see for instance Roine 2016, 15; of the position of fantasy among other literature see Attebery 1992, ix, 18–19). Many valuable works, such as Farah Mendlesohn's (2008) and Brian Attebery's (1992 and 2014) studies[2], have done a great deal to remedy this problem and shed light on the depth and many sides of fantasy, but there is both room and need for further contributions. Taking part in the filling of this blank is one of the central aims of my dissertation.

The starting point from which this study approaches supernatural knowledge leans on possible world theories that originate in modal logic but have been adapted to literary studies among several other fields including natural, social and human sciences (Doležel 1998, ix). The way I approach Tolkien's complex universe is heavily influenced by theories of Lubomír Doležel (1998) and Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) especially when it comes to the difficult task of defining the supernatural: since one of the key problems this study pursues to handle is the possibility of supernatural knowledge, it is necessary to define what exactly is to be treated as supernatural, as something that surpasses the physical or logical laws in different world constructions. My treatment of the supernatural leans primarily on Doležel's formulation that is based on the operations of alethic modalities. Applied to the study of fictional worlds, alethic modalities are the basic rules that determine necessity, possibility and impossibility, providing the truth-value of uttered premises. According to Doležel, alethic modalities determine whether the fictional world is a

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Suspension of disbelief is a term coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and it is kin to poetic faith: in addition to the more literary and philosophical discussion it is also used in vernacular to "describe our acceptance in art of the most fantastic worlds whose premises, actions, or outcomes we would question or reject in reality" (Tomko 2016,1; on Tolkien's views about Coleridge's conception of imagination see also Flieger 2002, 24–25). Such suspension of disbelief is, in a way, also taken as the starting-point for the hypotheses of this work: in this context, it primarily concerns the concept of knowledge and its limits, and the adopted attitude is that in a world of fantasy the extension of the concept stretches out further than it ever would in the actual world.

[2] For more examples of deep examinations of fantasy see also works by Rosemary Jackson (1981) and Kathryn Hume (1984), for instance. Hume examines the mimesis of fantasy, while Jackson's approach turns away from definitions of fantasy as mere escapism, seeking to unravel its nature as a distinct kind of narrative of its own.

natural possible world or a supernatural one: in the former case, necessity, possibility and impossibility are governed by the modalities of the actual world, whereas supernatural fictional worlds are physically impossible, postulating phenomena and entities that are not possible in the actual world. (Doležel 1998, 115–116.)

Doležel's as well as Ryan's definitions of fantasy and the supernatural will be revisited many times in the course of this study, but for now it suffices to say that in the chapters to follow the chosen approach is to base the idea of the supernatural on the modalities of the actual world compared to those presented in the fictional world.[3] The word *actual* appears in this work primarily in two senses that must not become confused. First, it is used to refer to the actual world that is in this study understood in a way that follows Ryan's approach. Regarding different modal systems, Ryan writes that "[t]he first is our native system, and its central world is the actually actual world (or more simply, the actual world)" (Ryan 1991, 24). The second system she introduces is the textual universe at the center of which is the *textual* actual world, which refers to the genuine state of affairs in the world of fiction and represents the image the text proposes of the textual reference world, meaning the world of which the text claims facts (ibid. 24, see also Glossary in Ryan 1991). In short, the actual world is here used as a point of reference when modally distinguishing the supernatural from the natural; textual actual world, then again, is at question when discussing the true state of affairs in a world of fiction compared to beliefs and suppositions made of said world, for instance. As the analysis will show, the textual actual world and the beliefs, imaginings and suppositions characters have about it differ significantly from one another.

Possible world semantics, also the view Doležel presents, have been used as a basis for defining fantasy and separating the natural from the supernatural. Nancy Traill (1996), for instance, approaches fantasy fiction and possible worlds by study-

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[3] The supernatural as a whole has received scholarly interest in various forms, interdisciplinary approaches included, of which the journal *Supernatural Studies* is a good example. However, in order to avoid broadening the theoretical apparatus too much, I have chosen to focus on the modal aspects of the supernatural and its role as an important constituent of ancient and medieval epistemology.

ing the interaction between natural and supernatural modes. According to Traill (ibid. 8), the role of the supernatural in the definitions of fantasy depends on whether the supernatural constituent is "central or peripheral, functional or auxiliary, dominant or subordinate." This is her answer to the question whether single supernatural elements, such as the ghost of Hamlet's father, are evidence enough for a work to be considered fantastic. As Traill (ibid. 8) summarises, "[w]hether a work is fantastic depends on the *overall* structure (the macrostructure) of the fictional world, on what it is composed of and how its constituents are arranged. And that, in turn, is indeed the opposition of two domains, the supernatural and the natural [– –]." Focusing on the macrostructure, the mere conversation between Hamlet and his father's ghost is not a sufficient reason to call *Hamlet* a work of fantasy, because even though the ghost is a supernatural entity, in the play's fictional world as a whole it is only a small fragment the role of which is specifically to trigger the plot by motivating Hamlet's actions. Traill's understanding of the supernatural, then again, follows the alethic division of possible world semantics: the natural domain is in her reading a physically possible world, whereas the supernatural domain is a physically impossible one (ibid. 8–9).

The concept of the supernatural and anchoring it to a definite theoretical basis may cause trouble, mainly because the conversation focuses on Tolkien's world of fantasy that as such evokes questions about the supernatural, but also because of the historical context of the theoretical framework and the belief-systems of the time. Much of the theoretical background of this work has its roots in ancient and medieval tradition in which certain supernatural elements, such as the possibility of divine communication and instruction, did not contradict the logic or worldview of the time. The key issue is that worlds of fantasy, including Tolkien's, may include supernatural elements in a manner that makes them perfectly *natural* parts of the universe and everyday life. That being said, to call something supernatural in a world of fantasy is never simple, and the issue has been addressed by Agnieszka

Anna Jędrzejczyk-Drenda (2017) who criticizes Rodney Stark's definition of magic as follows:

> First, in fantasy literature the term 'magic' is used to signify efforts that succeed in altering the physical reality of the world. Second, the use of 'supernatural' as a term in the fantasy context is not useful, because it is difficult to establish the 'nature' of fantasy worlds. Therefore, the 'supernatural' of the fantasy world is even more difficult to establish. (Jędrzejczyk-Drenda 2017, 25.)

Jędrzejczyk-Drenda's study examines narrative strategies of magic in fantasy fiction, and she writes, drawing from previous scholarship, that magic can refer to three different things in fantasy. First, rules of cause and effect and natural laws can be bypassed in a world of fantasy; second, magic constructs the fantasy world as its central force and is often included in its natural laws; third, magic as an ability can be used by certain characters in order to cause changes in the world. (ibid. 7.) It is the second definition that causes the most significant issues, the fact that magic, something supernatural, becomes incorporated in the sphere of the natural: this is a problem the analysis to follow will often face. However, while Jędrzejczyk-Drenda makes valid observations about the problems of the supernatural, I would like to suggest that the concept can be useful in the fantasy context. I have chosen to discuss the supernatural because it is my aim to understand how knowledge operates in Tolkien's fantasy world, how it can be acquired and what are its limits; these limits, according to my hypothesis, do not correspond those of the actual world[4]. Knowledge and the basic processes it depends on, such as rational reasoning, understanding cause and effect, logical relations and perceptual evidence, for instance, are phenomena rooted in the laws of the actual world. Applying the concept to

[4] This is not to claim that *all* actual world inhabitants share certain belief-systems: it is perfectly possible for someone to consider prophetic dreams a valid source of knowledge. However, regarding stricter philosophical views on justification and the concept of knowledge, they would not meet the criteria.

another kind of world, a possible world with different laws, requires some bridging elements, and I seek to find out how the supernatural fits in this task.

In short, the problems of the supernatural have two main causes, both of which are context-related: First, those parts of the theoretical basis that have their origin in ancient and medieval tradition are rooted in a context that accepts certain supernatural phenomena as parts of the actual, natural world: myths, spiritual and religious beliefs were not detached from everyday life and world. Second, as Jędrzejczyk-Drenda (2017, 7) remarks, in fantasy literature supernatural phenomena, such as magic, are incorporated in the natural laws of the possible world in question. In both cases, the supernatural is no longer distinguishable from the natural, and the very use of the concept becomes questionable. I acknowledge this problem but nonetheless find the word fitting to describe the anomalous ways of knowledge-formation that take place in Tolkien's fiction. Within the fictional world phenomena such as foreknowledge, divine instruction, anomalous perception or informative dream visions, for instance, can be considered concurrent with the natural laws of the world, just as divine messages or prophecies are compatible with the belief system and worldview of a medieval Christian. However, depending on the chosen perspective from which the fantasy world is observed, some things are treated as supernatural even within the world of fiction: Sam McBride (2020, 103), discussing divine presence in Tolkien's Arda, writes that "[a]t that moment on Weathertop, Frodo needs supernatural help." In this situation, Frodo is gravely injured and, as McBride speculates, aided through divine intervention – which he calls supernatural. Previous Tolkien-scholarship does discuss supernatural elements in spite of the fact that they *could* be considered natural constituents of the world, implying that the natural order is at times broken: another example would be Jonathan McIntosh (2017, 60–61) who ponders miraculous events that transcend the natural order of Middle-earth. I seek to contribute to this discussion, and the novel aspect I want to introduce is that of the connections and cooperations between the supernatural and epistemic qualities of Tolkien's fictional universe.

The chief role of possible world theories in this work is to anchor the concept of the supernatural to some ground definitions from which to proceed. From now on in this work, unless stated otherwise, supernatural refers to something that contradicts the natural laws of the actual world, either by somehow manipulating the physical reality by altering perceptual abilities, for instance, or from an epistemic viewpoint by presenting as knowledge something that would not meet the criteria in the actual world – I treat the phenomena as supernatural even if they are considered normal in the fictional world. The latter aspect is indeed the very phenomenon this study is concerned with and will become more specific as the analyses proceed. Supernatural knowledge, I suggest, can be acquired in a manner that violates the physical laws of nature, such as by using magic, but it can also be understood in a more abstract, conceptual manner. By this I mean that, following Doležel's basic distinction, something impossible becomes possible: in a fantasy world, it is *possible* to predict the future. The process of prediction does not necessarily as such include breaking of natural laws, and yet it would be neither possible nor credible in the (modern era) actual world. In such cases the breaking of laws refers to a conceptual incongruence between the actual and the supernatural possible worlds, and the acceptable reasoning, justification and epistemic criteria of the actual world are challenged and broken. This is the hypothesis I proceed from.

Alongside theories on modality in fiction I seek theoretical support from mainly two philosophical branches, epistemology and metaphysics. Of these epistemology concerns itself with questions of knowledge whereas metaphysics alongside ontology, its kindred but debated branch, studies reality, the nature of being and existence in general (BonJour 2010, 1; Varzi 2011, 407). Since both branches are ever so wide – understandably so, given their long history in philosophical literature – I shall narrow my approach down to a few central ideas that will be further introduced in later chapters. In a broader context this thesis also partakes in the wider discussion about the relationship between literature and philosophy, especially their boundaries that at times are unclear. One of the defining characteristics of

this study is that it often treats the literary material and the philosophical theories side by side, breaking the hierarchies between the fictional work and the concepts and theories used to analyse it: the relationship between theoretical and literary material is constantly re-evaluated because of the fineness of the line drawn between literature and philosophy, particularly when it comes to, say, Plato's writings.

It is the focus on epistemic qualities of fiction and the way they appear in the fictional universe that determines the extension of the textual corpus I study. Of the many written works about Tolkien's Arda, this work focuses more specifically on *The Silmarillion* (1977), *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), and *Morgoth's Ring* (1993), the tenth volume of *The History of Middle-earth*, but other works, too, will be referred to in order to deepen the analysis and acknowledge significant inconsistencies. Of the primary books of interest, Tolkien's undeniably best-known work, *The Lord of the Rings*, focuses on the War of the Ring and the final years of an era that is coming to an end. The dark lord Sauron is attempting to regain his power and Middle-earth becomes increasingly restless as his might grows. Soon more or less the entire Middle-earth is at war, but the most vital task is to destroy Sauron's long-lost Ring. *The Silmarillion*, then again, covers a significantly larger period of time starting before the creation of Eä and ending in the War of the Ring which is briefly reported, and the primary relevance of the book for this study is based on metaphysics and cosmology. The complexity of Tolkien's cosmology is revealed in *The Silmarillion* and further discussed in other, posthumously published works. One of the most important cosmological distinctions is between Arda and Eä, concepts that even within Tolkien's own writings are debated and at times unclear. In spite of occasional incongruences due to the many revisions and versions of the cosmology, the basic difference is that Eä refers to the created world as a whole, the material universe in its entirety, whereas Arda as a part of Eä signifies the inhabited region or Earth, the known world of which the stories of the legendarium tell (*The Silmarillion*, 8–12, 380, 390).

The Silmarillion offers the key information based on which I approach the metaphysical and epistemic structures and hierarchies of Arda, and also the supernatural epistemic abilities of certain creatures; *The Lord of the Rings*, then again, opens more practical views to the workings of epistemic phenomena in the everyday life in the fictional world, particularly with respect to perceptual knowledge. The third book that is of major interest, *Morgoth's Ring*, has been chosen for the analysis because of the several metaphysically and epistemically relevant manuscripts posthumously published in it. These three works present the workings of the supernatural epistemic phenomena with different emphases and perspectives, and together they provide much insight both into the practical knowledge-formation processes and the underlying modal and supernatural principles governing them.

With respect to other volumes, *The Book of Lost Tales I & II* offer valuable, contrasting views to Arda's cosmology and metaphysical structures, hierarchies and philosophical laws, highlighting the metafictional books–within–books-structure, whereas *Peoples of Middle-earth* provides background information about the languages of Arda and deepening analyses about naming customs et cetera. The reason for not automatically including the entire collection of books in the analysis is that such an approach would be better suited to a work that is interested in the process of developing the fictional universe and the different phases of shaping the myths; such an analysis would naturally include the entirety of Tolkien's published writings and greatly benefit from the variety revealed in them. However, the focus of this study is not on the different versions of plot-developments and the shaping-process of the fictional world.

Paralleled with previous Tolkien-scholarship this choice of literary material may stand out, particularly because studies on Tolkien traditionally focus on specific books, usually *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion* or *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (1937), either approached as the canonical three or individually – this tendency is also evident in the theoretical material this study draws from. Verlyn

Flieger's (2002) *Splintered Light*, for instance, provides a thorough reading of *The Silmarillion*, whereas Maria Prozesky's (2006) and Amy Amendt-Raduege's (2006) readings focus on *The Lord of the Rings*. The reason for not prioritising *The Hobbit*, for instance, is the continuous interaction of metaphysical and epistemic structures and processes of the fictional universe that this study seeks to keep aware of and disentangle. *The Hobbit*, compared to *The Lord of the Rings*, does not deal with these issues quite as prominently – this, of course, is a noteworthy matter in itself and a good example of the great variety and development of Tolkien's fiction, both with respect to literary style and narration and the characteristics of the fantasy world. A literary corpus as vast as Tolkien's certainly includes inconsistencies and deviations, particularly because of the posthumously edited, uncompleted works: this is a matter I acknowledge and keep in mind, and the readings I present about the works that are of primary interest here will probably find many counter-arguments in other books that I will take into account to my best ability. Trying to explain away all the possible incoherencies would be to read against the nature of the textual corpus. However, I seek to form an acceptable account of the epistemic operations of Tolkien's world that explains the supernatural epistemic processes convincingly enough so that the contradicting, incompatible aspects found in the many different versions of Tolkien's tales do not wipe out the central arguments.

While admitting that Tolkien's vast textual corpus has been examined very meticulously, taking into account also less-known works as is done in Tom Shippey's (2007) Tolkien-examination *Roots and Branches*, as a rule some of Tolkien's works have received much lesser attention due to the general emphasis on the canon. To a degree, this is quite understandable: many of the posthumously published writings are rather fragmented and inconsistent. Regarding the choice of books in this study, one may wonder why include *Morgoth's Ring*, giving it plenty of space and only make smaller references to other works, not including the entire collection of books into the analysis. However, it is worth asking whether it is indeed necessary to always assume these two alternatives – the canon or the whole – as preferred

approaches that exclude other possibilities and combinations: choosing the textual corpus is always done with respect to the questions and themes each study is concerned with, and even though one cannot simply choose books that fit the theoretical scheme most neatly, it is equally unsatisfactory to exclude thematically relevant books merely because they do not fit the traditional corpus.

I argue that for any scholar interested in fantasy fiction's ability to address philosophical issues, books such as *Morgoth's Ring* have much to offer, and I want to give space and attention to this not-so-well-known but significant collection of writings (of the book's philosophical relevance see for instance Whittingham 2008, 103–105). While my main focus is on the epistemic whole being constructed in Tolkien's legendarium, for instance the epistemic operations in everyday lives of different characters as presented in *The Lord of the Rings*, I also hope to draw attention to the overall tendency of involving philosophical elements in Tolkien's fiction. For this purpose, *Morgoth's Ring* offers some of the finest and most profound examples. *The Lord of the Rings* gives insight to the epistemic laws and operations in practice; some of the text excerpts in *Morgoth's Ring*, on the other hand, have a much more scholarly undertone and tell much of how epistemology is perceived within the fictional world, shaping its belief-system and presenting theoretical speculation. In many ways, *The Silmarillion* treads in the middle: it provides an account of the structure and coming into being of the fictional universe and records its major historical events both globally and from the perspective of central characters. This combination of books, at times completed with remarks from other works, is able to shed light equally to the epistemic operations in practice and to the more theoretical approaches to epistemic issues in the form of openly philosophical writings.

While Tolkien's fiction is my primary interest and the most important textual corpus, I will occasionally refer to other works of fantasy in order to strengthen my claims and provide contrast to my readings of Tolkien. The most important works of comparison are Lord Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and C.S. Lewis's

The Chronicles of Narnia -series that I will later introduce in more detail. The purpose of including references to these works is to provide contrast to the readings I present, particularly with respect to the treatment of Platonic themes and undertones, the problem of universals or the metaphysical hierarchy of fantasy universes, for instance. Including Lewis's fiction in particular helps to show how the different branches of Platonic tradition can be utilised in fictional worldbuilding: his treatment is very Christian-(Neo)Platonic, whereas Tolkien's theological undertones are more subtle.

Apart from Tolkien's fictional works plenty of his academic and personal material has been published, parts of his correspondence, for instance. Tolkien had a remarkable career as a scholar specializing in Old and Middle English but his linguistic interest extended to Germanic philology, Old Norse, Old Icelandic, Old Welsh, Greek, Latin and several other areas of which he had varyingly broad understanding (Garth 2004, 13–18). Despite his academic accomplishments he became best known for his work as an author, especially as the creator of Arda, and simultaneously as one of the most remarkable influences on modern fantasy literature. Tolkien's best-known works of fiction include the aforementioned *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's literary work, however, dives much deeper and further than the books that made him renowned in the first place: his Arda-related fiction is vast indeed and includes for instance the posthumously edited and published 12-volume series *The History of Middle-earth* (1983–1996) in which the development process of the fictional universe and several alternate versions of the stories are compiled, presented and commented by his son Christopher Tolkien.[5] These works I will cite and comment as necessary whenever they provide epistemically noteworthy aspects.

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[5] Tolkien's fiction is generally associated with stories concerning Arda, especially Middle-earth, where the events of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* take place. His other literary works include writings and tales such as *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949), *Leaf by Niggle* (1945) *Mr. Bliss* (1982) and a novella called *Roverandom* (1998). He has also written, translated and edited several texts based on different mythologies, including *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* (2009) which is inspired by Norse mythology, specifically Poetic Edda, *The Story of Kullervo* (2015) inspired by *Kalevala* and *Sir Gawain and*

The literary material itself is multi-layered, vivid and discussion-provoking but so is the academic discussion revolving around it. Tolkien's legendarium has been studied in various contexts and from several perspectives, not forgetting interdisciplinary approaches in which especially connections to theology, ethics and real-life mythologies, Scandinavian and Judeo-Christian ones, for instance, have been a major object of interest.[6] Instead of the views focusing on Christianity and real-world mythologies, the scholarly work my analysis relies on the most include writings by Gergely Nagy (2004), McIntosh (2017), McBride (2020), Jyrki Korpua (2015 and 2021), and Flieger (2002, 2017), all of whom from different perspectives acknowledge the philosophical strains in Tolkien's writing, diving into the metaphysics, conception of the divine and symbolism of his legendarium. Flieger's analysis of light provides an important starting-point for many of the questions studied in the fourth chapter that focuses on perception, while Nagy and Korpua's approaches to Tolkien's Platonic influences will resurface throughout the whole work. In addition to these, the analyses of the literary metafiction in Tolkien's world by Vladimir Brljak (2010) and the treatment of medieval dream-vision influences in *The Lord of the Rings* by Amendt-Raduege (2006) provide certain key aspects from which I begin my epistemic readings of Arda's lore and belief-systems. That being said, this study seeks to introduce a new, somewhat neglected yet relevant approach to Tolkien's fiction, that of its epistemic operations: as will become

the Green Knight (1925), originally a 14th-century chivalric romance rendered to Modern English by Tolkien (Garth 2004, 3–5, 13, 50–59). These works, albeit fictional or mythical in nature, are not what I will from now on refer to when discussing Tolkien's fiction: instead, my interest lies more specifically in what is often called Tolkien's *legendarium*. The term is used to refer generally to Tolkien's writings about his fictional universe, that is to say all texts concerning Arda including several novels, unfinished or posthumously edited manuscripts, poems and other texts. (On the use of the word *legendarium* see Korpua 2015, 11).

[6] Tolkien's Christian influences are the main point of interest in *The Ring and the Cross* (2011, ed. by Paul E. Kerry), an anthology of academic essays and articles that approach Tolkien's fiction from the perspective of Catholic, pagan and spiritual themes, influences and characteristics. Ancient Greek, Latin, Scandinavian, Finnish and Old English mythologies, among others, and their influence on Tolkien's writing have been studied in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader* (2004), an anthology edited by Jane Chance. In this collection the role of myths, their relationship with language, magic and history, is also examined more broadly – particularly Nagy's (2004) analysis about Tolkien's Platonic influences and the ways in which the two writers treat myths provides notions that will become important later in this study.

evident, the themes of knowledge and truth have been touched and their role in Tolkien's legendarium has been acknowledged, but a more thorough treatment with epistemic questions at the core is yet to be written.

This study consists of five sections, including Introduction and Conclusions. The analysis itself is divided into three main chapters. The first part of the analysis, named "Metaphysical hierarchy of Arda", discusses the metaphysical structures, hierarchies and layers of the fictional universe and in doing so also participates in – and hopefully contributes to – the earlier conversation and the undeniably many fine interpretations already written about Arda's cosmology. The primary purpose of this chapter is to find the most suitable ways to understand the metaphysical hierarchy of Tolkien's world, and in this treatment also the relationship between literature and philosophy is an important underlying theme, not least because Platonic notions about metaphysics will be a starting-point for the analysis and indeed one of the core elements of the entire study. This study seeks to show that literary fiction, in this case Tolkien's legendarium, does not merely reflect philosophical themes, concepts and theories using its own artistic methods but is also able to develop these themes further, offering new perspectives and encouraging readings that re-evaluate concepts and their extension. The most important concept to be re-evaluated is, of course, knowledge. In addition to truth and knowledge, reproduction, mimesis and the highly complex idea of originality, all of which are distinctive and frequent motifs in Tolkien's work, are some of the central topics of the analysis.

In the second part, "Supernatural knowledge", the theoretical perspective shifts from metaphysics to epistemology, although the analysis leans on the observations outlined in the previous chapter. The second part focuses on the hypothetical idea of supernatural knowledge and attempts to define what it means to talk about *supernatural* in the context of fantasy fiction and, most importantly, how the word can justifiably be applied to knowledge. Theoretically this chapter draws from modalities and possible world theories and examines the natural and logical bound-

aries knowledge-formation and understanding face in the fictional world. Supernatural knowledge is approached from the perspective of prophecies, dream visions and the magic of knowing the world through language, for instance.

The third and final section, "Perception, imagination and the epistemic position of sensory world", concentrates more specifically on perceptual knowledge and, at times, questions not only its reliability but its boundaries, too. In this chapter I analyse the unsteady, subjective and ever-changing sensory world trying to determine its role in understanding the surrounding reality as it is presented within Tolkien's fictional universe. This analysis is closely connected to the ideas presented in the first section: I aim to prove that the metaphysical hierarchy, the many reproductions, copies and mimetically created entities of Arda, and the inevitable absence of the so called *original* or *genuine*, have a great influence on the ways the reality[7] is comprehended and determine what can be known about it in the first place. In this section I will also study the relationship between perception, imagination and memory in knowledge-formation, and the line between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge that often becomes blurred in a world of fantasy – this blurring is one instance of the workings of the supernatural. I shall conclude by summing up my main arguments and by suggesting a few possible lines of analysis that could in further research deepen and refine the observations and approaches proposed in this study. All in all, I argue that literary fiction, not being restricted by the conventions and criteria of academic argumentation, is perhaps able to venture questions and topics that stricter philosophical discussion does not allow as daringly. These possibilities reach even wider in the context of *fantasy* fiction that by its conventions and modalities explores areas more realistic fiction normally does not enter;

[7] In this work, the word *reality* refers to the reality of the fictional world, that is the one presented in Tolkien's Arda, unless specifically stated otherwise. The term will also be used in the context of explaining and summarising philosophical theories about reality such as Plato's metaphysical conceptions; however, since the first context is primarily concerned with the literary analyses and the second with theoretical material, the two are not likely to become confused. Problems may, of course, arise in the parallel readings of Tolkien and Plato and the conceptions of reality presented in their respective works that will be an important matter of interest. When the time for these analyses comes, I will be as clear as possible about the distinction in order to avoid misinterpretations.

one of these possibilities, supernatural knowledge, is what this study seeks to disentangle, drawing from literary theory and philosophical currents alike. The two disciplines, literature and philosophy, have often trodden the same path and dealt with similar issues in their respective ways; it is the relationship between the two that I will now turn to.

1.2 On Literature and Philosophy

> And Pengoloð answered: Much of what I know or have learned from the elders in lore, I have written; and what I have written thou shalt read, if thou wilt, when thou hast learned better the tongue of the Noldor and their scripts. For these matters are too great and manifold to be spoken or to be taught in speech within the brief patience and heedfulness of those of mortal race. (*Morgoth's Ring*, 17.)

Pengoloð the Sage, an elven loremaster, refuses to give an account of the early days of the universe as they are recounted in ancient lore to Ælfwine, his interlocutor, in speech; rather, he suggests that the stories are to be read. The impatience of the mortals is here given as the primary reason, but the question of wisdom and knowledge passed in literary versus oral form comes to the fore nonetheless. Is there something about written word or literary form that adds to the factual – or philosophical – substance? Lore traditions, both oral and written, are central constituents of the belief system woven in Tolkien's Arda, and as such the question about the relationship between literature and philosophy is not restricted to the macrostructure of this study, that is the theoretical material compared to the literary corpus. Rather, it is a question that Tolkien's fiction evokes itself and one that influences the epistemic system within the fictional universe.

The main interest of this study is with the epistemic operations of fantasy fiction, and it is the branch of epistemology that provides the most central philosophical background. However, since Tolkien's fiction in many ways invites philo-

sophical readings, and since my aim is to bring together approaches of literary theory and philosophy, it is necessary to take a brief look at the historically and theoretically vast area that lies between literature and philosophy and ask how these two disciplines work together. This must be done also because of the possible dangers of an interdisciplinary approach: applying philosophical theories and concepts to the analysis of literary fiction is something to be done with caution, and understanding the shared history of literature and philosophy may help to detect the troubles that are likely to emerge in the analysis. Since the purpose of this section is to provide context and background, both historical and philosophical, the discussion at this point mostly concerns the relationship between philosophy and literature in rather general terms; however, as this study proceeds, I endeavour to provide more specific insights into the relationship between *fantasy* and philosophy, reflecting and examining the distinctive ways in which worlds of fantasy can approach metaphysical and epistemological issues. My assumption is that worlds of fantasy stretch the use of philosophical concepts and their extension, and I hope to offer new aspects to the complex interaction of literature and philosophy from the viewpoint of speculative fiction.

Regarding the relationship between literature and philosophy, my main interest is in their relationship to truth and knowledge and their partly similar, partly different means of expressing them. Tolkien's writings will in this work often be paralleled with Plato's, and in this analysis the cooperation of the figurative and the literal uses of language is central. Therefore, questions of chosen forms and expressions are important, as are those that concern the (assumed) uniqueness of conveying philosophical notions by using *literary*, artistic means. The relationship between philosophy and art has been discussed by Alain Badiou, who suggests that their common denominator is *truth*, a third party that they both strive for in their separate ways. When contemplating the position and nature of philosophy, Badiou (2008, 13; translated by Steven Corcoran) writes that "[p]hilosophy borrows from its two adversaries of origin: the sophists and the poets. But one can also just as

well say that philosophy borrows from two of its truth procedures: mathematics, as paradigm of the proof; and art, as paradigm of subjectivating power.” Badiou, when discussing the concept of truth with respect to philosophy, poetry, mathematics, politics, science et cetera, perceives that one of the aspects separating philosophy and poetry from one another is their attitude towards mystery: according to Badiou, philosophy is always keen to open the veil of mystery whereas truths that accept their dependency on narrative and revelation are “gripped by mystery”. The poetic form presupposes proximity between discourse and the sacred, whereas philosophy, in Badiou’s words, has desacralization as its starting point, founding a basis for a discourse that relies on its own, earthly legitimation. (ibid. 36.)

Since Plato’s philosophy forms the most extensive and fundamental theoretical basis for this study, providing certain ground principles and concepts from which many other theoretical frameworks arise, the coexistence of philosophical theory and literary art in his work must be addressed. About Plato’s artistic writing, Badiou (ibid. 12–13) writes that

> [i]t is, in Plato’s work, the images, the myths and the comparisons the procedures of which are the same as those of the poets he fought against. This time art is called upon, not for its possible intrinsic worth, nor for any imitative or cathartic aim, but to elevate the void of the Truth to the point at which dialectical progression is suspended. Here again, at issue is by no means to ‘make a work of art’; yet the text resembles one and will be bequeathed and perceived as one, even if its destination is totally different. We might say that art is imitated in its ways with a view to producing a subjective site of the Truth.

The literary, aesthetically and artistically pleasing nature of Plato’s writing influences the manner in which his theories are approached in the analysis. Literary style in works of philosophy is by no means a rare phenomenon, and partly due to this – even though aesthetics as such is not the most important philosophical branch in this context – some aesthetical viewpoints are to be taken into account in this

study, especially when discussing the sliding boundaries between literary art and philosophical writing. The connections between the two literary traditions, that of philosophy and that of literary art, are far wider than the mere aesthetic, theoretical analysis of literature as one form of art among several others. The relationship is bidirectional: literature and philosophy have adopted patterns, forms and ideas from one another, and while philosophical theories and ideas can be conveyed with the help of literary forms[8], literary art can explore philosophical questions, problems and themes (see for instance Mikkonen 2011, 14). A good example of such mutual participation in the era's defining currents of thinking, and one that constitutes an important part of the analysis in the third chapter, is the deeply philosophical nature of medieval dream vision literature that includes famous works such as *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Boethius.

Since there are several possible ways to express philosophical positions and theories, some strictly committed to academic conventions, some figurative, poetic and fictional, even, it should be asked how it is possible to determine the role of form, expression and modes of presentation and their impact on the work[9]. The

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[8] As Samuel Scolnicov (2016, 5) writes, literary means have often been used to express philosophical statements: Nietzsche and Heraclitus expressed many of their ideas in aphorisms whereas Augustine and Descartes chose to use monologues. Dialogues, then again, have been used by many, including Cicero, Galilei and Berkeley, "as a literary façade". Scolnicov's treatment of these examples is not without criticism: he compares the dialogues of Galileo and Berkeley with those of Plato (and much to the last one's advantage), the "real drama", and claims that the "philosophical positions [of Galileo and Berkeley] could be and were developed also apart from the literary form in which they were presented in these dialogues" (ibid, 5). According to Scolnicov (ibid, 5), Plato's dialogues, then again, are full confrontations between characters, and while they are philosophical treatises and a way of expressing theories, they are also dramas in which personality traits, emotional and moral perspectives are factors as well as the intellectual, philosophical ones.

[9] Forms are a crucial matter of interest in literary studies, and their significance surfaces also in the course of this study. In order to keep the discussion focused and controlled in spite of the temporal and theoretical vastness of the topic I will restrict the treatment of forms primarily to the Platonic context; this is also in order to avoid misinterpretations and confusion. However, the role of forms in different artistic modes of presentation from a more literary perspective cannot be completely ignored. Caroline Levine (2016, 76–77) for one studies the capabilities and restrictions of aesthetic forms, and she writes that literary forms set limits to how much can be said and achieved within the work of art: the sonnet's length restricted to fourteen lines, for instance, only allows so much character development within one poem. It is particularly important what Levine ponders about the relationship between forms and thinking. She writes that "[t]o be sure, imaginative writers can expand the affordances of a form in surprising ways [– –]. But it is useful to think about how some forms

question concerns the distinction between literature and philosophy in many senses, and one conceptual way of approaching the philosophical merits of literature is to ask what is the difference between literary philosophy and philosophical literature, as Mikkonen (2011, 14–15) does in his dissertation. The division into works of fiction and philosophical literature is in Mikkonen's approach based on the assumption that also fictional literary works can have philosophical merit as long as philosophy is understood as something broader than an academic discipline. If philosophy is defined as a broad activity that "*systematically explores fundamental questions concerning human existence, knowledge, and values*" (Mikkonen 2011, 18, italics original), fictional literature can have significant philosophical value regardless of the fact that it does not fulfil the requirements of academic writing, its structure and argumentation. This argument can be extended to Tolkien's literature that partakes in deep metaphysical, ethical and epistemological conversations, of which the last one is of interest here. This would mean, as the analysis seeks to show, that Tolkien's fiction does not merely rework pre-existing philosophical theories by using them as building-blocks for the fantasy world, but genuinely contributes to the philosophical discussion through literary means.

The contributions Tolkien's fiction offers to philosophical discussion form an important yet secondary aspect; the key questions concern the epistemic system formed within the fictional universe. Knowledge in Tolkien's Arda is often gathered, preserved and passed on in forms that are in one way or another artistic: assessments about reality, states of affairs, history (and future, for that matter – one of the key perspectives from which I approach supernatural knowledge) and ethics are often expressed in a literary manner, works of prose or poetry, their artistic

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afford some kinds of thinking and knowing better than others." (ibid. 76–77.) This is a notion that does not much emerge in the analyses to follow but it is by every mean central to the overall matters of interest of this study: I examine the ways in which Tolkien's fantasy fiction contributes to different epistemological (and, occasionally, metaphysical) problems, how it perceives knowledge and expands the concept, providing its own criteria and context of justification. In this task the literary form and the aesthetical and structural core elements Tolkien's work is based on with respect to thinking are anything but irrelevant.

value and epistemic value set side by side. This can be seen when Aragorn, a remarkable lore-master, war hero and future king, recites a historical poem[10] and comments it afterwards:

> 'I will tell you the tale of Tinúviel,' said Strider [Aragorn], 'in brief – for it is a long tale of which the end is not known; and there are none now, except Elrond, that remember it aright as it was told of old. [– –]'
> 'That is a song,' he said, 'in the mode that is called *ann-thennath* among the Elves, but is hard to render in our Common Speech, and this is but a rough echo of it. It tells of the meeting of Beren son of Barahir and Lúthien Tinúviel. [– –]' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, xi,198–201.)

Such poems and stories are valuable both epistemically and artistically, and Aragorn's remark on the metre that does not completely work in the translated version suggests that the knowledge-related perspectives from which the poem can be approached are manifold. The poem conveys historical knowledge, albeit with less precision than Aragorn's later summary, but as an example of a certain poetic style and structure it also contains information about cultural and literary conventions. The third aspect is that of the social and aesthetical significance: interestingly, in Tolkien's work the words *song* and *poem* are often used interchangeably, suggesting the dominance of their oral presentation in a social context. I will return to the role of literature in Arda in section 2.5 where tales and songs are treated as epistemic evidence as well as art and entertainment. My interest lies in the relationship between claims made about reality and the manner of conveying and preserving these claims as proverbial wisdom or historical knowledge, for instance. In Arda's

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[10] The tale of Beren and Lúthien is one of the stories that have gone through most significant changes in Tolkien's many revisions. The version presented in *The Silmarillion* deviates in many ways from the earlier formulations published in *The Book of Lost Tales II* or "The Lay of Leithian" published in *The Lays of Beleriand* (1985): the story has been presented both in poem and in prose, and both the plot and characters have changed remarkably on the way. In *The Book of Lost Tales II* (15–17; 53–54), for instance, Sauron does not yet appear in his role as the protagonists' enemy: in this earlier version Beren and Lúthien have to face Tevildo, Prince of Cats. Tevildo, since then, has disappeared from the legendarium.

belief-system and epistemic whole art, especially literary art and lore, are a dominant manner of preserving knowledge, and yet it is unclear what exactly is the significance of the chosen form when it comes to absorbing knowledge and properly comprehending its content.

Taking into account everything stated above, I claim that there is still room – or need, rather – for further analysis regarding the overlapping fields of philosophy and (fantasy) literature. New questions arise with a slight change of perspective, and in this study the change is provided by the fantastic universe and its epistemic laws. I perceive that analysing Tolkien's fictional universe can provide significant new insight into the discussion concerning the relevance of art with respect to truth and knowledge, their treatment and the very concepts themselves. So far Tolkien's epistemic aspects have not been neglected but their treatment is still quite limited: Peter Kreeft's (2005) philosophical treatment of Tolkien's fiction, titled *The Philosophy of Tolkien. The Worldview behind The Lord of the Rings* discusses epistemology in one chapter. Kreeft focuses on the ethics and virtue of knowledge as well as intuition and faith as forms of knowledge, and while his observations are indeed valuable, they are also very short. Furthermore, his conclusions, particularly those concerning truth (ibid. 81), focus for the most part in Tolkien's openly expressed views, such as his idea of discovering the legends rather than inventing them, and in doing so, elucidating truth by writing *The Lord of the Rings*. After giving a brief summary of epistemology's chief areas of interest, Kreeft (ibid. 76) suggests that the most practical question in epistemology is what sources of knowledge can be trusted. He asks, for instance, whether there is such a thing as a third eye or if the heart is able to know in addition to being able to feel – these questions are among the ones I intend to develop further.

Regarding the analyses about the kindred natures of Tolkien's world and certain philosophical theories, Plato's myth-saturated philosophy especially, my study leans mostly on Korpua's (2015, 2021) aforementioned readings and Nagy's (2004) analyses presented in his article "Saving the Myths: The Re-creation of Mythology

in Plato and Tolkien." Germaine Walsh's (2015) article "Philosophic Poet. J.R.R. Tolkien's Modern Response to an Ancient Quarrel" is another notable example of a philosophical approach to Tolkien's work. Walsh studies the strife between poetry and philosophy, paying special attention to the charges uttered against poetry in the tenth book of Plato's *The Republic* and reflects these charges with respect to Tolkien's legendarium, contemplating ethical questions as well as the constitution of history and its reliability within the world of fiction. I wish to continue and deepen some of the remarks made in these writings, and I claim that the many philosophical and literary connections between Tolkien and Plato, such as their treatments of literal and figurative expressions and, most notably, the epistemic and metaphysical hierarchies of the world, are still far from exhaustively resolved. To this discussion I include the possibility of supernatural knowledge, its extension in the fictional world and its relationships with the modal and metaphysical laws of a supernatural, fictional universe. Furthermore, I also want to show that philosophical readings and interpretations should not be restricted to certain works of literature, selected classics: the workings of philosophy in literature can be very subtle, and the philosophical approach can also be a chosen perspective or a manner of reading and interpreting instead of a question of categorisation of literary works into philosophical and non-philosophical ones.

1.3 Fiction, Knowledge and Presumed Falsehood

1.3.1 Concept of Knowledge and Its Applications in Fiction

Since the aim of this thesis is to analyse J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium as an epistemic system, examine the rules and patterns according to which knowledge is both formed and comprehended within the fictional universe and to show how the structures and constructions of the fantasy world influence the knowledge-

formation processes, the chosen concepts and theoretical approaches draw strongly from epistemological discussion, both modern and classical. The very word 'knowledge' is not only the key concept but also one of the most fundamental problems in this work and it is to be discussed and reflected on throughout the entire analysis. Defining knowledge and considering its significance in a work of fiction, namely finding out what it means to know something in the context of fiction, can certainly be seen as a great difficulty for this study – and yet, despite the problems originating in the vastness of the philosophical discussions and the various branches of the ever-ongoing debate, these issues must be a starting point of some kind. This study concerns itself with knowledge in several ways and it is thus necessary to bear in mind that the chosen theoretical approaches and definitions are likely to prove to be problematic later on in the analysis. *Some* definitions and points of view, however, must be discussed right in the beginning.

The very first issue, especially in the English language, is the meaning of the verb *to know*. 'Knowing' can firstly be understood as knowing someone or something, a person or a place, for instance, a type of knowledge that can be referred to as *knowledge by acquaintance*. Another kind of knowledge, knowing how, is used when talking about abilities and skills: to know how is to be in possession of knowledge about an activity of some kind, riding a bicycle, for instance. The third category, propositional knowledge, is often the primary concern of epistemological discussions. Propositional knowledge refers to knowledge of facts and is generally expressed using a schema *S* knows, that *p*, *S* referring to the knowing subject and *p* to the proposition in question. (Ichikawa & Steup 2017; Steup 2017.) This division into three types seems to be, at least when focusing solely on the very meaning of the word, useful. However, the categories are often intertwined and the different facets of the trio cannot always be clearly separated. This problem must be acknowledged and kept in mind and the borders between different forms of knowing do become blurred at times in the fantasy world, but in this study, it will not be

a central issue: epistemology is mostly concerned with propositional knowledge and it will be the centre of attention also in this work.

Especially in the context of propositional knowledge epistemological theories attempt to set criteria and conditions that claims and beliefs must meet in order to be considered knowledge. According to my hypothesis, there is a breach between what is epistemically justifiable in the actual world versus in a supernatural possible world: the criteria are not always the same, and in order to be able to understand this difference, the concept of the supernatural can help. Dealing with these questions often requires that other equally problematic and ambiguous concepts, especially truth, are also taken into account: the traditional approach defines knowledge as justified true belief and is thus inevitably concerned with the problems of truth and justification. The principal idea, in its plain form, is that proposition *p* can be known if and only if a) *p* is true, b) *S* believes that *p* and c) *S*'s belief that *p* is justified, that is to say that *S*'s belief does not just happen to be true due to a lucky guess or by chance, for instance. The first requirement concerns the content of the proposition, its relation to fact and reality, whereas the second presumes that one cannot know something one does not even believe. The third requirement excludes cases where a proposition happens to be true by chance. (BonJour 2010, 23–24.)

The requirement of truth has been examined from various perspectives, some of which emphasise the correspondence between the claim and reality, some the coherence of the belief system in question, some take into account the social, historical and cultural processes through which truth is constructed (BonJour 2010, 30–34). These theories will be briefly introduced alongside the analysis when necessary: even though truth as such is not the primary subject of this study it must at times be referred to since the problem of justification cannot completely be omitted when discussing knowledge. My preliminary assumption is that what the epistemic stretches enabled by worlds of fantasy question and challenge is primarily justification, the third criterion of the traditional understanding of knowledge. In

the analysis to follow I seek to show that often the supernatural element of knowledge-formation processes occurs specifically with respect to justification, allowing unorthodox evidence and means of gathering information to be considered epistemically valid.

1.3.2 Epistemic Contradiction of Fiction: Untrue Statements, Contributions – or Something Else?

> It [fantasy] shares that work with such enterprises as depth psychology, religion, and popular media. Unlike those institutions, fantasy claims no authority nor exerts hegemony. It denies its own validity; the one characteristic shared by all fantasy narratives is their nonfactuality. The fundamental premise of fantasy is that the things it tells not only did not happen but *could* not have happened. In that literal untruth is freedom to tell many symbolic truths without forcing a choice among them. (Attebery 2014, 4.)

Here there are two main aspects to the relationship between truth, fantasy fiction and the supernatural: first, there is the problem of the *literal* untruth of fiction that at times has given literature an undeserved reputation as something false; second, there is the question of how the supernatural elements of fantasy worlds may complicate truth-estimations by producing anomalous causal chains, for instance. This section seeks to provide a preliminary foundation for future discussion about these topics, and in doing so it also comments on the influence the historical context of the theoretical framework has on its applications. Since much of the discussion draws from ancient and medieval sources, their historical background cannot be ignored – and this background involves "literally untrue" mythologies and worldviews as constituents of the prevailing belief-systems. Theories and myths develop side by side, and as Flieger (2017, 157) writes, "[a]ll myths are true for the people whose myths they are. This does not mean that all myths are factual, but that they express some deeply held belief or world-view that gives meaning to their

culture." This is the aspect that should be kept in mind in the applications of theoretical framework; another aspect considers the literary material and the (alleged) tension between factual truth and symbolic truth Attebery (above) discusses.[11] If the question of *truth* in Tolkien's world is pondered taking into account the perspective Attebery offers, the power and relevance of figurative expression and "literal untruth" become evident: the tension between what is said and how it is said is a constantly resurfacing issue in the analysis. Therefore, truth is an important concept to be addressed both because of the thematic characteristics of the literary material and because of the theoretical framework.

Both literature and philosophy have some kind of relationship with truth, as Badiou's (2008, 13) previously quoted formulation shows, and since truth is an important element in traditional definitions of knowledge, leaving it out of the analysis completely could lead to the overlooking of relevant aspects. Another reason for taking a brief look at truth is the age-old problem literary fiction has had to face: throughout the discussion about the nature of fiction and its relation to knowledge and reality fiction has often been deemed untrue, false and deceptive, even – behind these currents of thought the echoes of Plato's criticism are strong (*The Republic*, 292–297). This problem needs to be addressed in order to justify the approach chosen for this study, that of epistemology and knowledge in Tolkien's fictional world. If fiction, all fiction, is indeed to be associated with lies and incorrectness, it may well be argued that discussing questions of knowledge within literary fiction is irrelevant and absurd per se. This kind of argument would put an end to this study at once, and approaching a work of fiction with such presuppositions

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[11] Kindred ideas are also present in Shippey's (2003, 58) discussion about Tolkien's linguistic approaches to the nature of fantasy, creation and literature. Regarding the word *spell*, its etymology and connection to the words evangelium and gospel, Shippey (ibid. 58) writes that "[t]he word embodies much of what Tolkien meant by 'fantasy', i.e. something unnaturally powerful (magic spell), something literary (a story), something in essence true (Gospel)." The three aspects Shippey mentions, magic, story, and truth, are not here mutually exclusive or in contradiction with one another, and they characterise not only the different semantic facets of the word *spell* but also fantasy more generally.

would hardly result in fruitful interpretations; however, since the theoretical basis also draws from epistemology, different aspects must be acknowledged.

Mikkonen (2011, 12) remarks that this interpretation of falseness is present in some of the very definitions of fiction: according to him fiction can either refer to works of imaginative literature, such as novels, or alternatively to things fabricated, constructed or unreal, things that somehow can be seen as false. Mikkonen himself adopts a different kind of approach and acknowledges the significant cognitive value of philosophical fiction, its ability to convey knowledge and contribute to philosophical discussion; also Graham (2005, 127) discusses literature's possibilities to expand knowledge and understanding, being kindred to science and philosophy.[12] Concepts such as fiction, fictionality and fictitious have understandably evoked much discussion in literary studies, and for instance Dorrit Cohn (2006) among several other scholars has studied their meanings, both in relation to the real world and within literary fiction[13]. Ryan approaches fictionality with respect to modalities of fiction, recentering and referentiality. At the beginning of her treatment of fictional recentering, Ryan goes through the many adjectives derived from the word *fiction* and ponders their meaning. She points out that many of the words are usually matched with what are viewed as their antonyms: "[i]f it is not fiction, is it then fact, truth, or simply nonfiction? And if not fictional, fictive, or fictitious, is it natural, serious, real, or historical?" (Ryan 1991, 13). Ryan suggests that the adjectives and their antonyms can be divided into two semantic classes, one that focuses on discourse, and one that focuses on objects; some of them are compatible with both classes. She writes that these semantic classes provide two different an-

[12] There has been a lot of friction between notions of truth and literature, and this is partly due to the colloquial use of the word *fiction*. Fiction, when referring to journalism or gossip, for instance, conveys impressions of questionability and falsehood, and in it are included implications of erroneous memories, deliberate deception and incorrect information. These uses of the word 'fiction' may produce negative connotations that remain even when talking about fiction in a completely other kind of context, even that of literary studies. (Cohn 2006, 12–13.)

[13] Richard Walsh (2007), for instance, has presented thorough treatments about fictionality in his book *The Rhetoric of Fictionality. Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction* in which he suggests an approach that focuses on fictionality as a distinctive rhetorical resource of its own, challenging many of the long-prevailing conceptions of narrative theory.

swers to the question of fictionality: "to be fictional is a mode of being, an ontological status specific to certain entities; or a mode of speaking, an intent constitutive of a type of communicative act." (ibid. 13). The referential theory Ryan then proceeds to is generated by a definition of fiction that is based on the first possibility, the ontological status; this referential theory of fiction is, according to Ryan, a formal definition based on intuitive and common idea of fictional in everyday language. Following this thought, an object is called fictional if it is a product of imagination and does not exist objectively; fiction, then again, is a text primarily concerned with such objects and situations. The truth value of statements with respect to the real world easily leads to problematic interpretations, and Ryan stresses the importance of distinguishing fiction from errors and lies. (ibid. 13.)

Regarding the questions of referentiality and factuality, Ryan (1991, 112) shows that even some of the most straightforward notions can in fact be rather complex. She writes that while the actual world, or the concept of actual domain, in narrative semantics often seems fairly simple, the case soon proves to be far from clear. The basic definition of actual world is that it consists of the elements that absolutely exist in the semantic universe of the text, while the private worlds of characters, on the other hand, consist of things internal to the mind, not necessarily correspondent to the objective state of affairs. Ryan, however, states some important questions to challenge this basic notion:

> But how is this absolute existence established, and what authority guarantees it to the reader? [– –] Or to put it another way: should narrative semantics take a *de re* or a *de dicto* approach to the concept of actual world? It was shown in chapter 1 that TRW differs from TAW only in inaccurate texts of nonfiction (errors, lies, exaggerations). But since a truly narrative semantics is not concerned with the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, its concepts should be general enough to account for both types of narrative. [– –] Narrative se-

> mantics is concerned with what is true in the story, and not with what really happened.[14] (ibid. 112–113.)

Ryan's (1991, 113) emphasis suggests that the latter alternative, the *de dicto* -perspective is the more suitable approach to the concept of factual domain: if this notion is adopted, the factual domain becomes synonymous with textual actual world. The problem of authentication is evident if this perspective is chosen, and particularly because of the various possibilities of narration in fictional discourse. The situation is somewhat easier with impersonal narration, but it is far from simple to determine what really is the true case in a text that is narrated by a personal narrator whose subjective mind is imposed between the reader and the facts offered by the text, her mind's content becoming reflected in the discourse. (ibid. 113.) Ryan (ibid. 113) argues that "[t]he reader in this case does not perceive the narrative actual world directly, but apprehends it through its reflection in a subjective world", which means that the reader must then be able to distinguish the true states of affairs from the narrator's subjective beliefs.

This problem of authentication differs quite a lot in degree in Tolkien's different works. In *The Hobbit* the narrator takes a role far more active than the one in *The Lord of the Rings*: he comments on the limits of his knowledge and expresses sympathy, for instance. In chapter "Riddles in the Dark", the narrator would "not have liked to have been in Mr. Baggins' place" (ibid. 76), and when introducing Gollum, he admits that he does not "know where he came from, nor who or what he was" (ibid. 77.) In *The Book of Lost Tales I & II*, then again, the development of literature and many subordinate chains of narrators, writers and translators inner to the fictional universe create a complex whole of oral and written tradition based on which the (assumed) factual events are hard to construe.

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[14] Ryan's theory will be discussed more thoroughly in the third chapter. For now, the important concepts Ryan uses are TRW (textual reference world: the world within which the propositions the text asserts should be valued) TAW (textual actual world: the image the text proposes about the textual reference world, that is, what the world is said to be like) and actual domain that consists of things that absolutely exist in the semantic universe of the text (Ryan 1991, vii, 112).

Based on views studied so far, the most pressing issues now seem to concern the idea of *truth* and the question of where it should be attributed to. If the relationship between (literary) art and philosophy is studied with respect to truth that Badiou perceives as their common denominator, a third truth-seeking party, science, could also be included in the examination; this aspect is noteworthy in Tolkien's fiction for not all means of seeking and acquiring knowledge are considered equal in Arda's epistemic system. The cognitive and epistemological aspects of literature have been analysed by Peter Swirski (2000) who explores the questions of literature and knowledge as a part of a larger treatment of the relationship between literature and science. According to Swirski the vast territory between fiction and science, an area he refers to as a "no-man's land", is not in fact as deserted as the common opinion tends to presuppose. Literary studies and literature itself are not quite so alienated from the scientific realm: the two are largely ignored by each other but on the other hand there are several ways for them to become interlaced and infiltrated by each other. The scientific territory has been widely explored by fiction that in doing so produces hypotheses and thought-experiments about the world, carries out cognitive aspirations while maintaining their aesthetic and artistic nature. (Swirski 2000, ix–x.)

Swirski is mainly interested in two authors, Edgar Allan Poe and Stanislaw Lem, both of whom have, according to Swirski, thrown "literary bridges over to the scientific mainland" (Swirski 2000, x). Several scientific disciplines from cosmology to epistemology, philosophy and futurology are examined and reflected, and the literary works of Poe, for instance, often slide from imaginative fiction to philosophy. It is indeed Swirski's claim that Poe and Lem's writings cannot sufficiently be interpreted and analysed if the dialogue between fiction, philosophy and science they take part in is ignored. He therefore suggests that an interdisciplinary approach, one that acknowledges both the literary, speculative freedom of fiction and the exactness of scientific method and analysis, is the only way to properly understand the unique nature of Poe and Lem's work. Swirski establishes his ap-

proach on two assumptions. Firstly, he presumes that literary fiction can be a powerful instrument of knowledge. Secondly, he states that interdisciplinary criteria can be used to evaluate this knowledge. He also argues that the philosophical and scientific content of the works is closely connected to and an important part of their artistic intentions. Focusing solely on literary aspects often results in disregarding philosophical and cognitive matters, something that an interdisciplinary approach tries to amend. (ibid ix–xiii.)

Swirski's analysis focuses on Poe and Lem but I intend to extend the starting-point of his study to the world of Tolkien, arguing that the interdisciplinary, philosophical approach is not merely intriguing but also necessary in order to understand certain characteristics of Tolkien's works of fantasy and their operations, aesthetical and epistemic alike. Particularly Swirski's claim about literature as a powerful instrument of knowledge is important: I am somewhat hesitant to treat a piece of literary art as an instrument of any kind, but I do think that Tolkien's fiction has much to say about the processes of knowledge-formation and truth-seeking, even if not as an instrument. Including epistemic aspects in the analysis has a great influence on the interpretations about the books in a broader sense: the main plotlines of *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance, are seen in a very different light when the epistemic journeys and ascends towards enlightenment are foregrounded – Frodo's journey through darkness and light that culminates in the Grey Havens and crossing the sea begins to convey very different meanings.

Swirski writes much about *science* while my approach is more concerned with epistemology. The world of Tolkien is largely rural and pre-industrialised, and science at first sight does not seem to have a significant role in the books, if not in Saruman's stronghold Isengard, in the desperate endeavours of the Númenoreans to find a way to prolong and even recall life that only result in preserving dead flesh (*The Silmarillion*, 318), and in a few chapters of *The Lord of the Rings*, especially in chapter "The Scouring of the Shire" (*RK* II, viii, 1024–1047), where it appears that the invasion to Shire results in destruction of nature and emerging industriali-

sation. However, lore, history, linguistics and different studies of arts and crafts are a recurring element in the legendarium. Practicing science, especially pursuing secret, even forbidden, knowledge is a major ethical question in the legends of Arda. This problem is strongly present in the character of Saruman, a powerful spirit in the form of a wizard, who eventually uses his wisdom, knowledge and skills to cross the ethical boundaries, making them tools for treason:

> 'I [Gandalf] looked then and saw that his robes, which had seemed white, were not so, but were woven of all colours, and if he moved they shimmered and changed hue so that the eye was bewildered.
> '"I liked white better," I said.
> '"White!" he [Saruman] sneered. "It serves as a beginning. White cloth may be dyed. The white page can be overwritten; and the white light can be broken."
> '"In which case it is no longer white," said I. "And he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom." (*The Lord of the Rings*, *FR* II, ii, 266.)

Pursuing knowledge is not always encouraged or acceptable. Knowledge can sometimes come to a conflict with wisdom, as Gandalf points out to Saruman in the passage: gaining knowledge cannot always justifiably be an end in itself. Saruman's speech, countenance and his thirst for knowledge are almost near to a kind of hubris, as I will later argue – this quotation will also be revisited. What makes Saruman's approach to knowledge dubious is his attitude towards the objects of his interest. This attitude is possessive, jealous, even, and as the passage above suggests, Saruman does not shun mutilating and altering reality in his attempts to figure out its entities and operations.

Kreeft (2005, 76) points out that since knowledge in Tolkien's world is compatible with evil as much as it is with good, it cannot be considered the supreme good. Kreeft argues that this is the case particularly when knowledge takes the form of dismantling analysis, breaking or dissecting things in order to study them,

and according to him, this is the epistemic path Gollum, for instance, has chosen to follow. Kreeft also parallels the dissecting approach to knowledge represented by Gollum to the real-world turn of replacing ancient wisdom with modern knowledge, extending the thought to literary criticism and Tolkien's views on faërie and fantasy: the very enchantment of fantasy is in that which remains unexplained, in the enormous whole of which only small parts are told, and fantasy by nature deals with things that natural science is unable to explain. (ibid. 76–77). A similar view is also present in Shippey's (2003, 61) study in which he discusses Tolkien's conception of fantasy and words such as glamour and spell. According to Shippey (2003, 61), "the quality he [Tolkien] evidently valued more than anything in literature was that shimmer of suggestion which never quite becomes clear sight but always hints at something deeper further on", a characteristic that built consistency and brought together works like *Beowulf* and 'The Man in the Moon'. It would appear that the genuineness of fantasy, its commitment to truth, requires some level of concealment, refraining from revealing everything whether the whole is known or not.

Venturing the interdisciplinary zone can be a risky endeavour. I want to emphasize that bringing together literary theory and epistemology is not a priority in itself but rather an exploration to find new ways to analyse Tolkien's complex, multifaceted fictional universe and the epistemic, philosophical problems implied in it. With respect to theories presented above, I aim to find a fruitful middle way of viewing the epistemic system of Tolkien's universe as a philosophically relevant treatment of issues of truth, knowledge and understanding without reducing his literary art to mere contributions subordinate to other disciplines.

What, then, can fantasy fiction add to the discussion, particularly by bringing along the element of the supernatural? As remarked in the beginning, speculative fiction has often been neglected when discussing the broader and deeper significance of literature, and if this thought is taken even further and observed side by side with the instrumental value of literature in general, it could be argued that

while literature may seek justification and value beyond its own borders, making contributions to science and philosophy, speculative fiction seems to require justification even within its own field as literary art. This is an issue Attebery (1992, 18–19) discusses, arguing that unless literature and its standards are re-examined and redefined, many works of modern fantasy, Tolkien's included, have to be excluded. Sometimes self-reflective fantasy fiction comments on this pressure to prove itself, in a manner of speaking, acknowledging its own position as if trying to justify its relevance. Lord Dunsany's fantasy novel *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1924) is one example of such reflection. The novel begins with the narrator's (or author's; the paragraph is attributed to Lord Dunsany although the style greatly resembles that of the novel itself) preface in which he warns the reader about what is to come and asks her to not to be intimidated by the magical and the supernatural elements in the book, remarking that even though some chapters take place in Elfland, much of the book tells of "ordinary English woods and a common village and valley, a good twenty or twenty-five miles from the border of Elfland" (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, Preface). What I find especially interesting is that in the twentieth chapter, "A Historical Fact", the narrator tells of a unicorn one of the heroes of the novel, Orion, has killed, and explains what happens to its horn. The narrator makes an intertextual reference to Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography and writes that the horn taken by Orion is the same Cellini, the Renaissance goldsmith, tells of in his memoirs. The reason for introducing this (allegedly) real-life connection and clarifying the temporal relationship between the events is explained as follows: "I mention the date because there are those who care little for a tale if it be not here and there supported by history, and who even in history care more for fact than philosophy." (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 89.) Alongside this remark I would like to bring to the fore the attitude Verlyn Flieger (2002, 9) finds in Tolkien's essays, letters and his works of fiction, one that determines his conception of myth, fairy tale and legend: "that they convey not fact but truth and, even more important, that they are the best vehicles for certain kind of truth." This is a matter kin to the no-

tions presented in *The King of Elfland's Daughter* but also to Attebery's (2014, 4) remark about fantasy's tendency and ability to reveal symbolic truths by not presenting literal truths.

In addition to juxtaposing fact with philosophy, another division is made between different kinds of stories in Dunsany's remark: first, there are the tales that supposedly refer to fiction and fantasy; second, there are historical writings the readers of which are said to favour facts – and even tales should include historical remarks in order to maintain the reader's interest. These two divisions for sure are not black and white and cannot without problems be paired so that stories of fiction would more closely go hand in hand with philosophy while history's primary business is with fact[15]; however, entertaining philosophical topics and dilemmas is explicitly brought to the fore in the fantasy novel, and the reader is more or less directly encouraged to let go of the factual details of the real world and venture the magic and enchantment of Elfland as is already hinted in the preface. Dunsany's novel frequently comments issues of perception, knowledge and transcending borders, all of which are essential constituents of this study. *The King of Elfland's Daughter* will be at times briefly discussed in the later chapters in order to broaden and deepen the claims made. Treating books such as *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and *The Silmarillion*, for instance, as philosophical literature can provide new insights both to philosophy and to speculative fiction.[16] What I hope to show in the chapters to follow is that when it comes to the relationships between literature, knowledge and philosophy, studying the epistemic peculiarities of fantasy fiction is able to provide one possible answer to that *something else* suggested in the title of this section, and perhaps even name it – supernatural knowledge.

[15] Regarding ancient philosophers, it is Plato whose influence on the approaches chosen for this study cannot be overestimated, as the analyses will show; however, remarks such as the one above also imply more Aristotelian attitudes towards literature, particularly with respect to the relationship between history and poetry – these matters will be briefly addressed later.

[16] This endeavour of *providing new insights* to philosophy and literature does not mean, I want to emphasise, that literature is here being used in philosophy's favour; rather, it refers to the methods I will employ, including reading Plato's philosophy and Tolkien's fiction side by side, breaking the boundaries between theory and literary art.

1.3.3 Plato's Criticism

> Myth can tell one about the world: how it is structured, how it works, and how we get to know it. In these, it also suggests how we get to know truth – indeed, it points out what truth is. Both Plato and Tolkien find truth expressible in the mythical past, which they both create along the lines and in the discourse of the mythological tradition they are part of and to which they are relating. (Nagy 2004, 95.)

While I study Tolkien's epistemology as a whole as it is constructed in his fictional world, taking into account different perspectives, the most dominant methodological approach is to parallel Tolkien's world and, equally importantly, his literal and figurative use of language, with Plato's dialogues. My reason for separating Plato's view on literature and art, especially his criticism of both, from the other perspectives introduced thus far has to do with the difficulty of placing Plato among these theories. This difficulty can be expected for obvious reasons, to a degree, at least: it would be rather a blunt and awkward approach to present modern, late 20th and early 21st century theories alongside philosophical formulations that date back to the 4th century BC, neglecting the differences in their context and the conventions, restrictions and requirements that nowadays govern academic writing. The second reason is that Plato's philosophy – or his *literature* – concerns more or less explicitly all the previously asked questions about truth, poetry and knowledge, and because of that its position in the conversation is omnipresent. Above all, Plato's Theory of Forms, his metaphysical, mythological and epistemological formulations and their influence on later philosophy, cosmology and worldview will be one of the core elements of this study, being intertwined in all of its sections in one way or another. Also, already at this point I wish to present some preliminary, acceptable explanations for why Plato's theory so strongly guides the major lines of this work: it is

not by chance that earlier treatments have discussed Tolkien and Plato side by side, albeit not perhaps exhaustively. These earlier works form an important point of reference and basis for my future analyses, although my perspective and emphases differ from them quite a lot. Korpua's (2015 and 2021) treatment, for instance, focuses much on the structural similarities between Tolkien and Plato's ways of presenting cosmology and myth-making, while my approach is more concerned with the manners in which the philosophical theses are being worked through in the writings of the two authors. While Korpua studies the shared characteristics of Plato and Tolkien's myths and their themes themselves, I ask how the philosophical views are being woven and expressed by crossing borders between the literal and the figurative – I will explain these differences of approach more clearly in later sections.

Plato's writings problematize the distinction between philosophy and literature especially when it comes to determining the significance of chosen literary forms the philosophical ideas are expressed in. It has been argued that Plato's distinctive style and the literary devices he used, the characters of his dialogues, for instance, are exceptionally vital for the theories they are used to present, and understanding these forms is also a key to understanding Plato's philosophy (Cornelli 2016, 1; Scolnicov 2016, 5–6). Plato's dialogues are a remarkable hub in the net of problems surrounding the relationship between literature and philosophy by their form alone, but they also include more specifically expressed notions of the truth-value of literature and its place in the metaphysical hierarchy of reality, the model of which is based on Plato's Theory of Forms famously presented in *The Republic* and also discussed in several other dialogues including *Meno*, *Parmenides* and *Phaedrus*, for instance. I shall also take a look at Plato's criticism towards *poiesis* and *mimesis* in general. This I will do in order to illustrate how relevant the metaphysical structure of the world is when determining what can be known and which criteria must be met for something to be considered knowledge. The fine line that separates fictional literature from philosophical one – a line that in Plato's own works,

despite his fierce criticism, at times becomes nearly invisible – will also be a point of interest.

Plato's conception of knowledge is metaphysical and inseparable from his Theory of Forms, that is the separation of the world of ideas and the world of perception. This distinction is perhaps most famously expressed in the Allegory of the Cave that is included in the seventh chapter of *The Republic*. That which knowledge concerns is tied to the ontological structure of the world: knowledge only derives from ideas, the higher level of reality, and has nothing to do with the uncertain, ever-changing world of perception. (*The Republic*, 205–209.) This is one of the primary reasons for applying Plato's theory to my analysis: including metaphysical aspects when discussing knowledge in the world of fiction is necessary, especially when analysing a fictional universe that follows logic of its own as is the case in Tolkien's legendarium. Problems, too, arise from this kind of approach, and handling them will form the major part of the second chapter in which I will also draw attention to certain similarities that occur in Plato and Tolkien's creation myths. The final section of this study in particular focuses on the significant similarities between Tolkien and Plato's treatments of knowledge, recollection and understanding, and reading their works side by side is a good way to find new insights to both.

In Plato's *The Republic* it is Socrates who utters the two famous claims against poetry, the claims that are of interest in Walsh's (2015) aforementioned study "Philosophic Poet. J.R.R. Tolkien's Modern Response to an Ancient Quarrel". Socrates's first allegation is that what poetry has to offer are lies disguised as truth since poetry produces images of things instead of allowing access to the things themselves. The second problem of poetry is that it prefers rule of desire over rule of reason, weakens morality and in doing so damages the political community. Literature and art are, in other words, possible threats to social order and moral of the community. The feelings and actions depicted in tragedies can be transferred to the viewers, and eventually emotion and passion are elevated over reason, control

becoming impaired. These two allegations are illustrated by Socrates in his dialogue with Glaucon in several examples. (*The Republic*, 62–90; Walsh 2015, 10.) One of the most famous formulations is uttered followingly:

> And so, when we hear persons saying that the tragedians, and Homer, who is at their head, know all the arts and all things human, virtue as well as vice, and divine things too, for that the good poet cannot compose well unless he knows his subject, and that he who has not this knowledge can never be a poet, we ought to consider whether here also there may not be a similar illusion. Perhaps they may have come across imitators and been deceived by them; they may not have remembered they saw their works that these were but imitations thrice removed from the truth, and could easily be made without any knowledge of the truth, because they are appearances only and not realities? (*The Republic,* 292; translated by Benjamin Jowett.)

The thing an artist makes is something that only has the *semblance* of existence. Furthermore, the artistic creation as an imitation is an image of how things appear, not of things as they truly are – not the pure and genuine idea, not the perceptible object of the physical world but yet another layer, a copy of an uncertain appearance (*The Republic*, 291–292; see also Harland 1999, 8). This is what the words "thrice removed from the truth" mainly refer to.

Plato's strict commitment to the true and original provides an interesting point of reflection for the analysis of Tolkien's legendarium in which copies and reproductions are a recurring, constantly emerging element. As previous studies on Tolkien, such as Walsh's (2015), Nagy's (2004) and Korpua's (2021) show, contextualising Tolkien with Plato has many justifications. One of these has to do with the treatment of myths of the two writers and the layered metaphysics embedded in their work. Attebery's (2014) book *Stories about Stories. Fantasy and the Re-Making of Myth* discusses the tight connections between the modern literary genre and the oral, sacred, collective and oral tradition of myths. He writes that "[b]ut fantasy's

main claim to cultural importance resides, I believe, in the work of redefining the relationship between contemporary readers and mythic texts." (ibid. 4.) On many levels this is what happens in Tolkien's fiction, in a manner that has much in common with Plato's writing – besides, Tolkien's work is famous for not only drawing from real-world mythologies but for building entire myth-like backgrounds for his own stories as well. In my reading one of the most prominent Platonic echoes in Tolkien's work is its tendency of creating hierarchical layers of reality and truth. The things in the subordinate, unreliable world of senses are often the only accessible source of perceptual knowledge in the absence of the original; however, as the fourth chapter shows, this basic distinction between the perceptible and the imperceptible worlds and their epistemic hierarchy can be challenged, too. It is my intention to prove that things that seem original may indeed be a mere illusion as such, irretrievably removed from the eternal and divine, whereas perceptual knowledge can under certain circumstances bring the viewer closer to the higher level of existence.

The reliability of material world very central to Tolkien's epistemology is also one of the issues that reveal the incongruences between Plato's dialogues and their later interpretations, particularly those of Neoplatonism: in her treatment of Neoplatonism, Pauliina Remes (2008, 135) emphasises that since human beings are inevitably bound to the physical world, also their mental lives and operations are influenced by it. Therefore, in Neoplatonist thinking, the sensory world of perception was far from irrelevant to knowledge – it was necessary. Remes (ibid. 136–137) emphasises that the Neoplatonists considered the rational and propositional discourse limited and therefore sought other ways of finding truth and connection with the One. Tolkien's epistemology shares common characteristics both with Plato's dialogues and the later (Christian) Neoplatonic tradition, but my approach focuses on the similarities and differences between Tolkien and Plato. Even so, I acknowledge the larger difficulty of contextualising Tolkien's Platonic undertones to specific parts of the tradition: because of the undeniably strong influence of

Christian theology on Tolkien's work, the tradition of Christian Neoplatonism is an obvious point of comparison. The methodical approach this study favours with respect to textual analysis is to read Plato and Tolkien's literature side by side, and therefore the main focus will be on Plato's dialogues instead of their later interpretations by other authors and philosophers. The purpose of limiting the treatment to Plato's dialogues, apart from the occasional, necessary references to some Neoplatonic thinkers, is also to steer the discussion away from the overtly theological viewpoint that is not the main focus in this work.

Another reason for focusing on Plato's own texts is that Tolkien's Neoplatonist influences and characteristics have been meticulously examined in Korpua's (2021) recent opus *The Mythopoeic Code of Tolkien. A Christian Platonic Reading of the Legendarium*, and his analysis takes into account both Plato and later approaches influenced by Christian philosophy and thinking. Korpua's approach to Platonic tradition is in this sense slightly different than the one adopted in this study. Korpua outlines the key differences between Platonism (as referring to Plato's own texts and the philosophy of his followers) and Christian Platonism that combines Platonic philosophy with Christian tradition, but he emphasises that while he at times treats the terms separately, they are for the most part used as "a solid tradition that regarded Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy as the best instrument for understanding Christian theology." (ibid. 1). Many of the questions Korpua unravels are also of interest in this work, but the emphasis and aim are different: the purpose of Korpua's (ibid. 3) study is to understand Tolkien's mythology and aesthetics from a previously overlooked perspective by reading his fiction in (Christian) Platonic context as a description of the ideal and real that find their counterparts in the model image of creation and its physical realisation. While the interaction of the physical and the ideal is at the very centre of my work, too, the focus remains on the ways in which these structures influence the epistemic whole constructed in the legendarium.

In spite of his criticism, Plato does not ban *all* literature from his ideal state but rather sets criteria the acceptable writings must meet. It is, however, good to keep in mind that Plato's aesthetically and rhetorically pleasing works of literature do not necessarily escape his own criticism: the dialogues show several elements of poetry, comedy and tragedy, they include narration of myths and allegories and also literary devices of rhyme and metre are present in the works which thus carry several qualities associated with fiction. As was hinted before, for this reason in the later chapters the distinction between the literature being analysed and the theoretical source material seems to waver at times when applying Plato's ideas to the analysis: instead of studying Tolkien's fiction from a Platonic viewpoint, I study the texts side by side, acknowledging the philosophical, fictional and literary aspects in both. As the study proceeds, this reading method becomes increasingly prominent: my approach combines the widely acknowledged tendency of speculative fiction to encourage literal interpretations of figurative language (see for instance Chu 2010, 10) and the allegorical and analogical methods of presenting philosophical theory used in Plato's dialogues. Particularly in the fourth chapter I extend the literalising manner of reading to the philosophical dialogues instead of restricting it to the readings of Tolkien's work.

Tolkien's epistemic system acknowledges the possibility of communicating with the divine, being able to convey knowledge from – in lack of a better word – the spiritual realm, and often this knowledge is conveyed by lore-masters and minstrels. This possibility contradicts some of Plato's views: Plato's first allegation claims that since *poiesis* always has a sensory element it can by no means have any claim upon the truth, and in general he disclaims the widespread opinion that poets are able to provide wisdom, as many of his contemporaries believed. (Harland 1999, 8.) In Ancient Greece the poet was often seen as someone able to transcend the boundaries of human knowledge. Human understanding is limited but the poet communicates with the Muses and is therefore capable of both acquiring and conveying divine knowledge normally unavailable to mortals. The role of the poet and

his work is a vehicle that enables access to wisdom. (Ledbetter 2003, 19–20.) Grace Ledbetter analyses the way in which the Homeric epics convey knowledge and the role of the poet viewed in early Greek theories on poetry. Here it must be acknowledged, as Ledbetter (2003, 10) writes, that in Plato's early dialogues, especially *Ion*, the view on poetry is not quite the same as in the sharper and more provocative critique in *The Republic*: "Might a case be made for understanding the discussions of poetry in the *Ion* and other early dialogues as distinctively Socratic and independent of the Platonic treatment of poetry?" Ledbetter asks and points once again out one of the crucial problems of Plato's theories – the fact that the voices, opinions and theories cannot always be clearly distinguished, especially those of Plato and those of Socrates.[17]

Of the opposing notions on poetry, its transcendent ability to reach divine knowledge and convey hidden wisdom on one hand and its alleged nature as a mere copy removed from the authentic on the other, the former comes to the fore in this study, particularly with respect to prophecies as one very frequent form of supernatural knowledge in Tolkien's fiction. Regarding the role of literature, the knowledge of minstrels, lore-masters and poets is manifold with respect to time since it concerns both history and the future in forms of prophecies. Knowledge of poets and storytellers is prestigious in the legendarium, although the slow decay in the present of the narrative for instance in *The Lord of the Rings* affects the attitude towards historical and mythological understanding, too: ignorance is taking over, and especially oral tradition is losing its credence even in Minas Tirith, the capital of Gondor and a centre of high learning. An example of this can be seen in a con-

[17] When it comes to both ancient literature and theories about literature and its relation to reality, philosophy and culture in general, it is important to keep in mind that Greek and modern understandings of "literature" are not equivalent, and there are significant differences with respect to composition, social function and theoretical concepts. For instance, the words *poetry* and *poiesis* are not interchangeable: poetry in its modern use associates for the most part with lyric poetry but in Plato and Aristotle's theories about poiesis the emphasis is on epic and drama rather than lyric. Poiesis in their writings denotes primarily tragedy and comedy – although the word can also refer to making or creating in a more general sense, not in the context of literary art only. (Harland 1999, 1–3.)

versation Aragorn, the future king, has with the herb-master of the Houses of Healing. Aragorn asks for a particular herb, *athelas*, but the herb-master doubts its healing powers and scorns the old rhymes that speak of it:

> 'Your pardon lord!' said the man. 'I see you are a lore-master, not merely a captain of war. But alas! sir, we do not keep this thing in the Houses of Healing, where only the gravely hurt or sick are tended. For it has no virtue that we know of, save perhaps to sweeten a fouled air, or to drive away some passing heaviness. Unless, of course, you give heed to rhymes of old days which women such as our good Ioreth still repeat without understanding. [– –] It is but a doggrel, I fear, garbled in the memory of old wives. Its meaning I leave to your judgement, if indeed it has any. [– –]' (*The Lord of the Rings, RK*, V, viii, 887.)

The herb-master's disrespect is striking not only because of his learnedness but also because he ignores the knowledge available to him by experience and practice – while he dismisses ancient lore, he also dismisses his own perceptual observations of the herb's qualities. If a plant is able to "drive away some passing heaviness", it could reasonably be expected to be worth further examination to find out whether it has broader benefits, especially given the long tradition of beliefs that support this assumption. However, the herb-master's scorn for old wife's tales is too strong, his presumptions too deep to encourage this kind of inquiry. The intrinsic value of lore and learnedness is at times in conflict with practical knowledge, as has been pointed out by Shippey. Shippey (2007, 162–163) addresses this ignorance and questions of learnedness and linguistic tradition in his essay "History in Words: Tolkien's ruling passion", writing that

> [l]ess successful is the philological herb-master of the Houses of Healing, who knows all the names for *athelas* and indeed a rhyme from Middle-earth's equivalent of Grimm's *ammen und spinnerinnen*, but does not actually have the herb or feel any need for it. He shows, in a rather prophetic way, how genuine

> knowledge can dwindle down to ancient lore, which is remembered but no longer felt to have any practical value.

Even though contemporary philosophical discussion follows the conventions of academic writing and perhaps offers more specific theoretical basis for the analysis, I claim nonetheless that the earlier tradition, that represented by Plato, for instance, is in many ways more relevant in this study. Tolkien's treatment of myths has much in common with Plato's formulations, and I hope to show that the philosophical themes at work in Tolkien's fiction not only join but contribute to the Platonic discussion about Ideas, perception, layered ontology and the epistemic abilities of the soul, to name a few. Another matter that makes Plato's theory particularly fruitful for studying Tolkien is his way of explicating philosophical notions through allegories. If read side by side with Tolkien's fiction, these allegories lead to valuable epistemic interpretations not only on figurative level but on literal level, too: the most notable example of this is the much-foregrounded light-motif. The strong Platonic connections also raise questions about the larger philosophical tendencies of fantasy fiction in general and the way in which philosophical ideas are worked through in worlds of fantasy: particularly C.S. Lewis's stories about the imaginary world of Narnia, a mythical land sometimes visited by people from the actual world, are openly Christian but also openly (Neo)Platonic. The final book of the seven-volume series, titled *The Last Battle*, brings Lewis's Platonic undertones to their pinnacle, as the fourth chapter will demonstrate.

The nature of Plato's writings as both aesthetically pleasing literature and philosophical ponderings on knowledge, existence and structure of the world can be seen as one example of Swirski's (2000, 139) idea of human creativity appearing in forms of science, art and philosophy alike. This delicate connection between the traditions I hope to respect in my analysis. Applying philosophical theories and concepts to the analysis of literature is not to bind together two separate cultural and scientific entities, to glue a set of theoretical approaches on a given literary

material; rather, it is to discover and conceptualise pre-existing connections and, at best, to find suitable ways to interpret these connections in a manner that expands the notions both of the philosophical quality of literature *and* the literary quality of philosophy. In the following chapters I aim to justify that this is a productive approach to J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction as an example, and that the analysis of Tolkien's epistemically complex legendarium can lead to conclusions that can more broadly be applied to epistemological analysis of fiction more generally, not speculative fiction alone.

1.3.4 Tolkien, Allegory and the Medieval

To conclude the Introduction, I will give a brief account of some of Tolkien's noteworthy literary characteristics, particularly his thoughts about – and his use of – allegory and his way of drawing from medieval imagery in his style, stories and the process of constructing a metaphysical and epistemic whole. These two aspects become foregrounded both because of Tolkien's own interests as a scholar and tendencies as a writer, and because of the theoretical background of later analysis. Allegories need to be addressed because of my method of paralleling Plato and Tolkien and their respective approaches to the literal-versus-figurative-dichotomy; the medieval context, on the other hand, is relevant primarily because of the epistemic role of Tolkien's dream-visions and their connection to the literary – and philosophical – traditions of medieval discussion.

Allegory has evoked quite a lot of interest among Tolkien-scholars and enthusiasts[18], not the least because of the author's undisguised dislike of using allego-

[18] Tolkien's own dislike of allegory often surfaces in studies concerning these topics. Nelson's (2010) article "J.R.R. Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle": An Allegory in Transformation.", for instance, is a comparison between Tolkien's work "Leaf by Niggle", a story of art and (sub)creation, and the fifteenth-century play *Everyman*. Nelson (ibid. 7–8) treats "Leaf by Niggle" as a re-writing of the play, and she asks why Tolkien, known for detesting allegory, chose to write such story in the first place, and she emphasises that based on information gathered from Tolkien's correspondence, the author was not equally unforgiving about *all* forms of allegory: an acceptable allegory would be one that serves a justifiable intention, such as learning to understand creative process. Long's (2009) study "Clinamen,

ry in order to mask the fantastic. David Lavinsky (2016, 306–307), for instance, points out that Tolkien did not invite allegorical readings of his works of fiction and generally disdained it as a mode of interpretation, but that the author's use of and his relationship with allegory is more complex and nuanced than that: according to Lavinsky, allegory has been a central issue in Tolkien-studies. Tolkien himself has commented on the allegory issue more than once, and one formulation can be found in a letter addressed to Milton Waldman in 1951. The letter has been published as an attachment to *The Silmarillion*, and in it Tolkien writes that

> I dislike Allegory – the conscious and intentional allegory – yet any attempt to explain the purport of myth or fairytale must use allegorical language. (And, of course, the more life a story has the more readily will it be susceptible of allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made the more nearly will it be acceptable just as a story.) (*The Silmarillion*, xii–xiii).

In this characterisation of the role allegory plays in the discussion and language of myth and fairy-tale Tolkien already admits that the two are hard to talk about without using allegorical language. Tolkien emphasises his dislike of intentional allegory, and a difference is thus being made between deliberately allegorical writings and allegorical language and devices that avail in discussions and explanations about something that is not allegorical for the sake of it but must be set in that linguistic sphere in order to be understood. Intentions set aside, it is understandable that many of Tolkien's works, *The Lord of the Rings* among them, attract allegorical readings, and the Christian frame of reference soon takes over when such an approach

Tessera, and the Anxiety of Influence: Swerving from and Completing George MacDonald.", then again, studies literary influence and shows how Tolkien departs from the writing of MacDonald in his story *Smith of Wootton Major*. Long (ibid. 135–136) writes that earlier studies of *Smith* have presented quite opposing opinions about whether or not the story should be read allegorically, and he begins his own treatment by clarifying the difference Tolkien makes between allegory and allegorical interpretation: "[a]llegory is a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to dominate the story and reader's mind [– –]. Allegorical interpretations, in contrast, arise as a reader comes into contact with a text." (ibid. 136). Already these two examples show that Tolkien's own (academic or personal) views on creation, art and literature are seldom overlooked when studying similar themes in his works of fiction; the general rule applies to the treatments of allegory, too.

is adopted. In the study at hand, however, the allegorical aspect must be commented for other reasons.

It is not my purpose to study Tolkien's legendarium as an allegory, and it is not this particular branch of readings that my study joins; rather, the relevance of allegory is based on the Platonic framework and the method of presenting and illustrating philosophical theories with the help of allegories and analogies. Historically, allegory has been scorned by many writers and schools of thought much before Tolkien, but on the other hand allegory has been practiced by several exquisite writers such as many commentators in antiquity and medieval times.[19] The complexities and conflicts of allegorical interpretation often arise from the historical context of cultural and critical community producing said interpretations: the interpretative act itself can be either denied or defended in a biased manner for instance when different critical communities represent incompatible belief systems, such as pagans and early Christians. (See for instance Whitman 2000, 3–4, 6.) In spite of the problems, allegory has been essential to cultural communities balancing between altering belief systems, traditions, religious, philosophical and scientific currents. Jon Whitman discusses the ambivalent role of allegory and its history, and according to him, allegorical interpretation played a significant role in the attempts of civilizations to maintain intellectual and spiritual equilibrium, and it extended beyond the mere literary works to the methods of comprehending reality in a broader sense: "[i]n the Middle Ages, it [allegory] reoriented critical approaches not only to foundational works, but to the world at large, sometimes provoking fundamental conceptual and social crises within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities." (ibid. 4.) The significance of allegory reaches beyond canonical texts and literary works, being a part of larger processes of comprehending the world.

[19] Allegorical exegesis, interpreting *The Bible* is, of course, one of the most dominant branches of Western allegorical tradition. Allegorical exegesis is an important tool of theological studies, and one of the most renowned works about medieval exegesis is Henri de Lubac's (2000) *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture* from mid-20th century. de Lubac's treatment is divided into four methods of interpretation, including allegory, typology, tropology and anagogy. de Lubac's interest is both historical and literary, and his work is one example of notions that, contrary to the Enlightenment-like approach, acknowledge the value of understanding allegory.

Regarding the very nature of allegorical interpretation, Whitman presents the following thought:

> Allegorical interpretation is not exactly a single 'kind' of interpretation. To engage 'it' seriously is to encounter not just a system of beliefs or a set of conceptual 'norms,' but a series of critical negotiations. Acts of interpretive allegory are transactions between fluctuating critical communities and formative texts. While these transactions regularly draw upon shared interpretive methods, they are situated in times and places, marked by tensions and polemics, that are specific to each historical community and its developing canon. (Whitman 2000, 5–6.)

Whitman outlines here his views of what it means to interpret something allegorically. Again, the importance of situatedness, the context and background of the historical, interpreting critical community comes to the fore. What these different communities do, each viewing the text at hand from their own theoretical and philosophical position, is that they approach the text as work that conveys meanings and messages other than the ones specifically stated in it: Whitman (2000, 7) discussing the expression "other-speaking", writes that the concept allegory consists of two words, one signifying other or different, one signifying speaking. This is the very basic meaning of allegory, and in this study its role is not easy to determine. Even though I do not view, say, *The Lord of the Rings* as an allegory of a seemingly deeper scientific, philosophical or religious treatise, some of the interpretations presented in the chapters to follow have allegorical undertones. This resemblance arises from the method of reading Plato's dialogues and Tolkien's fiction side by side, at times breaking the hierarchies between theoretical and literary works, and it is largely based on the collaboration of the literal and the figurative. However, in this process my method of reading is in a way turned backwards: I interpret certain epistemically relevant motifs in Tolkien's literature by examining them in parallel with Plato's allegories, but while I search for the epistemic currents

in Tolkien, looking beyond the literal, I also *restore* the literal to Plato, dissecting the allegorical, philosophical whole back to its components, viewing the cave as a cave, and the sun as the Sun. The purpose of this approach is to set the theoretical framework and the literary material on the same level, viewing their literal and figurative sides as equals. Plato's Allegory of the Cave, for instance, was devised to demonstrate the hierarchies of reality and the difference between belief and knowledge; on the other hand, examining it through the literalising lens often put to work in studies of speculative fiction opens new possibilities of interpretation, as chapter four later shows.

Tolkien's figurative and literary use of certain imagery, such as light-related vocabulary or the motifs of ascending and descending, evokes questions about the very purpose of certain word choices and whether their function is to make a point philosophically, for instance to construct or illustrate metaphysical or epistemic developments, or if the use of language is more aesthetically motivated. In addition to the philosophical aspects, the frequent descriptions of ascending and enlightenment soon lead to discussions about divinity, heaven and theological readings. As becomes evident for instance in Flieger's (2002, 87–88) study, linguistic aesthetics were indeed central to Tolkien and certainly had significant impact on his literary work and style, and therefore it is more than natural to acknowledge the possibility of reading his figurative expressions as primarily aesthetically and stylistically motivated, carefully shaped pieces of literary art without assuming philosophical schemes behind them. Taking into account the many views that perceive philosophical literature as a means to convey models and theories, sometimes reducing the intrinsic value of literature, Tolkien's emphasis on linguistic aesthetics can help to avoid this problem. The aesthetical value of figurative expression is clear in Tolkien's fiction; however, in addition to the phonological and semantically pleasing imagery conveyed in the Tolkien's language, I argue that the figurative expressions can also invite deeper readings about the world they describe – whether the linguistic choices are deliberate in their philosophical undertones and associations, is not

for this dissertation to determine. As many of the studies cited in this work show, including those by Nagy (2004), Flieger (2002 and 2004), Shippey (2007) and McBride (2020), Tolkien's legendarium weaves something that in complexity and depth produces a whole much larger and profound than a mere fictional platform for stories to take place in, and much of it owes to Tolkien's use of language.

The chosen method of paralleling Tolkien and Plato may invite questions concerning Tolkien's own views on Plato's philosophy and, by extension, the Neoplatonist tradition. I want to avoid making too bold speculations about the matter, particularly the author's philosophical position, but it is clear that Tolkien was certainly more than familiar with Plato's dialogues: already Tolkien's undergraduate studies indicate a connection, and Tolkien has often characterised the story of Númenor as his version of Atlantis myth that appears in Plato's *Critias* (see for instance Williams 2020, 418). Korpua (2021, 1) summarises this connection and the many parallels, echoes and reworkings writing that "there are elements of Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Christian Platonism observable in Tolkien's fiction. In other words: Tolkien used Platonic ideas to create his fantasy world." What surfaces in Korpua's formulation is an assumption of consciousness and deliberate use of philosophical and Christian tradition. This thought easily comes to the fore, particularly because of Tolkien's strong associations with myth-making; in previous scholarship, the connection between the two writers has been approached primarily with respect to their treatments of myth – this view is adopted by Nagy (2004) and Williams (2020), among others. My interest, on the other hand, is on how the two shape an epistemic whole while building myths and world-constructions. There is much more information available about the mythological connections: the influence of ancient and medieval tradition on Tolkien's writing is commonly acknowledged, and Williams (2020, 404) points out that "Tolkien's reception and rewriting of the classical tradition has helped to shape his imagination of utopia and its subsequent loss." In this formulation Tolkien's awareness of the influence of the classical tradition is plainly stated. Even so, particularly regarding worldviews

and philosophical positions, indicating direct connections to specific writers or currents of thought is risky: between Tolkien and Thomas Aquinas, for instance, clear links are hard to show. In his discussion of Tolkien's Thomistic influences, Jonathan McIntosh (2017, 20) writes that

> [t]o begin, it has to be said that there is admittedly very little direct or obvious evidence linking these two thinkers. Tolkien's for example, never so much as alludes to St. Thomas in any of his writings, yet this by itself is hardly conclusive, for neither does he ever mention Augustine, Boethius, Plato, Nietzsche or any other major thinker whose works Tolkien was certainly aware of, and in the light of whose thought his stories have been insightfully examined by others.

In spite of the difficulties and the danger of slipping into speculation, Platonic connections have been given thought. Regarding Tolkien's theories about creative writing and his concept of *sub-creation*, the subordinate, imaginative creation-process of fictional worlds a writer of fantasy engages in (about sub-creation see Tolkien 1983, 138–140), Carl Phelpstead (2014, 89) writes that

> Tolkien's theory of myth-making and sub-creation has roots much further back than Coleridge, however. His conception of the world of physical phenomena as bearing witness to spiritual realities is ultimately Platonic, though whereas for Plato imaginative literature was suspect because it peddled imitations of imitations, the Neoplatonists who inherited and modified his views saw imaginative literature as offering valuable insights into truth.

Phelpstead's remark is important with respect to both metaphysical questions about the structure of the universe and to the relationship between literature, knowledge and truth. A question of its own is whether Tolkien is deliberately building a Platonic universe in his process of myth-making or is this impression something that arises in the interpretations, perhaps encouraged by the specific,

clear mythical elements shared by the two authors; this is a question the tools of textual analysis may not be able to provide a satisfactory answer to. At this point, and particularly regarding the main topic of the second chapter, it is noteworthy what Phelpstead writes about Tolkien's conception of "the world of physical phenomena as bearing witness to spiritual realities" (ibid. 89), which Phelpstead sees as a clear indication of a Platonic worldview. Given Tolkien's background as a devout Catholic and the strong Christian undertones of his writing, the Christian Neoplatonist tradition Phelpstead mentions is an obvious point of connection to resurface in the analysis, and in many ways Tolkien's writing resembles Neoplatonic currents (see for instance Korpua 2021, 2–3; Vaccaro 2017, 81–82). These issues I will point out as they emerge in the analysis, but my main focus remains nonetheless on Tolkien and Plato.

If the ancient tradition played a significant role beginning from Tolkien's early education and continuing to his literary and academic pursuits, medieval thought forms another significant historical and theoretical context for future analysis. It is by no means justified to treat ancient literature and philosophy and medieval thought as clear-cut time periods and easily distinguishable branches; rather, this study seeks to maintain and enhance consciousness of the remarkable influence literary and philosophical history have on Tolkien's fictional world and its epistemic structure while remaining aware of the natural and inevitable overlapping of different branches and time periods. The theoretical core originates in certain aspects of ancient philosophy, some of which transformed over time, gaining new characteristics and emphases and re-emerging in (Christian) Neoplatonism through which they were carried over to medieval times. Plato's metaphysics and epistemology form the major line that my analysis more or less follows, but Aristotelean philosophy, too, is taken into account, not least because of the synthesizing and harmonising ambitions that substantially characterised Neoplatonism.

It requires only a brief look at the vast scholarly work on Tolkien's Arda to notice that the word *medieval* keeps resurfacing both in academic and in non-

scholarly discussions. While the medieval influences in Tolkien's fiction are, intuitively speaking, quite clear, it is nonetheless at times difficult to specifically point out what exactly is being talked about when attributing medievality to Tolkien's work. Does it refer to reworkings of certain medieval stories or patterns, or to specific character types and plots in medieval literature? Has it got more to do with acknowledging Tolkien's own scholarly expertise in medieval literature and the possible influence this learnedness has on his writing? Or is the medieval used in a broader, less historically and academically definite sense to characterise the overall atmosphere and imagery that many works of fantasy share, Tolkien's legendarium as a quintessential example, something that readers recognise and associate with medieval times without linking these associations to specific textual observations? All of these are possible approaches, depending on the exact questions that are of interest in each branch of conversation.

I want to foreground a few aspects with respect to the medieval. Firstly, the third chapter is much concerned with medieval dream-vision literature popular particularly between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, and its characteristics significantly echo in Tolkien's descriptions of dreams, foreknowledge and visions; these influences I study with the help of Kathryn Lynch's (1988) work *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*. Lynch's study takes into account both the literary styles, structures and themes and the more philosophical aspects of the medieval genre, a combination that offers valuable tools for examining similar themes in Tolkien's fiction. Secondly, while my use of possible world theories relies mostly on Doležel's (1998) and Ryan's (1991) work, I also discuss modalities, predetermination and knowledge taking into account historical views, particularly those of medieval era presented in Knuuttila's (1993) opus *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*. That being said, I fully acknowledge the importance of medieval imagery and themes in Tolkien's fiction, and soon introduce some of the scholarly work written about them, but my emphasis is nonetheless on the traces of medieval dream literature and theory in Tolkien's world, medieval conceptions of modali-

ty and certain half philosophical, half theological aspects. Examining the parallel lines of thought of Tolkien and particular medieval authors or philosophers (or, philosopher-poets for that matter) would be a task too grand to be attempted in this study for its main research questions are found elsewhere; however, the medieval literary and philosophical currents outlined by Lynch and Knuuttila provide important starting-points for later analysis.

The medieval elements in Tolkien's fiction have evoked large academic interest, and the medieval influences, intertextual connections, philosophical and cosmological aspects have been gathered together by Jane Chance in *Tolkien the Medievalist*. In the introduction to the work Chance suggests that the enormous popularity of Tolkien's fantasy is partly due to the author's vast, scholarly knowledge about medieval languages and literature (Chance 2003, 2). The medieval connections are, according to Chance, many indeed: she writes that "Tolkien was, over time, influenced by his own personal medievalism, his profession as a medievalist, his relationships with other medievalists, and his own mythologizing in constructing his major fiction." (Chance 2003, 4.) One of the purposes of the collection of essays and articles is to study the many ways in which Tolkien's fiction uses various works of medieval literature as a palimpsest for the ideas developed for his world of fantasy. (ibid. 4.)[20] One popular way of approaching Tolkien's medievality in a primarily literary context has been to study the clear influences that include subject matter, themes and motifs but also form and structure: in her article "Tolkien's Wild Men. From medieval to modern" Flieger ponders the dominant medieval genres behind Tolkien's fiction, writing that

> [t]he form and subject matter of J.R.R. Tolkien's major fiction clearly derive from the medieval genres of epic, romance, and fairy tale. This said, it should

[20] Another approach to Tolkien's medievalism has been to focus on his own academic work and his studies on medieval texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Reeve's Tale* and *Beowulf* – this perspective is put to work for instance in Michael Drout's (2007) article "J.R.R. Tolkien's Medieval Scholarship and its Significance." While acknowledging the importance of the undeniable cooperation of Tolkien's academic and creative work, this study is more interested in the latter.

> also be noted that Tolkien puts a modern spin on many of his characters, reconfiguring the contexts and situations in which they play a part while at the same time keeping faith with the medieval types from which they derive. [– –] His medieval roots are plain to see – from the surface texture of costume, custom, battle-gear, and speech to the deeper borrowings of theme and pattern from *Beowulf*, Malory, and the Gawain poet. (Flieger 2003, 95.)

Flieger's characterisation approaches Tolkien's medievality both as an overall source of themes and imagery and as a more specific, literary context that includes structural influences and shares strains with famous medieval texts. Her description includes examples of the many things that form an important part of the intuitive "medieval air" very recognisable to readers of fantasy literature, such as the costume, battle-gear and customs she names – I believe that this quite fittingly characterises what is meant when Tolkien's fiction is generally and in everyday speech said to be *medieval* without specifically determining what produces the medieval associations.

Another article I would like to introduce from Chance's collection is John William Houghton's work "Augustine in the cottage of lost play. The Ainulindalë as asterisk cosmogony". The imaginary connection between Tolkien's fantasy world and the real, historical Europe, England in particular, is one of the many aspects that become even more relevant when studied side by side with Neoplatonic tradition and the uninterrupted work of interpreting Plato in general. This aspect is acknowledged in Houghton's article that studies the creation myth of Arda alongside the Christian Neoplatonic accounts of creation. The concept of an asterisk cosmogony has its origin in the philological habit of marking lost words and their forms with an asterisk and, furthermore, of reconstructing the worldviews described by those words and languages. Tolkien's creation of myths was, according to Houghton, treated as an instance of asterisk cosmogony by Tom Shippey who claimed that in his fiction Tolkien created asterisk-like realities that "fit indis-

tinguishably amongst real ones." (Houghton 2003, 171.) According to Houghton, the "Ainulidalë", creation myth of Arda, is

> an asterisk-cosmogony, an imagined account of the creation of an asterisk-reality: and as the Hobbits fit neatly into the historical world, down to the level of having a respectable Old English etymology (*LR*, 1172), so (though we might not on first reading expect it to) the *Ainulindalë* fits neatly amongst the real cosmogonies known to early medieval Europe. (ibid. 171.)

For the Latin Christian early medieval thinkers there were, according to Houghton, two main cosmogonies to draw on: the creation presented in *Genesis* and Plato's *Timaeus*. The fictional auditor-editor-storyteller Ælfwine, who is of interest also in Vladimir Brljak's (2010) study, would serve as the link that introduces this third account of creation to the medieval thinkers: the *Ainulindalë* is placed side by side with *Timaeus* and *Genesis*, and the English history and Arda's history become linked.

What I find particularly important is Houghton's remark about the unexpected reconcilability of Tolkien's myth with the Christian and Christian-Platonic traditions: Houghton claims that the commentary tradition (of which he names the work of Saint Augustine of Hippo to be of special interest and importance in this matter) allows Arda's mythology to coexist with Genesis. St. Augustine's writings provided the most notable basis for cosmological reflection for the early medieval thinkers[21], and in their eyes the two-layered process of creation presented in the first chapter of *The Silmarillion* would have been quite reconcilable with the Augustinian Christian-Neoplatonic synthesis. (Houghton 2003, 171–172.) The medieval undertones in Tolkien's fiction, both cosmological and philosophical (assuming that the two can be treated separately in the first place which is not necessarily the

[21] Augustine's thoughts greatly influenced medieval philosophy and theology, and particularly his syntheses Christian faith and Platonism, which draw from Neoplatonism and Stoic currents, did much of the groundwork of later Christian philosophy (see for instance Remes 2008, 198). Also in this work, Augustine's thoughts are mostly discussed side by side with medieval thinkers and theories. However, in spite of the strong medieval associations, the philosopher himself, born in 354 AD, was a scholar of late antiquity.

case, particularly with respect to, say, ancient philosophy), are much intertwined with both Christian and Neoplatonic traditions, a matter that has remarkable influence also on the course of this study. With respect to the interpretations I am about to present, it is Augustine's notion on literal that is of particular interest: Houghton writes that Augustine's idea of "literal" is quite striking to a modern reader in the commentaries on *Genesis*, mainly because the modern conception of literality is much more straightforward than that of Augustine. For Augustine, literality did not mean the surface of creation in its six-day course; rather, he treated the key concepts of *Genesis* such as heaven, day and earth in a symbolical sense. (ibid. 172.) Houghton describes Augustine's complex ideas about literality as follows:

> What he [Augustine] proposes to discuss in Genesis is the nonallegorical sense, and he sees that sense in this case as historical (*De Genesi*, 1.1.1-2). This seems like backing into the topic, treating the derivative – allegorical – sense before the primary – literal – meaning; but Augustine wants to rule out figurative, allegorical meaning from the beginning precisely because the *literal* sense he finds in the opening of Genesis is itself *expressed* figuratively. [– –] Thus Augustine calls his symbolic interpretation the *literal* sense of Genesis because he is convinced that Moses deliberately used symbols in writing about real historical events of the Creation. (ibid. 172–173.)

To a modern reader Augustine's idea of *literal* easily seems slightly hard to comprehend. However, Augustine's understanding of literal reading provides fascinating aspects to the epistemology of Arda, and there are other noteworthy metaphysical and epistemological formulations, too. The concluding section of the fourth chapter of this study examines Plato's idea of *anamnesis*, that is the soul's recollection of its pre-existing knowledge of ideas, one of the forms of supernatural knowledge I read in Tolkien's fiction. Similar epistemic notions are also present in Augustine's (1955, IV.xv.25; p. 101) writings: he writes about knowledge as illumination, and in this particular matter his thoughts follow Plato's Analogy of the Sun to a great

degree, and he devises a theory of divine illumination and an internal teacher – Christ.

To return to the literal reading of *Genesis* – and, simultaneously, the light-symbol which cannot in this context be treated separately – it is by contrasting Flieger's Tolkien-analyses with Augustine's understanding of *literal* that provides fruitful aspects with respect to Tolkien's medieval influences and his treatment of knowledge and truth alike. Flieger's account of light in Tolkien's legendarium will be introduced in more detail later, and her treatment of the metaphorical–versus–literal-theme central in Tolkien's literature is an important starting-point for many of the key questions of this study, especially the role of light in knowledge-formation: furthermore, while the partly similar treatments of light in Augustine and Tolkien are interesting as such, the light-motif and its epistemic significance are an important example of characteristics that strongly link the epistemic system of Tolkien's fiction to Neoplatonist tradition instead of Plato alone. Flieger's (2002, 49) claim is that it is characteristic for Tolkien's fictional work to treat literally that which ordinarily would be read metaphorically,[22] an idea that leads to interesting interpretational possibilities when studying the epistemic power of the sun, light, day and twilight, to name some of the recurring motifs. This is by no means unusual in speculative fiction: the same phenomenon has been discussed by Seo-Young Chu (2010, 10), for instance, and according to her figurative language in science fiction has a notable tendency to invite literal interpretations almost as a rule: readers of science fiction tend to literalise the lyric figures. Chu focuses on science fiction specifically, but the phenomenon itself, I perceive, is the same that Flieger is interested in.

Alongside light, another epistemically relevant aspect that arises from Augustine's theory is the role of reason in knowledge-formation. Divine enlightenment

[22] This formulation is in many ways crucial for my later analyses. Flieger (2002, 64) continues her thought by stating that "In Middle-earth as in our own world, enlightenment is to be desired. But in Middle-earth that light is a physical reality, not a metaphor for an inner state of being [– –]." The analyses in chapter 4.3 are very much concerned with this idea, focusing on the literal *and* metaphorical meanings of light both in Tolkien and in Plato.

and prophetic knowledge are one instance of supernatural knowledge (that is, *supernatural* in the sense that does not necessarily violate laws of nature as such, as in cases of prophetic dreams taking place in the consciousness) in Tolkien's world, but despite the elements of sudden revelation and understanding granted from above the role of reason cannot be overlooked. Augustine's correspondence includes an exchange of thoughts with Consentius, whose claim is that truth should be sought through faith instead of reason. To this Augustine replies that

> God forbid that He should hate in us that faculty by which He made us superior to all other living beings. Therefore, we must refuse so to believe as not to receive or seek a reason for our belief, since we could not believe at all if we did not have rational souls. So, then, in some points that bear on the doctrine of salvation, which we are not yet able to grasp by reason – but we shall be able to sometime – let faith precede reason, and let the heart be cleansed by faith so as to receive and bear the great light of reason; this is indeed reasonable. [– –] But, if it is reasonable that faith precede a certain great reason which cannot yet be grasped, there is no doubt that, however slight the reason which proves this, it does precede faith. (Augustine 1953, 302.)

Faith and reason are not mutually exclusive for Augustine: he perceives faith as a necessary step that precedes reason, taking control when the human mind is still striving for understanding. In the course of this study, it will become evident that Tolkien's legendarium works in a manner that brings together two or more seemingly opposing or exclusive processes, and it is their synthesis that in my reading results in *supernatural knowledge* – in this sense, the epistemic system of Tolkien's world joins the Neoplatonist tradition of harmonising and synthetizing. The most important syntheses have to do with revelation and reason, visions and their interpretations and the marriage of the physical and the spiritual, all of which are some of Tolkien's most interesting medieval elements, and his manner of using them is

very distinctive with respect to both his literary style and his way of weaving epistemic structures in the fictional universe.

2. METAPHYSICAL HIERARCHY OF ARDA

> But when the Valar entered into Eä they were at first astounded and at a loss, for it was as if naught was yet made which they had seen in vision, and all was but on point to begin and yet unshaped, and it was dark. For the Great Music had been but the growth and flowering of thought in the Timeless Halls, and the Vision only a foreshowing; but now they had entered in at the beginning of Time, and the Valar perceived that the World had been but foreshadowed and foresung, and they must achieve it. (*The Silmarillion*, 10.)

Already in the very first pages of *The Silmarillion*, the mythological history of Tolkien's Arda, the layered structure of the fictional universe is laid bare. It is not only the world itself that is so structured but the very act of creation itself, too. It is no wonder, then, that the myth of creation, Arda's cosmogony, as it is called for instance by Korpua (2015, 45), has evoked considerably wide interest in scholars. In earlier studies written about the creation myth of Arda[23] certain core elements, themes and lines of analysis tend to emerge: comparisons have been made both to

[23] Tolkien's myth of creation, in its best-known form presented in *The Silmarillion* but also published in various, diverging versions in other books such as *The Book of Lost Tales I*, has been studied from equally various perspectives. The Christian connections, for instance, come to the fore in Holloway's article "Redeeming Sub-Creation" in which Holloway (2011, 183–184) examines how Tolkien's Roman Catholicism cooperates with his concept and act of sub-creation, and he argues that the opening chapter of *The Silmarillion* is, in fact, a story of sub-creation – he even characterises it as a "theological prologue". Holloway (ibid. 183) writes that Tolkien's account of creation is clearly not polytheistic, but the angelic beings, the Ainur, are merely subordinate co-creators – this interpretation of spiritual order is largely accepted, and Korpua (2015, 67–69) analyses the hierarchy of spiritual beings and emphasises the superiority of Eru as the one creator. Flieger (2002, 63–64), on the other hand, extends the analysis of creation to her main point of interest, light, and the acts of the Valar to spread and splinter it even though they are unable to restore the divine light. Flieger (ibid. 57–58), too, makes brief remarks about the Christian aspects of Ainulindalë, stating that Tolkien embedded in it both the Christian theme of Lucifer's rebellion (which Tolkien, however, deliberately took a step back from in order to avoid "overt Christian reference") and the Pythagorean idea of music as the harmonising, ordering force of the universe, writing that "Tolkien took these two ideas, celestial harmony and rebellious discord, and wove them together, making each concept dependent on, as well as the source of, the other."

Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* and to Judeo-Christian Genesis (see for instance Nagy's article from 2004 and Houghton 2003, 171–172). Elizabeth Whittingham's (1998) "The Mythology of the "Ainulindalë": Tolkien's Creation of Hope", on the other hand, examines how concepts such as hope and the struggle of good and evil are naturalised in Tolkien's creation myth. Whittingham (ibid. 212) also points out that paralleling Tolkien's fictional universe with real-world mythologies is a result of the inner consistency and coherence of the world construction: the fictional world is so complete that theories about actual mythologies could be applied to the study of the fictional universe, too. Given the number of analyses already written about the "Ainulindalë", the first chapter of *The Silmarillion* in which the creation of Arda, its beings and their relations are told, not much has escaped scrutiny and interpretation. My following remarks about Arda's creation join this discussion, and the line they are primarily intended to follow is one that contemplates the Platonic elements in Tolkien's myth of creation.

Instead of the righteously much-analysed questions of Arda's myth-making, especially the intertextual connections to historical, real-world mythologies such as old Norse, English and Finnish epics (as studied by Drout 2004 and Flieger 2004, among others), I examine how philosophical notions woven in the world of fantasy manifest themselves in the structure of the world. That being said, my analysis of Platonic elements in Arda is not a comparison between "Ainulindalë" and creation of the world as it is presented in *Timaeus*: it is the theory of Forms later constructed from Plato's dialogues that I intend to apply to this study.[24] I also want to emphasise that even though Korpua discusses the Platonic connections in depth, both the approach and the end are significantly different in this study: Korpua (2015, 47; 2021, 64) specifically points out that his interest in Plato's cosmology is primarily structural, not philosophical. I, on the other hand, study the structures, the process

[24] Regarding the Christian-(Neo)platonic characteristics in Tolkien's metaphysics, McIntosh (2017, 74) writes that "[i]n his representation of Eru as creating the Ainur according to a pattern in the divine mind or "thought," Tolkien would seem to allude to the classical and Christian-Platonic doctrine of the divine mind and ideas", and according to him, Tolkien in many ways parallels the creation myth given in *Timaeus* in the "Ainulindalë".

of creation and the metaphysical hierarchy in order to be able to access the philosophical notions conveyed in these analogies, and to be able to see how the literal and the figurative uses of light, origin, copies and shadows, the experiences of seeing, imagining and perceiving, constitute the epistemic whole of Tolkien's universe. Including the metaphysical conceptions to the analysis does not in any way reduce the emphasis on epistemology; rather, given the theoretical emphasis on ancient and medieval tradition, it is important to acknowledge the inseparable roots of the two branches. In fact, tearing metaphysics and epistemology violently apart would have damaged self-understanding, as Remes (2008, 38) writes: "[i]n ancient philosophy, metaphysics goes hand in hand with epistemology, and a rigid separation between the two would be impossible, and would probably have violated the self-understanding of ancient philosophers. In the same vein, being one something, a determinate entity, is essential for its availability to intellection."

In this chapter I will focus on one dominant characteristic of Arda, that being its repetitive and duplicating nature. My assumption is that the epistemic structure of Tolkien's world is highly affected by this tendency of producing copies: that which seen from the perspective of the characters seems genuine and real, an object of perception and knowledge, often proves to be a mere copy of something that is no longer present in the world. These remnants appear in various forms throughout Tolkien's written works about Arda, and later on in this study my analysis will cover examples that include events, physical places, people, artefacts, nature and written and oral tradition within the fictional world. The role of spoken and written tradition within fiction, usually in the form of artistic literature intended to be both educational and aesthetically pleasing, is important when it comes to passing on historical knowledge or lore, and also the relation between literary form and its ability to convey epistemic content in the legendarium will be a point of interest[25]. A key question here is how the many layers and duplications affect the

[25] For a more thorough treatment of the metafictionist nature of Tolkien's legendarium see Vladimir Brljak's (2010) article "The Books of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist". The vast literary tradi-

way the world is perceived and understood, especially when it comes to the reliability of perception: drawing from Plato's metaphysics it is reasonable to ask whether knowledge that concerns copies is indeed as valid as that derived from the so-called original source, or, in a stricter sense, whether it is to be called knowledge at all. Tolkien's fictional universe is strongly characterised by a sense of diminishing and fading of which the many remnants derived from things more ancient, grander and primary serve as evidence. It is my assumption that by exploring these chains of copies and their developing processes it is possible to unearth the underlying metaphysical hierarchy of Arda; of these chains particularly the motif of light and its replicas will be analysed in detail in this chapter.

The timeline and creation process of Arda have been thoroughly analysed by Korpua (2015, 41–76 and 2021, 13–14) who also pays attention to the hierarchical questions of the legendarium. Korpua's main interest, however, is in the hierarchy and relationship between the peoples and creatures of Arda, such as the Ainur, Elves, Men and hobbits, their place in the process of creation, the nature of their being, their soul and physical form – these issues Korpua analyses drawing from both (Christian) Platonic and Aristotelian theories. My primary interest is rather in finding out how the distinction between original and secondary, a motif so often highlighted in the legendarium, affects how the world becomes the object of (perceptual) knowledge. I also wish to show that the entire concept of originality is very questionable in Tolkien's world: the impossibility of restoration is a constantly recurring motif in the material I analyse.

Since most of the questions this chapter seeks to answer concern the concepts of (false) originality, the dualistic nature of the universe, chains of copies and layers, the main difference between this section and chapters three and four is the emphasis on metaphysics instead of epistemology. Before any thorough study about the very being of a world can begin, one needs to acknowledge the difficulty

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tion of Arda is Briljak's main interest and he analyses the way Tolkien's fiction comments on its own literary history as a collection of stories and lore: Arda is full of books within books, deepening layers that still are unable to grasp the irretrievable past.

of making a difference between metaphysics and ontology – and, after that, deciding which of the two the study at hand eventually concerns more. The problem of distinguishing the two branches is rather modern, and did not exist in ancient and medieval thought: the concept *ontology* was not coined until the seventeenth century AD, and for a long time ontology and metaphysics were used interchangeably or as mutually complementary rather than opposing terms. In modern discussion, metaphysics has been largely criticised, sometimes dismissed as obsolete, even. (Jaroszyński 2018, 1.) The different approaches have been discussed by Achille Varzi (2011, 407–408) according to whom one common distinction that has emerged in the long and versatile conceptual debate states that while ontology focuses more specifically on what entities there are in the world, that is, what exists, metaphysic studies the ultimate nature of these beings, attempting to explain what they are. Another fairly widespread tendency is to treat ontology as a part of metaphysics. Varzi's (ibid. 407) approach to the two concepts summarises the main definitions quite clearly: "[t]he question I wish to address concerns the relationship between the distinction – the relationship between ontology understood as the study of *what there is* and metaphysics understood as the study of *what it is*." In this study, I base my use of concepts on this notion and focus on metaphysics: this is primarily because it is not my intention to give an account of the different kind of entities in Tolkien's world – or, in Varzi's (ibid. 407) words, "drafting a "complete inventory" of the universe" – but to study the nature of these entities and their place in the whole.

2.1 Tolkien's Eä as a Possible World: Secondary Worlds and the Land of *Faërie*

The epistemic characteristics of Tolkien's fantasy world can only be understood once the world-construction itself has been introduced. This study, with its strong emphasis on the epistemic structures woven in the fictional universe, is inside out concerned with fantasy worlds for which reason questions of genre and the overall importance of *worlds* in its definitions cannot be completely omitted. In his examination *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings*, Stefan Ekman dives deep into the world constructions and landscapes of fantasy, but he nonetheless clearly states that he does not consider the definitions of fantasy to be dependent on these worlds and their characteristics. Ekman (2013, 2) writes that "[m]y intention is not to argue in favor of a *topofocal*, or place-focused, *definition* of fantasy, nor to suggest that setting is *more* important than character or plot. [– –] Fantasy offers possibilities to create fictive worlds that are fundamentally different from our own [– –]." While denying the genre-defining dominance of worlds in fantasy, Ekman also highlights their overall importance and distinctiveness and elevates them on the same level with plots and characters. Ekman's remark about the possibilities of fantasy is relevant for the aspirations of this study: the chapters to follow present interpretations and patterns about the epistemic structure of Tolkien's Arda, but in a broader philosophical sense they also ask if these means and patterns differ from those at work in the actual world. Fantasy enables, according to Ekman, fictive worlds *fundamentally different from our own*, and in an epistemically orientated reading it should be asked how these differences are embedded in knowledge-formation processes and belief-systems – indeed, the very hypotheses this study proceeds from are based on this assumed possibility of building epistemically distinct realities.

Just as the relevancy of fantasy worlds, fantasy itself, too, should be discussed, and the best place to do that is here, before entering one of the best-known works within the category. The study at hand, as is already revealed in the research

questions, does not adopt a primarily genre-specific approach to the literary material it analyses; however, since the topic is much concerned with the supernatural and the ways in which fantasy fiction can take epistemic liberties without damaging the central philosophical concepts, a few words about the genre need to be said. One of the famous studies on the nature of fantasy is Attebery's (1992) *Strategies of Fantasy*, in which it is immediately acknowledged that it is hard to find definitions broad enough in order to include all fitting books without the term and definitions becoming too vague and meaningless. According to Attebery (ibid. 1–2), this difficulty of broadness is very dependent on whether fantasy is approached as a formula or as a mode, for the scale is much narrower if focus is set on the former that is associated with commercial products known for consistency and following a certain, predictable pattern: "[t]herefore, the formula end of fantasy scale is relatively easy to describe, though identifying all of its social functions may be more difficult." Even so, the divisions into categories such as mode, formula and genre, are somewhat artificial (ibid. 11). Luckily, regarding the literary corpus this study is concerned with, the problem of categorisation is not likely to emerge: Attebery (ibid. 14) goes as far as to say that "Tolkien's form of fantasy, for readers in English, is our mental template, and will be until someone else achieves equal recognition with an alternative conception." This, I presume, allows restricting this study to fairly general and basic understanding of fantasy, even though the genre itself admittedly makes a very complex subject for literary studies.

A very brief but well-fitting and informative definition is given in the introduction of a rather recent publication, *The Big Book of Modern Fantasy*. The editors Ann and Jeff VanderMeer (2020, 1–2) admit that precise definitions can only be provided about genres that are very narrow and precise, whereas fantasy is immensely broad – in fact, the writers speculate whether fantasy should be better perceived as a mode, tradition or a tendency instead of a genre. However, the first and foremost criterion based on which they select their material and one that provides the ground for definition is the encounter with the not-real. The Vander-

Meers write that fantasy can be "any story in which an element of the unreal permeates the real world or any story that takes place in a secondary world that is identifiably not a version of ours, whether anything overtly "fantastical" occurs in the story" (ibid. 1). This definition is sufficient for the interests of this study: the fantasy world that is now to be introduced is very much about encounters with the unreal, and the world itself (despite certain connections to the mythical past of England) is a secondary realm of its own.

Tolkien's *Eä* – although most of its stories as well as the majority of studies written about them mostly focus on Arda – is exceptional in its genre. At first sight it might be odd to call Tolkien's world *exceptional* because its core elements and motifs have spread so very wide: Arda can safely be said to be one of the most prototypical pseudo-medieval fantasy worlds. Yet Arda is exceptional in its role of a precursor, and a very influential one, too. Tolkien's impact on the genre can hardly be exaggerated: his fantasy has been imitated by several writers, and the combining of mythic motifs with different kinds of realist fictional techniques was one of the far-reaching consequences of the significant influence *The Lord of the Rings* in particular had on other writers of fantasy. (See for instance Attebery 2014, 6, and Mendlesohn 2008, 17.) It is not only the stories that have become iconic and beloved but their author, too: Tolkien's academic career, family life and personal history in general have evoked great interest, and also within the field of literary studies causal relations are at times drawn between Tolkien's real-life experiences, mainly the First World War and the Battle of the Somme, and his written work; a famous example of a study that shows interest in both the author's personal life and his literary creation is John Garth's (2004) biographical study *Tolkien and the Great War. The Threshold of Middle-earth*. I, however, focus less on the author: after introducing the universe of Eä alongside its primary world creator, focus will solely concentrate on the former while the latter will be left behind.

The fictional universe of Eä is itself uncertain and indefinite. The posthumously published work *Morgoth's Ring*, perhaps the most important book regarding

some of the epistemic enigmas I try to solve, sheds light on the definition of the universe, its composition and structure, the connections and interlacing of earth, the universe, skies and heaven, but some qualms remain nonetheless. Such unsteadiness is quite understandable: *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, to a degree, give an account of the history of rather specific areas, primarily Middle-earth, Beleriand and the continent of Aman. The world of Arda and the universe of Eä are, however, much larger and complex.[26] This uncertainty is present from the very beginning of the study at hand: the primary point of interest is Arda, the rough equivalent of the Earth, not Eä, the universe, because the information available of the cosmic whole is limited. The epistemic whole of Arda is accessible for analysis; Eä, on the other hand, is not quite, and it cannot be taken for granted that what applies to Arda would automatically apply to Eä as well. The process of building these imaginary realms was something Tolkien not only worked on in practice but theorised about them, too, and both pursuits have significantly influenced the definition of fantasy and sub-creation: alongside the stories about Eä Tolkien also engaged in the discussion in the form of personal letters and academic essays, the most prominent one being "On Fairy-Stories" (1983; first published in 1947 and based on a lecture from 1939). This essay has evoked much interest among fantasy scholars, and it has also been linked to Coleridge's views on imagination: Mosley (2020, 6–7), for instance, discusses Tolkien's conceptions of imagination and sub-creation side by side with Coleridge's and C.S. Lewis's theo-

[26] *Morgoth's Ring* alongside other posthumously published works present varying accounts of the structure of the universe, but I will not introduce them here in detail; the making and nature of the Sun and Moon, for instance, went through great changes (see commentary in *The Book of Lost Tales I*, 222–228). However, matters such as planetary relations and space are relevant with respect to definitions of fictional worlds, storyworlds and worldbuilding. Ryan (2019, 64–65) writes in her study on storyworlds that "[y]et another common conception of worlds from which storyworlds must be distinguished is their association with spatial objects such as islands and planets. Narratives that represent travel between different worlds in the planetary or insular sense, such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Star Wars*, still present only one storyworld." Tolkien's universe focuses on Arda, leaving other planets and solar-systems in peace, but even as such the world constitutes a metaphysically complex whole that invites readings from various perspectives. The possibility of non-contiguous, contemporaneous worlds *within* one storyworld and its importance regarding the modalities of fiction comes to the fore very soon.

ries, and according to him, all three writers consider that imagination leads to better understanding of reality. Regarding the epistemic approach chosen for this study the observation is noteworthy, and it will resurface in section 4.2.2, "Perceiving the immaterial".

"On Fairy-Stories" is a treatise of fairy stories as a literary form, but the essay expands into rather a philosophical discussion about the potency of language, creative abilities, imagination, world-building and the nature of fantasy. For Tolkien, one of the most important definitive criteria for fairy stories is the setting: the tales take place in *Faërie*, a fictional, enchanted realm. Highlighting the importance of the world of fantasy is a choice most noteworthy, and Tolkien's view has had an enormous influence on the study of fantastic world-building. Tolkien criticises the former definitions of fairies and fairy stories, the ones given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for instance, for paying too much heed to fairies as diminutive, fragile supernatural characters of fairy stories who possess magical powers: an approach that defines fairy stories as stories about (poorly described) fairies or elves is far too narrow. (Tolkien 1983, 109–111.) He suggests that the common English notion of fairies as delicate, frail beings is a literary fancy but also a form of rationalisation:

> Yet I suspect that this flower-and-butterfly minuteness was also a product of 'rationalisation', which transformed the glamour of Elf-land into mere finesse, and invisibility into a fragility that could hide in a cowslip or shrink behind a blade of grass. It seems to become fashionable soon after the great voyages had begun to make the world seem too narrow to hold both men and elves; when the magic land of Hy Breasail in the West had become the mere Brazils, the land of red-dye-wood. (Tolkien 1983, 111.)

This is the first criticism towards the reduction of enchantment, fantasy and imagination given in the essay, and it is later followed by more detailed examples of rationalisation and the machinery of dreams, for instance. Tolkien's remark immediately brings to the fore one of the greatest issues this study has to deal with – that

of rationalisation and naturalisation, in this context, explaining fantasy and the supernatural away. The third chapter in particular discusses these problems and tries to prove that supernatural knowledge is indeed a genuine possibility in a world of fantasy, not merely something that can be reduced into the parts of the whole that are, eventually, *natural* and in no way break the modal restrictions of the real world. To return to Tolkien's view on elves and the world of fantasy, his choice is to dismiss the role of fairies as the centre of tales and their definition. Rather, Tolkien focuses on the land of Faërie that contains much more than the falsely-categorised, diminutive fairies – including familiar elements of the natural world:

> [– –] for fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories *about* fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being. *Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (Tolkien 1983, 113.)

Tolkien's Faërie begins with words, and it is words that allow the wonder and enchantment of Faërie to work. The land of Faërie, as cited above, is the realm where fairies *have their being*, and, according to Tolkien, they do so independently of our tales about them (ibid. 113). Now, over 70 years after the essay was first published and after copious treatises of fantasy universes, world-building and genre studies, the idea of a separate world of enchantment with peculiar laws and logic of its own seems rather self-evident, but Tolkien's essay commented on issues that have not lost their relevance. Alongside the entire concept of Secondary World, the result of an imaginative process of sub-creation, the idea of secondary belief is also a matter of great importance. In short, the writer of fantasy, a person of flesh and blood from the actual, primary world, employs her abilities of imagination and in doing so creates a Secondary World. True skill is required if one is to succeed in the mak-

ing of a world in which things such as a green sun would be credible; this skill allows Secondary Belief to enter. (Tolkien 1983, 138–140.)

Using terms Tolkien himself found fitting to discuss fantasy and literary creation, Tolkien is the sub-creator, and the entire universe of Eä is the Secondary World, skilfully devised through language, a place of events that can only be taken seriously if the reader is willing to engage in the shared play of Secondary Belief. Concepts such as Secondary World and Secondary Belief (and, if including a broader context, its aforementioned kin concept of suspension of disbelief) begin to steer the discussion towards one central theoretical framework of this study, that is modalities of fiction. To summarise the very basic idea, the actual world is one of many possible worlds, and it is logically and philosophically justified to discuss non-actualised, possible entities, events and states of affairs (Doležel 1998, 13). The modalities of a supernatural fictional world work in a manner that deviates from the ways of the actual world, and truth and knowledge are also subject to this manipulation of restrictions. While worlds of literature can be approached as special kind of possible worlds, that is as aesthetic artefacts constructed in the medium of texts of fiction (ibid. 15–16), it should be remarked that alternative scenarios and indeed entertaining the very existence of *physical* possible worlds can be a significant matter of interest within the literary worlds themselves: Tolkien's fiction at times comments its own modal rules and laws, including contingency, free will, causality and contradictions, for instance.

In order to learn more about the existence of possible worlds with respect to Arda's cosmology, one needs to look beyond *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*: some of the most fundamental notions regarding the metaphysical principles of Eä are formed in the less known works of Tolkien. Of these *Morgoth's Ring*, the tenth volume of *The History of Middle-earth* -series, provides deep insights into the existential questions of the fictional universe. Given the importance of possible world semantics to this study, also the notions formulated within the belief-systems

of the fictional world are relevant. The possibility of contemporaneous worlds is pondered in *Morgoth's Ring* as follows:

> But others use another analogy, saying that there will indeed be a New Arda, rebuilt from the beginning without Malice, and that the Elves will take part in this from the beginning. It will be in Eä, say they – for they hold that all Creation of any sort must be in Eä, proceeding from Eru in the same way, and therefore being of the same Order. They do not believe in contemporaneous non-contiguous worlds except as an amusing fantasy of the mind. They are (say they) either altogether unknowable, even as to whether they are or are not, or else if there are any intersections (however rare) they are only provinces of one Eä. (*Morgoth's Ring*, 252.)

The passage is rich with both metaphysical and epistemological views. First and foremost, it must be kept in mind that the notions are those of the Elves, and the passage is in fact a rendering of their beliefs. The singularity of creation and the nature of Eä as its only manifestation is neither denied nor confirmed – the passage is about beliefs, not verified facts. The claims are tied to the perspective of the Elves whose knowledge is limited. Regarding metaphysical stands, the Elves doubt the existence of "contemporaneous non-contiguous worlds", an expression which cannot be read without evoking associations to modalities of fiction and possible worlds: what is being commented is the possibility of simultaneous alternatives. They explicitly deny positions that could be seen as forms of modal realism. Modal realism, mostly associated with David Kellogg Lewis, acknowledges possible worlds as real as the actual world, and they only differ from our own, currently inhabited world in content but not in kind. Furthermore, (Lewisian) moral realism states that possible worlds are spatiotemporally isolated from one another and lack mutual causal relations. (Baltimore 2011, 120.) This kind of possibility is dismissed by the Elves and deemed as "an amusing fantasy of the mind". The thought, how-

ever, can be and is entertained despite the fact that its metaphysical relevance is denied.

Another modal aspect explicitly addressed in *Morgoth's Ring* concerns the fixedness of past events: it is said that as history unfolds and proceeds, "[t]he longer the Past, the more nearly defined the Future, and the less room for important change [– –]. The Past, once 'achieved', has become part of the 'Music in Being'" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 401). Regarding divine power and the modal restrictions set for it, it is notable that the might of the Valar becomes lesser as the history becomes more fixed. Because of this aspect, diachronic viewpoints are present, too, and they are also present in the previous quotation if its larger context is studied. The extract belongs to a longer handling of the fate of the Elves and their theory of Arda Healed, redemption of the world and undoing its marring. The belief is that Arda will be remade in one way or another, and this, of course, is a conception of diachronic possibility. Regarding the principle of plenitude, this is what must once happen if the possibility indeed is a true one: the principle obliges that only one possible world exists and that the set of possible things is limited to those that will at some point become actualised in history. Once a possibility is actualised, its alternatives vanish. The notion of diachronic modality the Elves have adopted considers the future open, but present and past are more problematic. If the prevailing belief-system accepts the principle of plenitude[27], past and present should be fixed – the actualised entities and chains of events deprive the world of their alternatives.

The problem of fixed past is not only epistemic but metaphysical, too: if the allegedly fixed past could be changed, what would happen to assumptions about the present and the future? The ability of fiction to manipulate causal chains and the past, even, is a central modal question, and Ryan discusses the fixedness of past

[27] Arthur Lovejoy's tracing of the principle of plenitude is given in his book *The Great Chain of Being* (1957). Regarding the views presented in Plato's *Timaeus*, Lovejoy writes that the universe, being the exact and exhaustive replica of the world of Ideas, must be singular and a result of one creation alone. Another world cannot be made since there is "nothing left over in the model after which a second world might be fashioned" (Lovejoy 1957, 51). The Platonic creation myth and the birth of Tolkien's Eä are in many ways correspondent, as has been remarked by Korpua (2015, 30), for instance.

events in fictional worlds. According to Ryan (2009, 157), it is clear why only one version of the past can be true: "Since the past corresponds to facts, we cannot have multiple branches leading into the present, because if it were the case, one branch would contain p and the other ~p, and the system would present contradiction." Changing the past in fictional worlds is an issue that remains, and the fixedness of the present does not explain it. Ryan (ibid. 157) writes that if one branch is replaced with its alternative, only one of the two would be true at a given time, and there would be no contradiction. Manipulation of temporal relations and chains of events would produce notable epistemic issues, particularly with respect to justification: a belief about a state of affairs (of the present moment or of the future, if the fictional world acknowledges the possibility of prediction) can be justified at a given moment, but its justification could soon be annihilated if the past on which it is based is changed.

Some form of predestination and necessity of events and entities in history is an issue that needs to be addressed when discussing Tolkien's work. The problem lies first and foremost between the idea and its realisation: the creation of Arda, as I will soon explain, consists of three different phases, music, vision and their actualisation as a physical world. The Vision in particular is significantly close to the Theory of Forms: the world is first created in music, turned into a Vision in which the history unfolds (although not until the very end that remains enigmatic), and only after that turned into a physical being. The crucial question concerns the correspondence between the unfolding in the Vision and the actualised history. If the correspondence is flawless, there is no room for contingency and alternate possibilities. The Platonic conception about the relationship between Ideas and their realisations is outlined as follows by Lovejoy:

> If any eternal essences have temporal counterparts, the presumption was that all do so, that it is of the nature of an Idea to manifest itself in concrete existences. If it were not so, the connection of the two worlds would have seemed

> unintelligible, the constitution of the cosmos, indeed, of the realm of essence itself, a haphazard and arbitrary thing. (Lovejoy 1957, 52.)

From this formulation Lovejoy (1957, 52) proceeds to rendering Plato's theorem of the fullness of the world and includes in his notion of the principle of plenitude also that "any other deductions from the assumption that no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled, that the extent and abundance of the creation must be as great as the possibility of existence and commensurate with the productive capacity of a 'perfect' and inexhaustible Source, and that the world is the better, the more things it contains." The genuineness of possibility is the key here, and it has evoked interest in Tolkien-scholars: Whittingham, for instance, discusses the power of the Ainur in their deeds, and creator-god Ilúvatar's omnipotence. She states very plainly that the struggle between good and evil during creation is not a contest between two equals since it is clear that Ilúvatar will always have upper hand in the end, remaining in control. Melkor, the opposing force and cause of discord, is always subordinate and secondary. This means, according to Whittingham, that there is little chance for evil to challenge good. (Whittingham 1998, 241–215.)

A similar interpretation has been proposed by McBride (2020, 126) who discusses divinity in Tolkien's world and writes that Tolkien favours moderate dualism when it comes to good and evil: according to him, "[– –] Melkor's freedom, in itself good and derived from Eru, comes through Melkor's own choice into conflict with Eru's primordial principles of perfection and goodness."[28] The questions of contingency, determination and free will are also addressed by Shippey (2003, 171–173) as a part of his treatment of the types of good and evil portrayed in *The Lord of the Rings*. According to him, good and evil are external powers as well as inner impulses, and he discusses the role of chance and luck in the fight against evil

[28] McBride (2020, 126) points out that this moderate dualism Tolkien presents in his fiction is connected to his Catholic worldview and that Tolkien's approach to evil is kin to Augustinian theories. This study is engaged with epistemology, not ethics, but McBride's remark is an interesting example of Tolkien's manner of building theoretical systems as well as literary and fictional, and of the Christian Neoplatonist characteristics of his world.

forces and influence. He asks whether chance and the Valar can be equated, and focuses on Tolkien's use of the word *chance* that is often suggestive and rich with meaning: sudden arrivals of help or lucky meetings, for instance, are explained as a chance. Luck, on the other hand, is in his view an interplay between free will and providence. According to Shippey, people in Middle-earth can reject the divine Providence, the influence of the Valar, and change their luck – with consequences. As an example Shippey uses Faramir's recurring dream that urges him to travel to Rivendell. However, no action is taken until the dream and the command pass on to his brother Boromir. Faramir would have been the first choice of the Valar, but because of a human decision Boromir was sent on the quest that corrupted him and cost him his life. (Shippey 2003, 171–173.)

The problem of freedom, genuinely possible alternative scenarios and outcomes, the triumph of evil, for instance, surfaces already in the process of creation, and the issue and speculations about it continue in the fictional world on a smaller scale. There are times when thoughts about past, unactualized alternatives are entertained, either generally or by different characters. In the second chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo Baggins expresses his displeasure at Bilbo's decision not to kill Gollum, and Gandalf encourages deeper consideration:

> '[– –] What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!'
> 'Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need. And he has been well rewarded, Frodo. Be sure that he took so little hurt from the evil, and escaped in the end, because he began his ownership of the Ring so. With Pity.'
> '[– –]'
> '[– –] Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends.' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, ii, 61.)

Frodo imagines an alternate, counterfactual *what if* -scenario and questions Bilbo's choice, conjuring in his mind and words a situation in which Gollum *would not* have been able to pursue the Bagginses and Sauron *would not have become* aware of their connection to the Ring and Frodo himself alongside the entire land of Shire *would not be* in danger. Diachronically, he longs for the unactualized possibilities and fashions another chain of events, replacing Bilbo's act of mercy with one of arguably deserved cruelty. Had this verily been the case, Frodo probably would be safe for the time being, but the corrupting influence of the Ring would likely be heavier on Bilbo. As is evident in the passage, Gandalf is hesitant with this kind of speculation given the uncertainty of the future and unpredictable causal relations.[29]

The brief exchange of words quoted above brings into attention several philosophical issues present in Tolkien's fiction, and is deeply intertwined with alethic modalities in general. Of these the problem of free will and the problem of future contingents are the clearest and most explicitly discussed by Frodo and Gandalf. The problem of future contingents has been famously discussed by Aristotle and illustrated in his sea-battle example in *De Interpretatione IX* (see for instance Hintikka 1964, 463). Future contingents refer to claims about future situations and states of affairs that are neither true nor false by necessity, and the problem and its interpretations have been discussed – among many others – by Hintikka in his summary of the problem of future truth:

> Assume, for the sake of argument, that (I) or (2) is true universally. Then it will be the case, as Aristotle says, that if someone declares that a certain individual event will take place and someone else declares that it will not take place, one

[29] Making choices and only understanding them afterwards as well as their nature as either orchestrated patterns or genuine decisions is discussed by Kreeft. Tolkien's characters constantly make choices, easy and difficult, but to what extent they indeed act independently from higher determination and guidance is not always clear. Kreeft (2005, 40) writes that "*The Lord of the Rings* is dense with destiny. Though the events are surprises to the reader, as to the protagonists, they also form a pattern, and we eventually see that they all "had" to happen that way. [– –] And it was predictable that the unpredictable would happen."

> of them will clearly be making a true statement while the other will be making a false one; necessarily so, if (2) is universally true. [– –] Hence the unrestricted applicability of *tertium non datur* to statements about future events seems to commit us to holding that all future events are predetermined, and thus to lead us to determinism. (Hintikka 1964, 463.)

The conflict appears to be between determinism and contingency: if a proposition is already true now, how can the future event it concerns be contingent? Similar issues are very much present in Tolkien's fiction as well: as discussed above, and as the future analyses will further illustrate, certain elements of creation and metaphysics in the legendarium suggest a very deterministic universe in which there is either little or no room at all for chance: every idea must be actualised, and the first stages of creation, the music and the vision, mark the future steps for the unfolding of the world. This characteristic, while interesting and relevant as such, is not why the problem of future truth is crucial to this study – its relevance rises to the surface in the third chapter in which the possibility of supernatural knowledge and problems of justification in particular are approached with examples that mostly concern knowledge about the future. Regarding the problem of future contingents and their treatment in Boethius's work, Simo Knuuttila (1993, 60) writes that

> [i]f the truth and falsity of sentences is thought to be known through the existing conditions which make them true or false, the possibilities of foreknowledge are very limited in an indeterministic world. [– –] To know the truth or falsity of indefinitely true sentences about future contingent events does not belong to human epistemic possibilities [– –].

Such remarks suggest that knowledge can be discussed in a context that reaches beyond *human* epistemic possibilities, for which reason the concept of the supernatural is one potential tool that can help to approach situations in which

knowledge surpasses the laws of nature and transcends its own extension. These instances will be further discussed in the third chapter.

2.2 Stages of Creation: Vision as an Idea

2.2.1 World Built from Outside

The majority of this section focuses on the process of creation *within* the fictional world, that is the creation myth of Arda. However, the world in which this creation takes place is itself textually shaped and constructed – built. Worldbuilding is deservedly a much-discussed topic in fantasy and speculative fiction scholarship and should be acknowledged here, too. Mark Wolf's (2012) book *Building Imaginary Worlds. The Theory and History of Subcreation* studies imaginary worlds from a broad perspective, including in the analysis themes such as the engagement of audience, different mediums, adaptation and the transauthorial nature of imaginary worlds. Wolf discusses the creation of imaginary worlds, and he examines possible world theories, different types of imaginative processes and their relationship with perception, and generally approaches worldbuilding as a human activity. Wolf pays much attention to Tolkien's conceptions of fantasy, creation and subcreation, matters that I have briefly introduced. Certain remarks that Wolf (2012, 20–21) makes about the different forms of imagination will be revisited in the fourth chapter that studies perceptual knowledge: I am especially interested in Wolf's treatment of imagination with respect to Coleridge's and Wordsworth's rather famous statements about the active role imagination takes in contrast to the previously dominant notions about imagination as mere repetition of sensory images that is able to combine ideas but cannot be seen as a truly creative force.

The active role of imagination and its alleged dependency – and, more prominently, the degree of this dependency – on perception is a matter most central to the analysis. For now, however, regarding the processes of worldbuilding and crea-

tion of imaginary worlds, the more pressing issues concern the compatibility of imagination and the laws that keep it in check. Wolf (2012, 21–22), taking Coleridge's division as his starting-point, writes that the kind of imagination that coordinates and interprets sensory data can be named Primary Imagination, while Secondary Imagination creates something new by dissolving and diffusing concepts and elements of the world. He continues by stating that the use of Secondary Imagination is "conscious and deliberate, not done merely out of habit or necessity but as a creative act." (ibid. 22) This creative act needs laws and restrictions in order to be able to function properly, and when Secondary Imagination is used to its full extent, taking the limitations into account, the result can be a full imaginary world that is not random but believable. Wolf further stresses the importance of rules and laws and their necessity for building consistent imaginary worlds, engaging in conversation with George McDonald and Tolkien whose views he studies. (ibid. 22–23.)

What I find particularly interesting in this conversation is the manner in which the rules and laws are said to expand and generate new laws, having a great influence on the further development of the world:

> Once an imaginary world's initial differences from the actual world are established, they will often act as constraints on further invention, suggesting or even requiring other laws or limitations that will define a world further as the author figures out all the consequences of the laws as they are put into effect [– –]. (Wolf 2012, 23.)

There is, according to Wolf (ibid. 23), an underlying logic based on these laws, a logic that incessantly shapes the imaginary world. Regarding the possible world frame Wolf's study discusses and that also holds an important place in the study at hand, the importance of (modal) restrictions in worldbuilding is certainly a noteworthy subject. Tolkien's fictional universe has, one might argue, received two sets of these ground rules: those generated in the process of *worldbuilding* that is now

being discussed, and those set in *creation* that happens within the world – all of this is tightly intertwined, I perceive, with the entire idea of creation and sub-creation that Tolkien so passionately writes about in "On Fairy stories" and then exemplifies in the entirety of his fantasy fiction. Flieger, too, detects a similar duality in her analysis of Tolkien's languages. She writes that

> [a]ny semantic analysis must be done with caution, for there was both an interior development, as Tolkien followed the course of his Elven languages through the shifts and changes attendant on their history in Middle-earth (as in the quote cited above), and an exterior development, as that history itself shifted and changed over the course of revisions and reconceptualizations. (Flieger 2002, 50.)

Flieger's remark concerns the linguistic developments both within the fictional world and with respect to the external changes that occurred in the course of countless revisions. This kind of duality is present in the fictional universe as a whole, determining its modal conditions and preliminary states of affairs. What is central to the main points of interest of this study is the set of laws determined in the processes of creation and world-building to the extent of the concept of knowledge: it is important to find out what kind of supernatural epistemic phenomena there are and if they can be justifiably considered knowledge.

One concept the treatment at hand has not yet commented with respect to world-constructions is that of storyworld. Ryan's (2019) article "From Possible Worlds to Storyworlds. On the Worldness of Narrative Representation" offers insight to the concept and its relationship with other characterisations of worlds in literature. First of all, Ryan makes a distinction between fictional worlds and storyworlds, emphasising the importance of temporal dimension and narrativity. According to her, fictional worlds can be completely descriptive and lack the temporal dimension, but storyworlds cannot: they must include transformations. Secondly, she makes an important difference between storyworlds and what she calls the

global vision of particular authors; this distinction concerns particularly worlds of given authors. Ryan writes that general, informal expressions such as *the world of Proust* or *the world of Kafka* are not identical with the storyworlds of individual texts. (ibid. 62–64). The difference "lies in the essentially concrete nature of storyworlds" (ibid. 64), and Ryan's definition of a storyworld is expressed as follows: "[b]uilding on the OED's definition of worlds as "all that exists," I regard storyworlds as totalities that encompass space, time, and individual existents that undergo transformations as the result of events." (ibid. 63). The storyworld this study is interested in is Tolkien's Eä, even though only a small part of it is opened in the course of Tolkien's work. This limitedness is a natural consequence of selection: of the universe of Eä only restricted areas are introduced, and what remains beyond the reader does not learn much about – deductions, generalisations and speculation can, of course, be entertained, but much of the storyworld remains a mystery.

The manner in which the imaginary world is built also influences how said world is accessed epistemically. It is not irrelevant how the world construction is approached and how its structures and landscapes, both literal and figurative, are accessed: the imaginary world is built as a metaphysical whole but simultaneously, as a necessary part of the process, an epistemic system is woven. In this respect there are great variations even within Tolkien's own literary work, as can be illustrated with the help of Mendlesohn's classic categorisations of fantasy. *The Lord of the Rings*, the best-known of the myriad of stories, is in Mendlesohn's categorisation named as portal-quest fantasy while *The Silmarillion* is closer to immersive fantasy[30]. Mendlesohn (2008, 67) writes that "[– –] Tolkien, for all his depth and breadth of

[30] Mendlesohn's study presents four different categories within the fantastic, and they are determined according to the manner in which the element of the fantastic becomes a part of the narrated world. The categories are portal-quest fantasy, immersive fantasy, intrusive fantasy and liminal fantasy. Portal-quest fantasy, the category in which Mendlesohn places *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance, invites readers through into the fantastic whereas the immersive fantasy keeps us tightly within the fictional world. A portal fantasy is, in short, a fantasy world that is entered through a portal, concrete or not, but an immersive fantasy obliges readers to share not only the fantasy world but also a set of assumptions that must be accepted: the fantastic is a norm both to the protagonist and the readers, and there is no need for explanatory narrative with respect to the fantastic. (Mendlesohn 2008, xiv–xv, xix–xx.)

detail, for all the maps he drew, and his care in the detail in the depiction of Middle Earth, came closest to creating a fully immersive fantasy world only when he wrote of the Shire (and later in *The Silmarillion* which is told "from the inside")." The epistemic relevance of the portal-quest structure of *The Lord of the Rings* compared to the more immersive approach of *The Silmarillion* concerns the attitudes towards not only the fantastic in general but the possibility of supernatural knowledge – this possibility is either perceived as an inherent part of the world or as something unexpected, doubted, even.

In *The Lord of the Rings* the perspective is largely that of the hobbits, and the fantastic marvel of the world and the supernatural elements are seen as novel, surprising and unexpected. In *The Silmarillion*, then again, the world is shaped before the reader's eyes, and the characters are born within the world of fantasy, being an inseparable part of it and perceiving its laws and peculiarities as norms. There are, of course, significant differences between characters and their epistemic positions (as a result of their cognitive capacities and, at times, supernatural mental powers), but certain basic examples tell much about the influence of either *entering* the fantastic or *being born into* the fantastic: different forms of foretelling, for instance, such as dream visions or deliberate scrying, are common ways of acquiring knowledge for characters such as Galadriel and Saruman, while they easily seem much stranger and devoid of justification to the hobbits who are unaccustomed to such supernatural phenomena. The manner in which the fantastic is accessed thus not only influences how the world becomes comprehended but also shapes the character's attitudes towards sense-making and the possibilities of gathering knowledge about the surrounding reality – for some the possibility of supernatural knowledge can be, following Mendlesohn's (2008, xx–xxi) description of immersive fantasy, an inherent part of the reality, assumed and accepted, never questioned and taken for granted alongside other fantastic elements.

In short, the importance of acknowledging the entire phenomenon of imaginary – and, in this case, literary and fantasy – worldbuilding, is based on one of the

hypotheses uttered in the beginning of this work: this chapter proceeds from the assumption that the epistemic system developed in Tolkien's fantasy fiction is necessarily determined by the metaphysical structure of the imaginary world. While the analysis focuses on the *created* world, that is the mythical *Genesis*-like coming into being and incessant unfolding of the world as described in *The Silmarillion*, the other side, that of *worldbuilding*, should be acknowledged, too: the entire construction of the fictional world significantly influences its epistemic laws that cannot be treated separately as phenomena of their own. The metaphysical structure of Arda is outlined in *The Silmarillion* in great detail, but it is good to keep in mind that the world is not such as it is only because it was created that way but also because it was built that way.

Before moving on to the myth of creation and the metaphysical ground rules set for Arda at the very dawn of its existence, certain conceptual matters should be explained. In the paragraphs above I have consciously made a distinction between created world and built world, using the former when referring to the myth of creation and origin presented within the literary works, and the latter when referring to the process of imaginary worldbuilding taking place in the real world as discussed by Wolf. Taking into account Tolkien's own views on literary creation and imaginary worlds accounted in "On Fairy-Stories", this distinction is far from clear-cut. The world-building author is for Tolkien a sub-creator, the maker of Secondary World. Such use of terms extends the concept of creation to something that happens in the actual – or primary – world, not just within the world of fiction; besides, shaping worlds and producing literary art in general is a creative act for sure. However, for the sake of clarity I will in the future hold on to the distinction between creation as the account of origin *inside* the legendarium and worldbuilding as the external, real-world process – the only exceptions to this will be instances where I specifically write about Tolkien's conception.

2.2.2 Creation Within the Fictional World: Music, Vision and Metaphysical Mimesis

> In Tolkien's cosmogony the Platonic creation myth is an inevitable influence. This influence is similarly a long tradition of cosmologies that starts with Plato and is viable for thousands of years in Western thinking. (Korpua 2021, 66.)

The chapter at hand draws from Plato's philosophy more than any other to follow, perhaps excluding the very final section of this work, and as such it sets the preliminary suppositions and theoretical frames for the whole study. As remarked, Tolkien's fictional universe has been much studied from Platonic framework, and not without justification. With respect to possible world semantics, I would like to stress the importance of Platonic approach to metaphysics by discussing Ryan's thoughts about split and homogeneous ontologies of textual actual worlds. According to Ryan, a textual actual world can either be homogeneous, or divided into different spheres that follow and are constructed according to laws of their own, not always compatible with one another. Examples of split ontologies include divisions into the sacred and the profane, the worlds of the living and those of the dead, the familiar and the strange and, most importantly regarding the analyses to follow, the natural and the supernatural more generally. (Ryan 1991, 114). If the ontology is truly split, "the regions recognized as "other" exist as objectively as the unmarked domain of the ordinary" (ibid. 114), and readers accept their validity in the textual actual world. With respect to fantasy fiction, an important distinction is between supernatural worlds that are divided into different spheres, and supernatural worlds that are homogeneous. According to Ryan, examples of the latter case can be found in fairy tales in which ordinary things existing also in the actual world coinhabit the same sphere as supernatural beings such as dragons and fairies. However, if the ontology of the world is split, communication between separated regions only occurs under certain circumstances, and such breakings of borders are often perceived as intrusions. (ibid. 114.)

Tolkien's fantasy universe is, as was remarked based on the categorisation outlined by Doležel in the beginning of the Introduction, a supernatural possible world – that much can be said safely in spite of the fact that supernatural creatures, for instance, are considered natural within the world. In addition to this it is, based on Ryan's categorisation, a homogeneous one: the element of the supernatural is not intruding or unsettling, albeit slightly foreign and intriguing perhaps from the perspective of the Edwardian-like hobbits (who themselves, too, are unknown to the actual world), but real-world entities such as human beings share the same, intact sphere with ents, wizards and dwarves. In this respect, examined from the perspective of the natural-versus-supernatural-division, the ontology of Tolkien's Eä is coherent and homogeneous – of course, taking into account Mendlesohn's (2008, 2–3) portal-quest-categorisation of *The Lord of the Rings*, the world can be interpreted as a split one, although this is not the reading I adopt. Another division, and more important regarding the epistemic structure, is between metaphysical levels: the world is split in another manner entirely, consisting of two separate regions kept apart from one another by borders that are at times crossed but not lightly or without consequences. The study of these borders and the different spheres of ontology they separate benefits significantly from Plato's metaphysics, as the now beginning analysis intends to show.[31]

The Theory of Forms, constructed from Plato's dialogues in which its core principles are dominantly uttered by the character of Socrates, is here applied to

[31] The traditions of interpretation about Plato's writings are many and diverse, and the amount of literature concerning Plato – both as a philosopher and as an author – is enormous without question. The temporal, linguistic and cultural distances, too, are obviously something that needs to be kept in mind when applying Plato's theories to literature that is part of a context so very different and distant. For the interests of this study, I have chosen to hold to a fairly widely recognised and accepted set of ground principles concerning especially the theory of Forms. Of all dialogues *The Republic* is going to be the most referred to in this work especially because of its analogical treatment of sunlight and its epistemic significance; the dialogue has been rendered into English by classical scholar Benjamin Jowett, and his translations are the ones I am using in this study. While Plato's influence on later Western philosophy, remarkable beyond description, has to be acknowledged as well as the interpretations of Plato's work by later scholars, the literary perspective comes to the fore precisely in the manner Plato's philosophy is here treated. Plato offers the most prominent theoretical framework for the analysis, but his work is here read both as philosophy and as literature.

the metaphysical and epistemic analysis of Tolkien's Arda. The Theory of Forms is considered one of the classical solutions to the problem of universals, that is the relationship between properties and particulars – essentially the question concerns the possibility of qualities and relations that separate, particular entities have in common. Plato's solution is to divide the world into two halves, that of Ideas or Forms and that of perception. The distinction is not only that of reality but one of knowledge, too: the world of Ideas is the only reality knowledge and understanding are concerned with whereas the world of perception cannot be treated as a source of reliable knowledge or truth. According to Plato, the physical, perceptible world is always unsure, incomplete and nothing but a mere copy of the world of Ideas, a shadow of the proper and primary reality. A distinction is also being made between particulars and universals: since the universals are eternal, unchangeable and inaccessible through sensory perception, they are a part of the world of Ideas. Particular objects, then again, are set in the world of perception as something much lesser than their archetypes in the higher reality. (Kraut 2017; Saarinen 1985, 30–36, 38–40.) A distinction similar to that between Idea and its realisation is also at work in Tolkien's metaphysics and epistemology.

The preliminary distinction between the two levels of existence is at this point the foundation for the analysis; however, the further the treatment proceeds, the more the medieval, Platonic, modal and literary sources and theories will converse with one another, each providing their own aspects and tools with the help of which the epistemic system of Tolkien's Eä is examined. While this cooperation and partial merging is more useful than it is risky or dubious, it may include some problems. One of these has to do with the many traditions of reading and interpreting Plato, particularly the attempts to produce a synthesis of philosophy and theology, Plato and Christianity. The tradition of (Christian) Neoplatonism especially brings together various views, and its name can be misleading: Neoplatonism sought to create a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle, committing to Plato's notion of metaphysics and spirituality while adopting Aristotle's somewhat clearer and more

precise formulations and his theories concerning the sensible world (Remes 2008, 3–4).[32] That being said, the theories often ended up quite far from Plato's original work; besides, Remes (ibid. 4) who has meticulously studied Neoplatonism, writes that Neoplatonism is difficult to distinguish from other forms and ages of Platonism.

With respect to the epistemic analysis of Arda, it cannot go unnoticed that some characteristics of the overall conception of knowledge and knowledge-formation follow Neoplatonist strains more than thoughts formulated in Plato's dialogues. Of these the problem of perceptual knowledge is particularly noteworthy: for the Neoplatonists, the sensory world was not automatically and unconditionally unreliable and false, as Remes's (2008, 137) study shows:

> Even though the Platonists from Plato onwards entertained a considerable amount of doubt concerning the reliability and trustworthiness of the senses, this kind of wholesale mistakenness about the world is precluded. Broadly speaking, the Neoplatonists are committed to the Aristotelian form of perceptual realism. Since our perceptions deal with the perceptible objects themselves and not some representations that may or may not correspond to the world, they report reality trustworthily; in fact, they do not merely report it but actualize it in the mind.

The significant Aristotelian influence on Neoplatonist thinking results in far more complex views on perceptual knowledge and the trustworthiness of physical reality

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[32] Neoplatonism in general refers to a school of thought dating back to approximately 245 AD. One of the most central igniting events was the moving of Plotinus to the capital of Roman empire and starting to teach his interpretation of Plato's philosophy there. From the work of Plotinus and his student Porphyry began a strand of philosophy that was categorised as a new form of Platonism, later very far-spread. Alongside bringing together Plato and Aristotle's philosophy, Neoplatonism is known for its complicated relationship with Christian theology and thinking. (Remes 2008, 1–2.) Because some aspects of medieval philosophy form a great part of the theoretical background of the analyses, and Neoplatonism certainly had a great influence on these currents of thought, it is important to be clear about which tradition of interpreting Plato is being referred to. In the analyses my chief source are Plato's dialogues, but Neoplatonism is often indirectly present for instance in sections that discuss St. Augustine.

and the senses than an approach that is more strictly committed to Plato's theories. The ability of perception to provide – at least to a degree – access to the truth is one of the most important cases in which the epistemic laws of Tolkien's fictional world take a step back from the views in *The Republic*, for instance. It is, I argue, fair to say that the epistemic and metaphysical aspects of Tolkien's fiction in many ways share more with Neoplatonist strains than Plato's original work; however, I nonetheless find the parallels between Tolkien and Plato's literature rich and fruitful, with respect to not only their similarities but differences, too.

The merging of Plato's theory with Christian doctrine and the concept of the otherworldly may create confusion and lead to possible misinterpretations. The analyses to follow make several remarks to spiritual or abstract levels of existence, the divine and the otherworldly, and I want to emphasise already at this point that Plato's notion of the primary level of existence, the World of Ideas, should not be confused with religious concepts of Heaven, for instance. Such line of interpretation easily surfaces when Plato's philosophy is brought together with Christian doctrine and theology, as often was done in medieval thinking. It is quite natural that Plato's worldview and his overall emphasis on turning away from this-worldly should seem appealing to early Christian thinkers: According to Korpua (2021, 2–3) Tolkien, as a committed Roman Catholic, followed beliefs and customs that were

> influenced by central elements of Platonism and this transformed Christian theology. Plato's theory of forms assimilates the Christian understanding of Heaven as a "perfect place," of which the physical level of existence is a mere imitation, or a reflection. Thus, the cosmology in Christian Platonism appears in two levels: as an *ideal*, spiritual plane of existence, and as a *real*, physical plane.

Since my purpose is to discuss the different levels of existence and their varying epistemic capacities with respect to the concept of the supernatural, the different

philosophical, religious or literary understandings of otherworldly should be written about with caution in order to avoid confusion: for Plato, the World of Ideas is realistic and verily existent, and it should not be treated as a kind of a supernatural world compared to the physical, actual world. In my readings of Tolkien's universe both aspects, the divine and the supernatural for their part and the abstract and ideal in the more philosophical sense, are present. The epistemic whole of the fictional universe is, I argue, better understood if both sides are taken into account because in this manner the fantasy world's exquisite philosophical and supernatural qualities are equally acknowledged. Self-evidently, this certainly does not justify an imprecise and vague application of concepts and theories: Plato's World of Ideas is not a supernatural paradise even though it is here used as a means to analyse metaphysical and epistemic constructions that resemble one.

Tolkien's Platonic worldview Phelpstead (2014, 89) defends is present from the very first steps of creation accounted in the "Ainulindalë", signifying "The Music of the Ainur". Before the beginning of time the creator-god Eru Ilúvatar makes the Ainur, a group of angelic spirits[33], some mightier than others. The ontological status of these beings is debated: McBride (2020, 14) writes that the Ainur "[– –] aren't really gods and goddesses at all; they lack divinity as an intrinsic element of self-existent natures", while Whittingham (2008, 60) places them "somewhere in between God and the angels". However, I will in the third chapter discuss the guidance and interference of the Valar as divine intervention, for even though they do not easily fall into any category of spiritual beings, they nonetheless form in Tolkien's universe a pantheon of a kind. Also, while they are not capable of genuine creation as such, they partake in designing the world and play a part in its making.

After creating the spiritual beings, Ilúvatar gives them themes of music and they sing before him, each weaving their own themes and thoughts into the com-

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[33] Flieger (2002, 55), when discussing creative acts and the nature of the Valar remarks that Tolkien called their subcreative work "demiurgic", a concept that very well illustrates the position of the creatures and their labours in the world.

position. The Ainur at first struggle to understand one another and mostly sing in turns instead of unison because each can only comprehend that part of Ilúvatar's mind from which he or she came from. The longer they sing the more their mutual understanding grows until one of the Ainur, Melkor, weaves into the music themes that are in discord with those of Ilúvatar, and for a while these two are in contest. It turns out in hindsight that even Melkor's themes are in fact fitted to the scheme of Ilúvatar and part of his intention and design, a matter that Whittingham (1998, 215) discusses with respect to Ilúvatar's unchallenged omnipotence. Eventually this music is first turned into a vision by Ilúvatar, and perceiving this the Ainur see that their music has indeed shaped a world. The world, however, remains a mere vision until Ilúvatar utters the word *Eä*, thus causing the world to be. After this begin the works of the Ainur, their attempts to bring the physical world as close to the one seen in the Vision as possible, or, achieving the world that is still incomplete. Creation happens step by step, from periodically evolving music to vision and only after that to reality, and even though the Ainur are included in it, Ilúvatar alone is able to bring new things into life and being. (*Silmarillion*, 3–12.)

The stages of creation can be summarised as follows: Ilúvatar, the sole thought and being, creates in his mind the Ainur; the Ainur begin the Great Music based on the themes given to them; Ilúvatar turns the Music into a Vision which he then turns into a physical being, the world. From now on I will treat the Vision as Arda's version of Plato's Form or Idea – not as a straightforward, identical representative of the philosophical model but as its closest equivalent in the fictional world (see also Korpua's [2015, 48, 50–51 and 2021, 57–60] comparison between Tolkien and Plato's creation myths). Then again, the world, including the physical universe and its process of "unfolding", that is its history, events and all included in it, is what in my reading will be analysed in terms of Plato's world of perception, the physical everyday reality.

This kind of treatment, especially the division, calls for an explanation. To be exact, the purest and most accurate "idea" of the world and its course would be the

very thought of Ilúvatar, his mind that is for the most part hidden. As such it is also impossible to analyse, inaccessible as it is both to characters of the fictional world and to the interpreter. I have chosen to refer to the Vision when analysing the idea of the world, with occasional reference to the Music. Both, I argue, can be seen as representatives of the Idea, the world as it is supposed to be, but focus is mainly on the Vision for two reasons. First, the Vision is intertwined with the problems of perceptual knowledge, particularly with the cooperation of expectations, observing, recalling and interpreting. Another reason for focusing on the Vision is that it is not until the Music becomes visible that the Ainur perceive it as the world to be – until then its purpose remains unknown. This realisation allows them to recall the idea and observe the world with respect to what they saw in its foreshowing, enabling hindsight, and the process of understanding becomes more complicated when the tensions and incongruences between expectations and reality begin to unravel.

One issue very central to the research questions and overall approach of this study concerns the hierarchical order of the two levels, the created physical world and, in lack of a better word, its blueprint represented by the Music and the Vision. My analysis proceeds from the hypothesis that the latter are more or less primary and original, while the former is both metaphysically and epistemically secondary and incomplete. This claim will be defended in the course of this study, and similar approaches have served as a starting-point for other examinations, too. McIntosh, for instance, outlines the notion on the hierarchical question of the *original* and the problem of correspondence as follows:

> Owing first to their finitude and secondly to the corrupting influence of Melkor, the correspondence or "adequation" between the Ainur's Music, itself patterned after the original divine themes or ideas in the mind of Eru, and the world in its actual existence is an imperfect correspondence, or at least initially an imperfectly *conceived* correspondence. It is anticipated in the *Ainulindalë*,

> however, that this imperfection is one that will at last be rectified "at the end of days" [– –]. (McIntosh 2017, 92.)

Treating the physical world as secondary and imperfect is something that *The Silmarillion* (10) itself suggests: it is said that the Ainur attempt to *achieve* the World according to what they first saw in the Vision, and therefore fulfilling the Vision is the aim of their actions. Furthermore, an overall existential attitude in Tolkien's world is more or less steered towards comprehending the Music and the Vision, as chapter "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" in *Morgoth's Ring* discusses. It is also stressed in Whittingham's treatment that understanding the Music anew is intertwined with Arda's entire conception of hope, and only when the world ends and a new Music is made, understanding is complete. According to Whittingham (1998, 220), there is a promise of perfection of the body, mind and spirit, and "[t]his new music will result in a new and better creation; each creature will understand completely and give life as Ilúvatar does." The world as it is in its current state therefore has to be imperfect and never entirely correspondent with Ilúvatar's image, as McIntosh above points out.

All in all, the *original* and *primary* this study refers to is, ultimately, the "original divine themes or ideas in the mind of Eru" (McIntosh 2017, 92), but since Eru's mind is not accessible to analysis, its representatives will be the Music and the Vision. They are what the actions in Arda are targeted at, and their proper understanding is the highest epistemic endeavour, particularly since they do not reveal everything to the beholding Ainur: "for the history was incomplete and the circles of time not full-wrought when the vision was taken away" (*The Silmarillion*, 9). Parts of the complete, perfected idea are known to Ilúvatar alone. However, one crucial misinterpretation should be avoided: the metaphysical hierarchy outlined here does not lead to the conclusion that physical existence would be undesirable or irrelevant. In her treatment of Arda's cosmogony and its development, Whittingham (2008, 47) writes that when the Vision is lost, the darkness in its place makes the

Ainur distressed, and they have developed an attachment to what they saw. According to her, "[h]aving lost the Vision, the Ainur are deeply moved by the ensuing appearance of the created world, *Ea*, and they value its presence. Rather than returning the Vision to the Ainur, Ilúvatar gives them what they truly desire – the World in its reality." (ibid. 47.) Physical existence, while soon revealed to be far from what was seen in the Vision, is also valued and desired for its own sake.

If the physical, sensory world is subordinate and less reliable than the eternal world of Ideas (or, when applied to Tolkien's world, the Vision), the tendency of producing copies that characterises Tolkien's fiction is noteworthy: following Plato, the copies are even further removed from the truth, and as such their epistemic value evokes questions. Acts of making something in the likeness of something else, sometimes very mundane things, serve as instances of both the characteristic motif of sub-creation and the overall principle of producing copies or relics of earlier places and times. This kind of re-representations (and, simultaneously, interpretations) can also be produced by beings of other than divine nature which is in concord with the idea of sub-creation. A very plain, everyday kind of example that is not even connected to the elements of fantasy or the supernatural is the way Goldberry, river-woman's daughter and wife of Tom Bombadil, redecorates their house to make it look more like her own home in the river Withywindle: "[a]bout her feet in wide vessels of green and brown earthenware, white water-lilies were floating, so that she seemed to be enthroned in the midst of a pool." (*The Lord of the Rings*, *FR*, I, vii, 128.) As a simple, mundane act this hardly raises questions; on a larger metaphysical and epistemic scale, however, all such copies can be considered corrosive.

Both beings and creative processes often become models for actions of mimesis: a general motif in the stories of Arda is the attempt to make something in the likeness of something else as it is interpreted by the reproducing actor – this, too, is linked to the questions of (alleged) originality. The word *mimesis* is, especially when making interpretations with reference to theory of Forms, hard to use in a

tone that is neutral and without bias. Considering the wider theoretical frame of this study excluding the Platonic notion on mimesis completely would be a questionable choice since the long history of the concept must be taken into account. Mimetic acts, including imitations of creation, will be a point of interest throughout this chapter more or less dominantly, and the most suitable place to provide an overall rendition of its many roles in Arda is here, before entering concrete examples of its workings, both metaphysical and artistic.

The role of mimesis in this study, particularly with respect to the metaphysical structure of the world that is of interest in the present chapter, is far from easy and simple. The main problem of applying the concept to the analysis of the duplicating, reprising tendencies so very characteristic of Tolkien's work arises from the dominant theoretical contexts and uses of the term: *mimesis* has for the most part been used in the context of arts and aesthetics, whereas its role in this study is more closely related to what I call metaphysical mimesis, that is imitation that regards being and creation rather than artistic work. Stephen Halliwell (2002) studies the long history of mimesis in his book *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Much of the discussion, quite understandably, draws from Classical scholarship and Plato[34] and Aristotle in particular. Because of the metaphysical emphasis and the overall theoretical framework, I will focus on Halliwell's rendering of Plato, introducing his other notions of mimesis when necessary.

Plato's relevance for the development of mimesis comes to the fore at the very beginning of Halliwell's study. Halliwell writes that even though earlier Greek

[34] The available evidence (that is quite limited) of pre-Platonic conceptions of mimesis establishes, according to Halliwell, that it has been used with respect to five different categories the last of which, metaphysical conformity, is of interest here. Metaphysical conformity refers to phenomena such as the Pythagorean belief according to which the material world imitates the realm of numbers that is immaterial: the true essence of things is in numbers. Regarding the main interests of this chapter, I would like to emphasise what Halliwell writes about the idea of corresponding object in pre-Platonic material. Halliwell points out that the corresponding model object of the mimetic entity was not uniformly considered a particular or actual, empirically perceptible being: it could also be seen as a type, a universal or general substance, or even a hypothetical, imaginary state of affairs. This conception of the model entity that allows also abstract and universal substances is in my opinion quite applicable to the mimetic processes this chapter discusses. (Halliwell 2002, 15–16.)

thought and poetry had voiced the same themes and issues rather unsystematically, it was Plato who first explored the concept of mimesis extensively and began devising theories that presented mimesis as a frame of his philosophy of art. From Plato's thinking, as has already been stated, arose also some of the most puzzling difficulties of philosophy of art in general: the long-prevailing thought he planted is that art and philosophy are in some way in conflict with one another, perhaps irreconcilable, even. The question of irreconcilability has troubled many schools of thought from the Neoplatonists to the romantics and several others. What Halliwell righteously stresses is that mimesis is one of those concepts that in Plato's dialogues become subject of constant re-evaluation, approached from several angles, and it cannot unequivocally be claimed that Plato had a fixed doctrine of mimesis in the first place. (Halliwell 2002, 37–39.) However, some "recurrent, underlying anxieties are traceable beneath the surface of relevant passages in his text" (ibid. 39), and these Halliwell studies in great depth, acknowledging both the consistencies and the uncertainties of the dialogues.

Mimesis cannot be reduced to mere imitation nor should it be translated as such, at least not without caution and sufficient reasoning.[35] However, the concept and phenomenon of imitation are essential to this study, particularly because the artistic side of mimeticism plays a much smaller role in my analysis – it is the metaphysical aspect of mimesis that is of primary interest. The metaphysical approach I follow receives support from the use of the word *mimesis* and its derivatives in Plato's writing. In *Timaeus*, for instance, Plato summarises the structure of the universe that consists of the intelligible, eternal model form and its copy subject to becom-

[35] Laurila (1911, 33, 342), for instance, emphasises that mimesis as used by the Greeks should not be seen as mere spiritless, mechanical copying but as an artistic endeavour that included original, self-dependent work that required great mental capacity. Aristotle's use of the word, for instance, presupposes very deep meanings that contribute to the fundamental essence and characteristics of art itself. Because of this deeper meaning, Laurila writes, it is difficult to find suitable equivalents for the word in other languages: the German *Darstellung* and *Gestaltung*, for instance, incorporate deeper meanings than the established *Nachahmung* that Halliwell also mentions, but unfortunately in some contexts they do not equal mimesis as they should.

ing, and the expression he uses of the model's copy is literally "μίμημα δὲ παραδείγματος", imitation of the pattern (*paradeigma*) (*Timaeus*, 48e–49a; p. 20). Mimesis is not found in art alone, but in the universe, too. For Plato, art (if expressed in a manner far simpler than the issue truly is) means creating yet another layer, making something that only has the semblance of true existence, being made in the likeness of the uncertain appearance of the physical world. Santiago Juan-Navarro (2007, 98) summarises in his article quite univocally that "Plato belongs to a mimetic tradition that considers art as a copy or imitation of the natural world." However, he also presents a broader use for the word, beginning his treatment of mimesis by stating that "[f]or Plato *mimesis* is the appearance of the external image of things. In his view, reality was not to be found in the world of the objects but in the realm of the Ideas" (ibid. 97). It is this broader meaning that I take as the starting-point of my analyses, treating the physical world of Arda as a mimetic representation of the Music and the Vision, a world of becoming that can never fully reach the perfection of its model, πᾰρᾰ́δειγμᾰ.

2.3 Ideas and Their Realisations

The model entity, the audible and visible foreshowing of the world, only exists before the mimetic act of *making* the world, achieving it, begins – where the physical world begins, the universal and the abstract ceases. After the Vision is taken away and Ilúvatar's word of command brings the new world into being, some of the Ainur enter this universe and are ever since called *Valar*, the Powers of the World. Following the notion of a twofold world the Theory of Forms is based on, the physical world would represent the realisation of the Vision, its physical – and inevitably imperfect – counterpart. This state of incompleteness is soon perceived by the Valar:

> But when the Valar entered into Eä they were at first astounded and at a loss, for it was as if naught was yet made which they had seen in vision, and all was but on point to begin and yet unshaped, and it was dark. For the Great Music had been but the growth and flowering of thought in the Timeless Halls, and the Vision only a foreshowing; but now they had entered in at the beginning of Time, and the Valar perceived that the World had been but foreshadowed and foresung, and they must achieve it. (*The Silmarillion*, 10.)

In Korpua's (2015, 47–49) reading the creation holds elements of Platonic two-layered process consisting of a model and a realisation but also the Judeo-Christian coming-into-being by the power of a word, and his analysis emphasises the Christian-Platonic undertones that prevail throughout the whole timeline of Arda. In a more recent study, Korpua (2021, 13) writes that the historical development and cosmology of Tolkien's world are "typical of the Roman Catholic worldview. It begins with the creation of the world and ends with its destruction, and hints at an apocalyptic future where everything will be healed and once again unmarred." My interest is in the way the unachievable model, the Idea, keeps surfacing throughout the narrative of *The Silmarillion*, especially in the attempts of the Valar to recall and fulfil that which they briefly saw in the Vision[36]. It is notable that what is at work as the Valar mould the world and labour in it is in fact their *interpretation* of the Vision, an attempt restricted by their perspective and understanding. The element of achieving is constantly present in the early eras of the world, and so is the failure of this attempt: fashioning the world according to the Vision is intrinsically a task that cannot be fulfilled as is soon revealed. The reasons behind this failure, however, cannot be unequivocally stated:

[36] Nagy (2004, 93) parallels Ilúvatar's Vision with Plato's vision of the Forms prior to embodiment and sees it as the representative of the ultimate meaning. Nagy discusses the use of myths in Plato and Tolkien's writing, and his views will later be further discussed. The questions of embodiment, recollection and *anamnesis* will be returned to in section 4.4, although Nagy's theories will resurface much sooner.

> [– –] and naught might have peace or come to lasting growth, for as surely as the Valar began a labour so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it. And yet their labour was not all in vain; and though nowhere and in no work was their will and purpose wholly fulfilled, and all things were in hue and shape other than the Valar had at first intended, slowly nonetheless the Earth was fashioned and made firm. (*The Silmarillion*, 12.)

The most apparent reason for the inability to wholly follow the model set in the Vision is Melkor's constant intervention: he spoils every deed of the rest of the Valar, marring and destroying things they attempt to make. This interpretation, I argue, is not fully satisfying: Melkor's sounds of discord are already present in the Music and he has his part in the Vision, too. Another and in my opinion more believable argument would be that achieving the Vision is in the first place a work that can only be done so well. The Vision and the world, or the Idea and its realisation, can never be wholly equivalent. This metaphysical characteristic of Tolkien's world is one of my primary reasons for choosing an approach that draws from Plato's philosophy, and one that quite well characterises the mimetic nature of the relationship between the different stages of creation and the achieving of the world that follows. In short, the essential nature of the Vision is to be perfect and unachievable; the essential nature of the world is to remain imperfect.

In addition to this primary condition there are other reasons that have their impact on the attempts of the Valar. Of these I am most interested in the limited abilities of the Valar, their failing memory, perception and understanding when it comes to recalling the Vision. The utmost example of their lack of understanding concerns other peoples of Arda. The Children of Ilúvatar, that is Elves and Men, are the greatest mystery since none of the Valar had any part in their making (*Silmarillion*, 6–7). The Valar have no pre-judgements or prior understanding concerning the Children who are strange and unknown to them until they meet. However, the Valar have great interest in the Children already before their coming even though they know about them only that what was shown to them in the Vision,

Ilúvatar's theme that the Valar did not contribute to. Even the physical form the Valar took is affected by the Children:

> Now the Valar took to themselves shape and hue; and because they were drawn into the World by love of the Children of Ilúvatar, for whom they hoped, they took shape after that manner which they had beheld in the Vision of Ilúvatar, save only in majesty and splendour. Moreover, their shape comes of their knowledge of the visible World, rather than of the World itself; and they need it not, save only as we use raiment, and yet we may be naked and suffer no loss of our being. (*The Silmarillion*, 11.)

The sentence "their shape comes of their knowledge of the visible World, rather than of the World itself" is very ambiguous. It can be understood as a comment on the metaphysical status of the Valar as beings less bound to the rules of the material world, that is that even their physical form is detached from the world and has its origin in thought rather than matter – this is one of the first instances of the dualistic nature of the fictional universe and indicates that Tolkien's Eä should be treated as a world of split ontology rather than a homogeneous one, using Ryan's (1991, 114) terms. On the other hand, it can also be a comment on the knowledge of the Valar, the perspective that is still highly dominated by the Vision instead of actual experience of the world – their appearance is moulded after their idea of the world that is still in the making and the knowledge of how it should be if successfully perfected. In that case, their form would be governed by their prior understanding about the world and their interpretation of the Children who still are unknown to them apart from the brief glimpse in the Vision. Thus, the physical shape they take is a model of something yet to come into being, moulded after an unrealised Idea.

The kind of imitation the Valar employ in taking carnal shapes also speaks in favour of the previously mentioned broader understanding of mimesis, one that acknowledges the possibility of having abstract and non-empirical entities as mod-

els of imitative actions (Halliwell 2002, 15–16). Regarding perceptual knowledge, the empirical – or, alternatively, non-empirical – nature of the Vision is a matter most noteworthy: the most reasonable interpretation is to treat the vision as an abstract, perhaps even spiritual, phase of existence, and as such (and also with respect to the Platonic framework) it should not be approached in terms of perception in the first place nor viewed as a physical, empirical entity. The core problem is, of course, the self-evidently *visual* nature of the Vision. Returning to the Valar and their imitation of the Children, the attempt to take shape after the appearance of Elves and Men can be read as one instance of the achieving of the world mentioned in the previous passage, working towards that which was seen in the Idea. I argue that this attempt is throughout the history of Arda affected by the restrictions of the Valar and their knowledge of the world, their ability to recall the Vision and interpret the things seen in it – I will soon return to this with examples. Already at this point it can be stated that interpretation is in many ways a central aspect throughout this study, and particularly the role of interpretation in knowledge-formation processes and its compatibility with supernatural phenomena is an important topic.

Another interesting remark in the cited passage is the comparison between the Valar and the undefined *we* the narrator uses to illustrate the secondary position of physical appearance. A question of its own would be who exactly are included when using the pronoun *we*: the comparison is made between immortal, angelic beings and quite likely Elves, since the accounted version of the events of *The Silmarillion* is attributed to them. In *The Silmarillion* this role of the Elves is somewhat pushed to the background compared to the frame narrative of *The Book of Lost Tales I & II* in which the Elves are openly viewed as storytellers and preservers of ancient tradition (see in particular *The Book of Lost Tales I*, "The Cottage of Lost Play", 6–7). The crucial words in the passage – "and yet we may be naked and suffer no loss of our being" – reveal much about the metaphysical laws of Tolkien's universe. *Being*, therefore, has both physical and immaterial aspects to it but their rele-

vance is different to Valar and other creatures. Physical appearance for the Valar is said to be no more than clothing to mortals and my interpretation is that when it comes to the laws of existence, the physical form of the Valar is contingent to their being, a property that is distinct from the creature itself and not crucial to its essence. The essence of the Valar is primarily spiritual; the physical appearance of the Valar and its significance in Tolkien's cosmology has also been discussed by Korpua (2015, 53, 57), and the role of the spiritual and the physical as constituents of Tolkien's world is one of his primary interests.

Returning to the Vision and the way the Valar understand it, their interpretation of it, much is to be said about the Children of Ilúvatar and their relationship with the Valar. The alien nature of the Children is also a major factor when vala Aulë creates the dwarves. Aulë perceives that the world is still for the most part empty and uninhabited and becomes impatient. Therefore, he decides to make new beings, dwarves, keeping in mind the image of the Children seen in the Vision: "And Aulë made the Dwarves even as they still are, because the *forms of the Children who were to come were unclear to his mind*, and because the power of Melkor was yet over the Earth; and he wished therefore that they should be strong and unyielding." (*The Silmarillion*, 37; italics mine.) The creation of the dwarves is motivated by Aulë's longing for the Children, and the actual process of making them is mimicry of the creatures in the Vision. Aulë's attempted creation is interesting also in relation to the contrast between the Idea and its realisation: Aulë's actions require constant recalling of the Vision, the Idea that the Valar are now trying to achieve. There is, however, a fault in Aulë's design, a fault that is difficult to place. In this context the fault seems to be in Aulë's memory, his inability to recall the Vision and properly interpret that which he saw in it. As a result, the dwarves are significantly different from the Children of Ilúvatar in whose likeness they were shaped. The Children remain vague and remote to Aulë who therefore is unable to mould the dwarves after their fashion. Here the most important words are the ones I highlighted in italics above in which is said that the *forms* of the Children were un-

clear to his mind. There are at least two possible ways to read this passage, both producing slightly different interpretations of Aulë's knowledge and the peculiar essence of the Children.

Firstly, attention can be focused on the literal level of the passage in which the role of the Vision and Aulë's interpretation of it is foregrounded. The fact that the Children's forms were unclear to him, more specifically to his *mind*, can be seen as a remark on the inaccuracy of Aulë's recollection, implying that his perception when the Vision was displayed was somehow incomplete or that he is afterwards unable to remember it properly. However, I incline towards an interpretation where it is Aulë's mind, not his perception, that is causing the trouble. The problem originates in the inescapable disconnect between the Idea and its realisation. If the vagueness of the forms of the Children is emphasised, Aulë's inability to create something in their resemblance can be traced back to the differences in the very being of the creatures, their metaphysical status in Arda. If the word *form* is read in the Platonic context as has been the approach in this chapter, the form does not necessarily refer to the physical frame only; it can, in fact, refer to something quite opposite. The form, not as in physical form but as in universal Form, could be understood as the essence, the Idea of the Children, Ilúvatar's thought in its purest. The form would thus be that which gives every particular being its nature and qualities, the most defining characteristics without which the being would not be as it is, would not have its essence. This is the required knowledge which Aulë lacks; he has no understanding of the Children and the nature of their being and that which at first seemed a mere remark on the blurred visualisation of the physical structure of the Children, causing the dwarves to be made much shorter, more resilient and stouter, is revealed to be a profound blank in Aulë's comprehension.

The inability to understand the Children can be explained by Arda's inner laws, the rules according to which the fictional universe is structured, and is therefore a good example of the profound determining rules Wolf (2012, 23) discusses when explaining the relationship between building an imaginary world and limiting

it by setting ground principles that govern it. The phenomenon is also closely connected to the modal constraints of a world of fiction, the questions of possibility and impossibility. In this case, the chief modal constraint is that true creation is possible for Ilúvatar only: the Children were made by Ilúvatar alone, and none of the Valar took part in their creation in any way. The entire creation originates in mind: first Ilúvatar creates the Ainur who are "the offspring of his thought" (*The Silmarillion*, 3), and the Music that follows is a weave of different thoughts, imaginings and devices, and each ainu only understands that part of Ilúvatar's mind from which they came. This is the prior understanding that is missing when Aulë makes the dwarves. The forms of the Children are unclear to his *mind* because no thought of the Children was ever present to him until he saw them in the Vision, nor were they included in the theme which the Ainur sang together. His remote perception of them in the Vision, a foreshowing of their coming realisation, is insufficient and as such does not give him knowledge concerning the most profound nature of the Children. The inability of the Valar to completely understand the Children is, of course, debatable, but I perceive that this indeed is the case. McBride argues about the limitations of the Valar, including their continuous mistake of trying to intervene In the actions of the Children and the bad decisions they make with them. As McBride (2020, 45) writes, "[t]he Valar confess ignorance of their nature and the future of the Children; Vairë observes that the Valar find Elves and Humans inexplicable. Tolkien adds that, at best, the Valar can draw conclusions through reasoning regarding actions stemming from the exercise of Elvish and Human free wills." This gives reason to assume the Children are to remain at least to a degree a mystery.

The word *form* is clearly one that evokes questions but so is the word *mind*. The fact that the forms were unclear to Aulë's mind contains another Platonic echo. This kind of use of the word strengthens one of the presumptions I have adapted in this work, the idea that in Tolkien's world knowledge can most successfully be strived for through mind and thought rather than sensory perception;

however, as the later treatment will show, this principle includes significant incongruences. A crucial and doubtlessly very problematic question concerns situations in which access to knowledge is provided simultaneously through mind *and* perception: examples of these include for instance prophetic visions. Already in Aulë's case the problem arises: The Vision represents the Idea of a world not yet made but it is perceptible nonetheless. Physically it is non-existent, a mere illusion, but the Valar see it and receive knowledge from it. Yet this knowledge is incomplete and the interpretations of the Valar are fallible. In Plato's epistemology understanding higher truths is only possible by using mind and intelligence rather than ordinary senses, and knowledge only concerns eternal Ideas, not their shadows in the physical world. (*The Republic*, 202–204). Aulë's perception of the forms of the Children is unclear – not to his eyes, though, but to his mind. Access to an impression is provided but the access to essence is not, as implied above.

Making the dwarves is a noteworthy process considering the layered structure of the fictional world more broadly. Aulë's actions can be seen as mimicry of the very act of creation – it is not only the world that gains more entities and layers but the process of creation itself continues and resurfaces. Furthermore, Aulë's act can be paralleled with Tolkien's concept of sub-creation: Aulë, the sub-creator, is subordinate to the actual creator, Ilúvatar. All in all, what Aulë engages in is a mimetic act of a kind, attempted yet flawed creation, a need kindled by his own nature. Aulë's act is unlawful because creation is only possible for Ilúvatar himself. When confronted by him, Aulë begs forgiveness:

> 'I did not desire such lordship. I desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them, so that they too might perceive the beauty of Eä, which thou hast caused to be. For it seemed to me that there is great room in Arda for many things that might rejoice in it, yet it is for the most part empty still, and dumb. And in my impatience I have fallen into folly. Yet the making of things is in my heart from my own making by thee; and the child of little understanding that makes a play of the deeds of his father may do so without thought of

> mockery, but because he is the son of his father. But what shall I do now, so that thou be not angry with me for ever? As a child to his father, I offer to thee these things, the work of the hands which thou hast made. Do with them what thou wilt. But should I not rather destroy the work of my presumption?' (*The Silmarillion*, 37–38.)

Aulë's work, imperfect at first but then completed by Ilúvatar, is an imitation of the very act of creation and inseparable from its author in more than one way: dwarves are tied to the will and mind of their maker but the act of creation itself, too, is an intrinsic part of Aulë's character and nature. This characteristic has been pondered by Flieger (2002, 100) who writes that "[i]n one respect, Aulë is the most "human" of the Valar, for he is the only one of them who has the impulse to create, to imitate his creator by making a race of people." While Flieger's claim is well argued for, it also views Tolkien's humans in a very contradictory light: it now seems that humans have strong impulses to do the very things that are beyond their rights and skills. On the other hand, if the previously discussed artistic mimesis is taken into account, Elves far surpass Men in this respect both in skill and in passion. However, imitating creation is indeed what Aulë does, and afterwards he pleads his own position as Ilúvatar's creation as an excuse, trying to justify his actions by saying that "making of things is in my heart from my own making by thee". He thus implies that he is in fact unable to fight his own nature, received as a gift from Ilúvatar, and it can be interpreted that the folly he succumbs to is not the making, but his impatience and momentary forgetting of the fact that it is not his place to try and create life.[37] On a larger scale, this view on creation – or making – is kindred to

[37] Korpua (2015, 72–74) has also discussed the place of dwarves in the legendarium, but regarding this matter his main interest is in the chain of being formed within the fictional world. Korpua writes that both hobbits and dwarves are outsiders in the world, having a significantly different origin than Elves and Men, for instance, and they are not included in the first cosmological idea. He focuses on the hierarchies between both the creators and the creations, remarking that while Aulë's level of authority is much lower than Ilúvatar's, also the dwarves are secondary to Men and Elves: they are adopted by Ilúvatar but yet must wait for their time and only come into being after the Firstborn. The exchange of words between Aulë and Ilúvatar clearly outlines the hierarchy of the chain of beings Korpua shows interest in. (ibid. 73–74.)

certain currents of Christian philosophy that study the creative work of imagination. There, too, the true creative power evokes core questions: Palmén (2014, 241–242), for instance, discusses the difference between the actual creative power of God and imagination that creates new images based on previously sensed things. According to her, in their own, limited world, individuals, too, can in this sense be omnipotent masters and to a degree paralleled with the creative activity of the divine. It is, in many ways, very natural for Aulë to imitate creation and practice the skills of his imaginative mind and handwork.

It can be argued that dwarves are not essentially a *creation* of Aulë at all: here I would like to draw attention to the phrase *making of things* in the passage above. Aulë, who governs the substances of the earth such as metal and rock and is associated with smiths and craftsmanship, is literally a maker of things: the dwarves, albeit being animate and seemingly alive, are mere things, artefacts, even, until their adoption by Ilúvatar who is the only one true creator. Therefore, my interpretation is that Aulë's work is to be understood as a mimetic act of creation, not another layer in the process of creation – this layer is not formed until Ilúvatar's blessing. Ilúvatar's intervention has been pondered by Randall Colton (2018, 405) who writes that "[t]he difference between the dwarves before and after Ilúvatar's intervention reveals a distinction between craft and practical wisdom." According to Colton, this distinction indicates that in *The Silmarillion* there is a difference "between the productive practice of craft, which finds fulfilment in an excellence that exists outside the agent, and the choices made by living things by which they bring about their own flourishing." (ibid. 405). This observation, while obviously relevant for the questions of this section, also paves way for later remarks in the third chapter where the problems of practical wisdom will be discussed in more detail.

Aulë's work is the first clear instance of mimesis that occurs in the legendarium and, again, one that does not quite fall to the category of artistic mimesis as discussed in aesthetics and literary theory, for instance. The Valar indeed attempt to achieve the world seen in the Vision, but Aulë takes this work further and imi-

tates the act of creation, too. Here the idea of mimesis is better suited to examining Aulë's act, not the result of it, the making, not the poppet-like things that bear very little resemblance to their inspiration. Because of the foregrounded aspect of *making*, I find it necessary to take a brief look at the concept of *poiesis* more generally, not only with respect to mimesis but to other related terms, too. The concepts, alongside other relevant terms such as *praxis* and *techne*, have been studied by Liberato Santoro (1980) in an article called "Some Remarks on Aristotle's Concept of Mimesis." Like many other scholars, such as the aforementioned Halliwell and Laurila, Santoro, too, acknowledges the difficulties of the plurisemanticity of the word "mimesis", emphasising the many problems of associating mimesis with copies, miming and imitation. Santoro examines the difference Aristotle makes between *techne* or *poiesis* and *praxis*, that is, between making and doing: according to Santoro, *poiesis* emerges from the opposition to *praxis*. The difference is based on the connections between the act of making, its origin and its result. (ibid. 33–35.) Santoro interprets and clarifies the difference presented in Aristotle's thinking as follows:

> Making is therefore understood as a transient, transitive and extrinsic activity: its ἀρχή lies in the maker, its τέλος lies without the maker and his activity of making. In the case of πρᾶξις and φρόνησις on the contrary, the ἀρχή, the τέλος and the activity of doing are immanent to each other and immanent to the soul. (Santoro 1980, 35.)

Praxis, in other words, (as well as *phronesis* that will be discussed in the third chapter in another context entirely) is an activity in which both the origin and the end are incorporated in the act of doing itself whereas *poiesis* is more concerned with the end-product that is the purpose of the making and stands independently without its maker. This is the chief purpose of Aulë's work, as is uttered quite clearly in the quotation: Aulë "desired things other than I am", and even though the urge to make and mould things is essential to him, it is in this case the end that drives him.

What Aulë does, if summarised, is that he imitates the act of creation, engaging in work that can best be described as *poiesis* because of the emphasis of bringing into being new entities independent of their maker and the act of making.

Returning to the interpretations of the Vision and the difficulty of understanding the nature of the Children, a few concepts need to be clarified. For the lack of a better word, I have for a few times referred to preceding notions or comprehensions as *prior understanding* but the purpose and meaning of the words have not yet been explicated. As a subjective condition that serves as a starting point for interpretation, the inescapable situatedness, it comes close to Gadamer's concept of *prejudice*. In Gadamer's hermeneutics[38] subjective involvement is always a necessary condition of understanding. Being open and receptive to something new and unknown is only possible from within certain "fore structures" of understanding that provide the preliminary means to grasp that unknown, strange thing that is to be interpreted. Prejudice for Gadamer, despite the word's common negative connotation, is a positive and necessary part of comprehension and it is important to see that in his approach prejudice is not something that stands between the interpreter and the thing to be interpreted, preventing her from making interpretations at all – instead it allows interpretation by providing the necessary background and context. In addition, the process of understanding includes an "anticipation of completeness", that is the preliminary assumption that what is being interpreted is understandable in the first place, that it can be seen as a meaningful whole. (Gadamer 1976, 9–10; see also Malpas 2018.)

The problem of the Children and their strangeness is one example of the overall question of mind-(in)dependency in relation to metaphysics and epistemology. The question of dependency and independency is often the ground for the separation of realism and idealism and the various theories concerning them. What

[38] It should be acknowledged that hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation if simply put, is a very relevant theoretical framework for a discipline that is concerned with interpretative practices and methods. However, in this study interpretation is rather approached from a point of view that focuses on the interplay of human understanding and the supernatural – this aspect enters the analysis more dominantly in the third chapter.

is obvious here is the *causal* independency, the fact that the universe is created and thus a product of intentions, wishes and designs of a divine mind. This causal relation is not necessarily very interesting philosophically: the more interesting matter is the clash between metaphysical and epistemic (in)dependencies that become apparent in the relation between the Valar and the Children. By their ontology the Children are entirely independent of the Valar: their creation, existence, choices and actions are not controlled by the Valar (*The Silmarillion*, 7, 35). The Children can therefore be seen as beings, entities whose existence is not dependent on the mind and thoughts of the Valar although the rest of the world was moulded by their Music and later on by their physical labours in it. In relation to the Valar the existence of the Children is ontologically realistic – even the causal dependency is absent since Ilúvatar alone is behind their creation. This ontological realism, however, appears to go hand in hand with epistemological *anti*-realism: the existence of mind-independent beings is allowed but receiving *knowledge* concerning them, or at least properly understanding them, is far more complicated. It could be argued that while the existence of mind-independent reality is possible, knowledge can only concern things that are somehow constructed by mind, language and concepts, an idea that would be congruent with epistemological idealism. This difference could provide one possible explanation to the different relationship the Valar have with the Children compared to that they have with the rest of the world.[39]

Understanding the nature of the Children is a challenge for the Valar, and yet it seems that it is only by getting acquainted with them that allows deeper understanding of Ilúvatar himself – the Children remain a mystery but can still pro-

[39] I would like to emphasise that this formulation of the metaphysical and epistemological relationship between the Valar and the Children is more of an illustration than a general notion on the entire system of Arda: analysing the legendarium in terms of idealism and realism is very complicated because of the inner hierarchy of the fictional universe and the varying modes of existence. This analysis is only of one particular dependency-relation and its purpose is to provide an explanation to the inability of the Valar to understand the Children and also their failed attempts to use as a model something that is outside their knowledge, as occurs when Aulë creates the dwarves. The overall question of mind-(in)dependency in Tolkien's work calls for further and more thorough analysis before more general claims can be made, and it is a task the fulfilment of which would require a study of its own.

vide knowledge of something else: ”Therefore when they beheld them, the more did they love them, being things other than themselves, strange and free, wherein they saw the mind of Ilúvatar reflected anew, and learned yet a little more of his wisdom, which otherwise had been hidden even from the Ainur.” (*The Silmarillion*, 7.) It is fascinating that a distinction is here made between the Ainur and the Valar, Valar being the ones who entered the world instead of remaining beyond its boundaries in the Timeless Halls. It is not my intention to engage in the discussion about the connections between Tolkien’s fiction and Judeo-Christian myths but it is worth noting that the inability to understand the Children can be seen as an extension of the inability to understand Ilúvatar himself. The mind and intent of Ilúvatar are for the most part hidden from the Ainur, and the part of the Children especially. Yet, as I argued, this limited opportunity to understand the Children to a degree allows the Valar to see some of Ilúvatar’s schemes anew. This understanding, I presume, is granted to the Valar only, those who descended into the world, not to those of the Ainur who remained with Ilúvatar. This importance of worldly situatedness is what I will now turn to.

When the Valar enter the world, they are astonished by its darkness and barrenness and see that it is in no way alike to that what they saw. Thus begins their attempt to *achieve* the world (*The Silmarillion*, 9–10), to turn the Idea into reality, and when doing so they cannot become ignorant of the things they learned and saw in the Vision. Descending into both time and space is to become aware of the incompleteness of the world and its forming. The Valar must struggle with knowing some of the things that are to come but simultaneously remaining unaware of some of Ilúvatar’s designs, especially those concerning the Children. The actualisation the world and their own part in it is something the Valar constantly mirror with the Vision, and many of their actions are affected by the things they foresaw. However, much of that they saw is only understood in hindsight, as is the case when Aulë creates the dwarves and Yavanna the ents:

> Then Manwë sat silent, and the thought of Yavanna that she had put into his heart grew and unfolded; and it was beheld by Ilúvatar. Then it seemed to Manwë that the Song rose once more about him, and he heeded now many things therein that though he had hear them he had not heeded before. And at last the Vision was renewed, but it was not now remote, for he was himself within it, and yet he saw that all was upheld by the hand of Ilúvatar; and the hand entered in, and from it came forth many wonders that had until then been hidden from him in the hearts of the Ainur. (*The Silmarillion*, 40–41.)

In the Vision the world and its history are foreseen but the Vision itself, at least some parts of it, are only understood afterwards (about the limited powers of the Valar to comprehend the future compared to Eru's unlimited perspective, see McBride 2020, 111). The perspective of the Valar is at first that of a spectator, someone looking at the world from afar and detached from its course. To be a part of the world, a choice freely made by those of the Ainur who entered Arda, is to let go of the divine perspective, perceiving the world from above and seeing it as a whole. It is somewhat paradoxical that some aspects of the Vision can only be understood after getting in touch with its imperfect, incomplete and time-bound realization: understanding the ideal is possible only after becoming a part of its physical form, being *in* the world instead of seeing it from the outside. With this retrospective ability to see the Vision from a new viewpoint comes also a restriction, certain situatedness in relation to both time and physical location. This can be seen in the way Manwë reviews the Vision in the light of the new information and insight he now has gained alongside new thoughts awoken by his conversation with Yavanna. Comprehending the Vision seems to be a hermeneutical process in which the initial impressions and judgements become re-evaluated, deepened and perhaps even corrected. The situatedness common to all those who live in the world is also implied in a passage in which are described the exceptional sensory abilities of Manwë and Varda: the two, especially when aided by one another, are able to see and hear better and clearer than anyone else, but only when

climbing the highest mountain top on earth (*The Silmarillion*, 16–17). After entering the world Manwë and Varda abandoned the divine perspective, and only by standing on the highest mountain some of that unrestricted vision can be reached. Even then only so much can be seen and heard at a time, and though the Valar are much less bound to physical world than other inhabitants of Arda, entering the material world is a choice that cannot be reversed.

As already hinted, comprehending the world and the Vision is something that is not achieved but it is not an excluded possibility either: when the world ceases, there will be a Second Music in which the Children, too, will participate in (*The Silmarillion*, 4). Being in the world and the unfolding of history can be interpreted as a learning-process that strives for this very culmination, creating and understanding the Second Music yet to be played. From an epistemic viewpoint it is noteworthy what Whittingham writes about the Second Music with respect to the concept of hope and the future, re-built Arda. According to Whittingham (1998, 220), the hope of a renewed world is also a hope of knowledge: "[t]he fourth aspect of this hope involves increased knowledge and insight. [– –] Each one will have Ilúvatar's perspective and see the whole picture for the first time." This promise of full, perfected understanding remains unachieved while the stories of Arda continue, but its possibility is not denied or made empty.

As time passes in the world and new peoples are born and ancestries formed, the Vision continues to influence people's deeds, sometimes in secret, sometimes more obviously. The Vision keeps echoing in the physical, imperfect realisation that is the world. A concrete example of this re-emerging is the building of Menegroth, the city and fortress of elven-king Thingol and his wife Melian who is one of the Maiar, a group of lesser spirits that served the Valar. Menegroth was delved under a hill, and the Elves were aided by dwarves who mastered the art of mining and working with stone (*Silmarillion*, 101–102). The collaboration of the two peoples results in a re-imagination of the bliss of Aman, in that realm known to Melian alone:

> But the Elves also had part in that labour, and Elves and Dwarves together, each with their own skill, there wrought out the visions of Melian, images of the wonder and beauty of Valinor beyond the Sea. The pillars of Menegroth were hewn in the likeness of the beeches of Oromë, stock, bough, and leaf, and they were lit with lanterns of gold. The nightingales sang there as in the gardens of Lórien; and there were fountains of silver, and basins of marble, and floors of many-coloured stones. Carven figures of beasts and birds there ran upon the walls, or climbed upon the pillars, or peered among the branches entwined with many flowers. And as the years passed Melian and her maidens filled the halls with woven hangings wherein could be read the deeds of the Valar, and many things that had befallen in Arda since its beginning, and shadows of things that were yet to be. (*Silmarillion*, 101–102.)

In this passage are included both the formerly introduced motif of mimesis and the act of producing copies of certain places or things. In contrast to Aulë's imitation of creation and his making of the dwarves, the building of Menegroth can also be seen as artistic mimesis, and this time the model can specifically be pointed out and named as an empirical, physical entity – it is not something abstract and universal as in the Vision but things of nature, perceptible and realised. However, there is a gulf between the artistic maker and the model, because the model is mediated to the dwarves by Melian which means that there is no direct contact between the makers and the idea. The most apparent mimesis is in the halls and pillars of Menegroth that draw their inspiration from the peace of Valinor, the gardens inhabited by nightingales, and have been shaped in their likeness; then again, some of the carvings depict flora and fauna in general. There is a difference in these representations, mostly due to their origin: animals and plants can be carved and moulded after perception, using models or visual memory as an artistic tool, but much of the work has its origin in something that is out of sight and unexperienced for the craftsmen.

The latter case, the absent model of moulding and carving, is best illustrated by what is said in the beginning of the passage: the labouring elves and dwarves "wrought out the visions of Melian", not their own imaginings or inspirations of subjective perceptions. That which in one way or another depicts Valinor beyond the sea, in this passage namely the gardens of Lórien, has its only source in the mind of Melian since the land is unknown to all others. The concept of origin or "model" is, however, more complicated, and not least because of the polysemic use of the word *vision* in Tolkien's legendarium. Since Melian is indeed one of the Ainur and thus involved in shaping of the world and weaving the Great Music, she comprehends the world not only in its physical form but also how it first appeared in the Vision (*The Silmarillion*, 22). Is it the Vision or the realisation that in Melian's designs becomes depicted in the halls of Menegroth? Likely, it is the realisation: the world as it is seen in the Vision is never described in detail, whereas the given examples have specific references to physical locations in Valinor. However, the influence of the Vision is not absent, even if this interpretation is adopted: tales of Arda are inscribed in the embroidery of the woven cloths, and among them there are references to future, though described as mere shadows. The source of these predictions can be only in Melian and in the knowledge she gained perceiving the Vision of Ilúvatar.

The layered nature of fictional worlds is often encountered in fantasy literature, and also before Tolkien. Lord Dunsany's novel *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, for instance, uses the motif of copies and layers and also comments on their role as constituents of the world. Dunsany's novel, first published in 1924, is an early, influential work of the genre and it tells the story of young lord Alveric's quest to win the princess of Elfland for his bride. Lord Dunsany's style is highly descriptive and filled with vivid imagery, landscapes and detailed accounts of places, actions, plants, objects and people. In the novel Lirazel, the daughter of the king of Elfland, has wedded a mortal man, Alveric, and left her magical homeland. She is struggling to adapt to the ways and customs of humans, including their religious habits: it is

forbidden to worship the stars, which Lirazel yearns to do. She is doing her best to obey the rules but wonders if it would be less evil to worship the mere reflection of stars:

> With face upturned to all that wandering host she stood long silent, obedient to Alveric: then she lowered her eyes, and there was a small pool glimmering in the night, in which all the faces of the stars were shining. "To pray to the stars," she said to herself in the night, "is surely wrong. These images in the water are not the stars. I will pray to their images, and the stars will know." (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 37.)

The King of Elfland's Daughter plays with images, reflections and copies. The hierarchy and notions of genuineness become clear in Lirazel's thought: her belief is that since the images are lesser than the stars themselves, praying to them should not be prohibited. Interestingly, she still believes that the images may serve as some kind of intermediary objects that are able to convey her prayers to their true recipients, the stars above. Lirazel is criticised for her actions, but similar methods of worship can be found in the religious community she is trying to become a part of. The Freer, the realm's religious instructor, attempts to teach proper worship to Lirazel so that she would forsake her heathen ways. The worshipping happens with the help of religious symbols, representatives of absent, holier things not that different to the manner in which Lirazel used the reflections of the stars to pray to the skies. The Freer's holy objects include a candle and a bell, a brass eagle and a symbolic bowl with scented water, for instance. He explains their purpose and the symbols to Lirazel, and the pattern of worship is very much the same as in any religious ritual: holy objects, that are the mere representatives of something beyond grasp, are in fact the medium of worship, not the thing worshipped. (ibid. 39.) The difference is that the Freer's rituals can be seen as deliberate recreations of religious events, objects or things, a man-made replacement or a facsimile, a physical representation of the holy, whereas Lirazel uses an image of the stars instead of engag-

ing in a creative act and making a replica herself. This kind of recreation, even when not explicitly spiritual in nature, is a recurring element in Tolkien's world, and it is one of the reasons why readings of Arda's metaphysics often have theological undertones. Particularly the recreations of the immortal continent of Aman in the mortal Beleriand and Middle-earth, such as the halls of Menegroth and the dreamlike Lothlórien, are an example of reproducing and maintaining some of the holy in a world that is cut away from it. Active worshipping is absent, but the significance of the recreations remains.

Concerning the overall notion on Ideas and their representations an interpretation I want to avoid is one where a certain physical place is seen as the equivalent of the World of Forms. The elven-realm Lothlórien, for instance, can be seen as the mortal-world representative of the Gardens of Lórien that are located in the Undying Lands (*The Silmarillion,* 19). It is fair to say that especially in *The Lord of the Rings* the Undying Lands, or in extension the continent of Aman, is often behind the illusion of originality and it is seen as a paradise, home of the Valar. It is important to not to fall to the misinterpretation that Aman would represent the world of Forms: Aman, too, is a part of the perceptible, physical world though it may be closer to the world of Forms, and it is not to be seen as the irretrievable "original" either.[40] In many ways the land embodies things that are good, (apparently) permanent and eternal and yet Aman, too, is marred by evil and subject to time. The different levels of permanence, or, the levels closer to or further away from the Forms are well presented in a remark made about languages:

> Their [the Noldor elves] language, Noldorin, that at first differed little from the Lindarin or Quenya, became on their return to Middle-earth subject to the change which even things devised by the Elves here suffer, and in the passing of time it grew wholly unlike to the Quenya of Valinor, which tongue the ex-

[40] Korpua (2015, 53) calls Valinor, the realm in Aman, "an interspace between the Ideal World and Changeable World, undying and unreachable, but still part of the world." This characterisation is in my opinion very fitting, and acknowledges the simultaneous divinity and worldliness of the land.

> iles nonetheless retained always in memory as a language of lore and song and courtesy. (*Peoples of Middle-earth*, 30.)

I would like to emphasise the remark about Quenya being the language of *lore*. Until now the analysis has greatly focused on the metaphysical layers of Arda in itself and the primary question about knowledge has been less examined. It is not a meaningless detail that the language spoken in Aman has become the language of lore (and songs, which also serve epistemic purposes) in Middle-earth: I argue that this is one indication of the prevalent notion about truthfulness and reliability of knowledge. In Middle-earth, a place that is even further removed from the true and permanent than Aman is, the language spoken there is seen as the most suitable one for preserving and conveying knowledge. The difference between the two continents is also underlined earlier in the passage: the language of the Noldor begins to change as soon as they arrive in Middle-earth, becoming "subject to the change which even things devised by the Elves here suffer" until very little resemblance to Quenya remains. This interpretation, however, has another side to it: in *The Silmarillion* it is stated that "[– –] and it is told that at this feast the tongue of the Grey-elves was most spoken even by the Noldor, for they learned swiftly the speech of Beleriand, whereas the Sindar were slow to master the tongue of Valinor." (*The Silmarillion*, 128–129). This implies that the Noldorin Elves adapted to the culture around them choosing to speak the language used in Beleriand, suggesting that the diminishing of Quenya is partially a result of a conscious choice.

2.4 Originality of Light and False Eternity

> The task of the Valar is to shape and light the world, but the whole concept belongs to Eru alone. In fulfilling his purpose, the Valar are already at one remove from his wholeness, for they bring to the world not light but lights, a variety of lights of differing kinds and progressively lessening intensities. Each

> light that comes is dimmer than the one before it, splintered by Tolkien's sub-creators. (Flieger 2002, 60.)

One of the most prominent examples of the multiplying, repetitive nature of Tolkien's world is the recurring light-motif that has been the primary point of interest in Tolkien-scholar Flieger's (2002) famous study. The thoroughness of Flieger's analysis and her notions about the many significances of the light-motif – such as the summary quoted above – might at first sight lead to questioning the need of further writings on the subject. However, even though the treatment to follow owes much to the groundwork offered by Flieger, I hope to show that certain aspects need to be studied further; not that they would have been in any way inadequately handled, just that more can be found with some changes in perspectives and emphases. I intend to provide a deeper examination about light's epistemic relevance, its relationship with causal processes of acquiring perceptual knowledge and its ability to allow (imperfect) access to the so-called original and genuine – I argue that light is a crucial constituent of knowledge-formation processes that are both sensory and practical *and* innate or abstract. The relevance of light to the epistemic structures and its symbolic value is the main reason for distinguishing light as a separate example of its own already at this point. Light is essential to the epistemological analysis of Tolkien both literally and figuratively, and I will approach it drawing from Plato's Analogy of the Sun presented in the sixth book of *The Republic*. In this theory the sun represents the light of knowledge and the ultimate Idea, Form of the Good. Form of the Good is not actually knowledge in itself; instead, it operates in a way similar to the sun giving visible shape and form to all things, enabling perception. The Form of the Good makes all the universals understandable and accessible to knowledge. Therefore, all ideas originate from the Form of the Good which is transcendent and absolute. (*The Republic*, 199–202.)

In Tolkien's legendarium it is not rare that the sun becomes an object of remarks and thoughts, sometimes in a much-highlighted manner: it is commented on

both in its presence and absence, as a source of relief and hope. As Korpua (2015, 54–66) remarks while discussing the motif of light in Arda, Tolkien's fiction largely associates light with goodness while darkness and shadows represent bad and evil. Korpua points out how the eras of Tolkien's universe are named according to the current source of light, the Years of the Sun being the last of these eras in this categorization. The Sun and Moon are created relatively late in the cosmology of Arda, and before their coming the world was first illuminated by two Lamps followed by two Trees – these early periods in the history of Arda are described in the first chapters of Valaquenta (*The Silmarillion*, 27–81). The sun is often, more or less subtly, referred to as something that brings clarity and gives the world a form more easily perceptible. This, of course, is only natural: shapes and landscapes become blurred in the dark and associating light with seeing and observing is not in itself supernatural or exceptional in any way. However, the way the impact of sunlight is emphasized, is interesting, and its revealing nature can in my opinion be interpreted symbolically.

Before discussing the symbolical value of sunlight in the context of knowledge and revelation an important notion needs to be made: associating Tolkien's sun with Plato's Form of Good is far from unproblematic – in fact, it falls to the same pattern of duplications as the instances introduced above. Sunlight, even while something powerful and knowledge-giving, is not genuine, original or primary: it is a reproduction of a light more ancient, a light that was first present in the two Lamps and in the two Trees later on and is, even when preserving some of the ancient light, "thrice removed". The sun is not the first, original source of light that originates in creator-god Ilúvatar himself; rather, it is a production of the Valar that are below Ilúvatar, and the light the sun emits is already marred by the deeds of Melkor (see for instance Flieger 2002, 62–65). A crucial question therefore is whether the refracted, duplicated nature of light that enables perception makes perceptual knowledge less valid and reliable. Therefore, to make the Platonic theo-

ry more applicable to this study, I discuss light more generally as a requirement for knowledge instead of narrowing the approach down to the sun only.

The light-theme is one of the most obvious contexts for Neoplatonist branches and associations to emerge. Remes (2008, 206) presents an account of the legacy and influence of Neoplatonism on the theories about God, nature, the soul and beauty, for instance, and in her commentary about knowledge she remarks that Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination, that can be seen as one version of Plato's epistemology, is greatly in debt to Neoplatonists who sought to understand the role of intelligible forms in concept-formation and perception and to find out how they could be present to the fallible human mind. Many of the analyses to follow clearly echo these Neoplatonist – and Augustinian – lines of thought, even though they are not always specifically addressed, mostly because of the previous examinations by Korpua (2021) in which the Christian Neoplatonist currents are of interest. From an epistemically oriented viewpoint, studying Tolkien's light-motif with respect to this tradition of interpreting and developing Plato's theory would make an interesting topic for future studies.

Flieger discusses the central theme of primary light that has been refracted and ties her analysis to Owen Barfield's theory on linguistics extending the light-motif to the languages, peoples and history of Middle-earth and analysing how the splintered light can be seen as a metaphor for them. Flieger (2002, 49–50) goes as far as to argue that *The Silmarillion* is indeed a story about light that in all of its forms pervades the fictional world, its songs and its stories. According to Flieger, Tolkien's treatment of light in his fiction has its imagery source in Catholicism and its linguistic method in Barfield's theory. Flieger summarises this treatment as a combination of unity and splintering:

> His [Tolkien's] approach is to first restore to words their primal unity of concept and then to set up a progressive fragmentation of both word and percept as these express a changing relationship to the fictive world and a diminishing reflection of its light. His technique is to confer literality on what would in the

> primary world be called metaphor and then to illustrate the process by which the literal becomes metaphoric. (Flieger 2002, 49.)

Flieger points out that the Valar, the angelic beings, take part in the making of the world, shaping it and lighting it, but Ilúvatar alone understands the world as a whole. The actions of the Valar are therefore splintered from the beginning and also the light they bring to the new world is fractured: instead of one divine light there are several lights of different kinds and intensities and each new light is to a degree lesser than the ones preceding it. Light in its primal brilliance is out of reach, and the peoples in the legendarium are also estranged from it despite their constant yearning and striving for it. The sense of loss, estrangement, sorrow and separation from light is present throughout the whole work, and these themes are extended to the peoples themselves and their languages. (Flieger 2002, 58–62.) This fractured nature Flieger proposes is a central part of my following analysis.

One example of another study that examines the nature of light in Tolkien's fiction is Catherine Madsen's (2004) article "Light from an invisible Lamp: Natural Religion in *The Lord of the Rings*" Madsen's article analyses the ways in which the much-discussed Christian elements become intertwined with natural religion in *The Lord of the Rings*, and her claim is that even though Tolkien's world has often been approached from the assumption that the Christian elements work in nearly evangelic ways, the character's awe before the world's marvels and the book's presentation of the world as one where virtue has its roots in nature rather than monotheistic God suggests a more secular cosmology and natural theology. With respect to light, the general notion that is noteworthy also for this chapter, is outlined as follows:

> It is clear that both the light and the darkness in Middle-earth are less than they once were. Morgoth was a greater enemy than Sauron, and the Elves were stronger in resisting him; Morgoth took away the light by stealing the Silmarils, whereas Sauron only blocks the light with a vast cloud of smoke; Elbereth

> scattered the stars and sent Eärendil among them in his ship, but Galadriel only seals a little of that light in a glass. Aragorn is a hero and a descendant of heroes, but he is brought up in hiding and given the name of Hope; Arwen possesses the beauty of Lúthien, but she is born in the twilight of her people and her title is Evenstar; these two restore the original glories only for a little while, before the world is altered and "fades into the light of common day" (William Wordsworth, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," line 76.) (Madsen 2004, 42.)

Madsen's formulation is not only a commentary on light-motif and the place of certain characters in the succession of history in Tolkien's world; rather, it is almost an exhaustive description of the incredibly dominant tendency of *fading* that *The Lord of the Rings* echoes throughout over a thousand pages. Particularly the vocabulary Madsen uses is very noteworthy: she discusses the diminished, scattered objects and containers of light but also illustrates the motif of fading and lessening with words such as twilight, and she mentions the name Evenstar as Arwen's epithet. However, the Wordsworth reference she concludes with is rather surprising and nearly turns the situation upside down: the world is inevitably altered and fades *into the light of common day*. Until now, the fading has been characterised with words that emphasise nightfall and dusk. The change can be explained with the help of Samwise Gamgee, who contemplates that "'[i]t's sunlight and bright day, right enough,' he said. 'I thought that Elves were all for moon and stars: but this is more Elvish than anything I ever heard tell of. [– –]'" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR,* II, vi, 360). Sam learns to perceive Elves from a new perspective during his time in Lothlórien, and the sunlit woodland surprises him with its unexpected air of "elfishness". However, in general and considering the larger context of the legendarium, the Elves are the people most associated with moon, stars and night time in Arda. Against this background, it is very understandable to say that the time of the Elves does not end at a dusk but at dawn, the "light of common day". The era that is coming to an end is poetically described as twilight; the time that is to come is a

new, bright day that no longer has a place for Elves. The scattering of light Madsen writes about has been in process throughout the whole history of Eä, and I will now go through some examples with special interest to the metaphysical status of light.

The primary example I have chosen to demonstrate the curious nature of light in Tolkien's world is an analysis of the elven-realm Lothlórien. Lothlórien makes an interesting example since it is in many ways a place where both light and the sense of originality, preserving the irretrievable past, are dominant characteristics. A few remarks about the land itself should first be made: Lothlórien itself, as it happens, bears remarkable resemblance to another ancient place, also when it comes to names and etymology. The land's name, to start with, roughly translates to "Lórien of the Blossom" or "Dreamflower", the Sindarin word *loth* signifying a flower (*The Silmarillion*, 408). The Gardens of Lórien, then again, is another place located in Valinor, the paradise-like home of the Valar that is shut from Men and the exiled Elves. The Gardens are home to Irmo, the master of visions and dreams, and Estë, who is a healer (*The Silmarillion*, 19). Lothlórien is already by its name associated with dreams, visions, rest and healing, and all of these are present when the Fellowship arrives in the land in *The Lord of the Rings*. Lothlórien echoes elements of Lórien and can, if holding on to the theory according to which Valinor represents a more genuine and purer side of the world even though it is still part of said world, be seen as a mortal-land counterpart for the "real thing" across the sea. However, the genuine nature of Valinor, including the Gardens of Lórien, is a mere illusion as the following analysis aims to show.

> As soon as he [Frodo] set foot upon the far bank of Silverlode a strange feeling had come upon him, and it deepened as he walked on into the Naith: it seemed to him that he had stepped over a bridge of time into a corner of the Elder Days, and was now walking in a world that was no more. In Rivendell there was memory of ancient things; in Lórien the ancient things still lived on in the waking world. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 358.)

> They remained some days in Lothlórien, so far as they could tell or remember. All the while that they dwelt there the sun shone clear, save for a gentle rain that fell at times, and passed away leaving all things fresh and clean. The air was cool and soft, as if it were early spring, yet they felt about them the deep and thoughtful quiet of winter. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 368.)

Lothlórien is a particularly difficult place to analyse for it seems to detach itself from all the statements and descriptions given about it: it cannot be approached directly but through impressions, images and illusions. The descriptions are systematically tied to the perspective of the members of the Fellowship, mostly that of Frodo but also more generally. Frodo's perception is the point of view in the first passage whereas the latter depicts the Fellowship's experience of being in Lórien more generally. Both passages draw attention to time and especially the way it flees one's grasp and rejects all attempts to keep count of days, refusing to be understood. Lothlórien also defies natural opposites by producing an atmosphere where the senses of spring and winter can coexist. Time is at once irrelevant and omnipresent: Frodo's first impression when crossing the river Silverlode and nearing the heart of the realm is the presence of the past, the feel of the ancient world as something more than a mere piece of recalled history. Yet time, even when it seems wondrous because of the feel of living history, is somehow of minor importance and the Fellowship's experience is that they are living in an ever-ongoing present. The country is seen through a prism of impressions and feelings and the description is for the most part highly subjective.

An inconsistency arises when comparing the Fellowship's impression and experience about Lothlórien and the events that already have been set in motion in the story: Lothlórien, as the other elven-realms, is coming to the end of its era and Middle-earth turns towards the dominion of Men (see for instance *The Lord of the Rings, RK*, VI, ix, 1056). Diminishing has already begun and the timelessness of Lothlórien turns out to be an illusion. Those of the Fellowship who are mortal are

even more likely to be deceived by the false sense of eternity whereas the Elves are immortal and thus perceive time differently. Legolas, the only elf in the Fellowship, regrets that it is not spring when he arrives in Lothlórien. His remark is answered by Aragorn who says that even in winter he will be pleased to see Lothlórien (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 343). Aragorn, who is of Númenorean decent and comes from a line of kings, spent much of his youth with Elves learning their lore and skills, and compared to the other members of the company he and Legolas are the ones who seem to understand the state of Lothlórien more profoundly.

Despite its inevitable diminishing Lothlórien does not fade away entirely: bearing remnants of Valinor, restoring some of the light of the Two Trees and even vegetation in the form of peculiar *mallorn*-trees, Lothlórien is in many ways comparable to lands beyond mortal world, most obviously the Gardens of Lórien especially concerning the dominant element of dreaminess and its refreshing, healing power. Lothlórien reproduces elements of other realms, and when finally coming to its own end passes them forward: as the Fellowship prepares to continue the journey southwards, Celeborn and Galadriel offer the company gifts that may help them in the future. Of these two in particular have great value in the later story, especially the glass phial filled with light that is given to Frodo. To Sam, then again, is given a small box that contains soil from Galadriel's orchard and one *mallorn* nut, and the gift is later used to restore the war-torn Shire. The distortion of Shire is presumably either foreseen or guessed by Galadriel:

> Though you should find all barren and laid waste, there will be few gardens in Middle-earth that will bloom like your garden, if you sprinkle this earth there. Then you may remember Galadriel and *catch a glimpse far off of Lórien, that you have seen only in our winter*. For our Spring and Summer are gone by, and they will never be seen on earth again save in memory. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, viii, 386; italics mine.)

Mellyrn were trees brought to Lothlórien by Galadriel, and the tree Sam later planted in the Shire was the only one in Middle-earth apart from those in Lothlórien. Planting the tree and scattering the soil all over the Shire is a purgatory act and its purpose is to bring the destroyed, industrialised land back to life but at the same time one more layer is, perhaps unintentionally, added to the chain of copies, another descendant of the ancient world begins to form. I do not intend to claim that these layers should in any way be direct, similar re-representations of one specific original entity; rather, as the quoted passages suggest, they are a diverse group of things or places where ancient elements re-emerge, probably in a slightly altered form, and pass forward that which still is left from the earliest ages of Arda. Ancient relics seem to diminish and probably bear less and less resemblance to their original source but they do not disappear entirely. What *does* seem to vanish from Middle-earth, however, is the light and radiance of Lothlórien, the remaining rays of the Two Trees. These depart alongside Galadriel and the aforementioned glass phial she gifted to Frodo.

The glass Frodo and Sam successfully use to defy a giant spider Shelob contains the light of Eärendil, an exceptionally bright star. In the legends of Arda Eärendil was a half-elf who rose to the skies with his ship bearing a bright jewel, the last remaining Silmaril, on his forehead and so became a star sailing the skies (*The Silmarillion* 295–306). When Frodo in the end of the Third Age departs from Middle-earth to spend the rest of his years in the Undying Lands, the glass vanishes as the ship reaches the shores of Eldamar[41]. The history of Arda is greatly concerned with the three Silmarils, precious gemstones created by Noldorin elf Fëanor who also devised the crystalline substance they were made of. Many of the wars of

[41] The mythical, unreachable west beyond the sea is another motif that links Tolkien's stories to medieval imagery and literature. In this case, the legends of King Arthur and the island of Avalon are the most obvious point of connection, and the similarities have been pointed out by Andrew Lazo (2003) in his article "A kind of mid-wife: J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis - sharing influence". Lazo, continuing the remarks made by previous scholars such as Tom Shippey, discusses the influence of Arthurian legends on the writing of Tolkien and Lewis, including the land of Westernesse and its counterparts of Avalon and Blessed land alongside the modern problem of associating the western, unattainable realms with America. (Lazo 2003, 47–48.)

Arda are to some degree intertwined with the Silmarils and quarrels about their ownership, as is the whole story of *The Silmarillion* in a larger sense, but it is their origin that makes them metaphysically – and epistemologically – interesting: inspiration for the making of the gems came from Galadriel's hair which was both gold and silver and was so radiant it was said to have caught the light of the Two Trees (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 336–337). Fëanor indeed managed to capture the light of the Trees and after they were destroyed the gems alone contained what was left of their radiance. The light of the Silmarils – and further, of the Trees – is last seen on earth in a physical form as the glass phial and once it disappears only the star itself remains. Simultaneously also Galadriel herself departs, leaves behind her realm and returns to the Undying Lands. Vanishing of the glass and Galadriel's departure are the most prominent indications of the process of slow dimming that I read figuratively in relation to the notion of light as a primary requirement of knowledge. The divine light that still was present in Lothlórien is finally gone, leaving perception and knowledge unsure.

Eternity, or alleged eternity, is something that Lothlórien echoes but cannot restore. Throughout the analysis the idea of an unreachable, unchanging and eternal origin, the world of Forms, has been seen as a contrast to the ever-changing mortal reality that consists of echoes, copies and resemblances, each layer slightly more detached from its origin than the previous one. The next question to be asked is whether it is justifiable to assume this eternity in the first place. Lothlórien's revealing radiance is after all itself detached from eternity, it is time-bound and as such a part of reckoning. The Two Trees whose light is still faintly present in Lothlórien are themselves already historical rather than timeless and eternal: the Trees are created by vala Yavanna who sings them into being, and these two, one golden, one silver, give light in turns forming a cycle (*The Silmarillion*, 31–32). Flieger associates this periodical nature of the Trees and mingling of their lights with reckoning: "The alternating cycles of light mark the beginning of days, a rhythm that suggests measured time. There is still no night, no absolute dark, but

there is a hesitation and pulsation, as if the light must now be tempered to the life of the world and brought softly into being. However dimmer, this is the light of the world." (Flieger 2002, 63.) The trees are time-bound, made in the physical world and of its substance, and they are Indeed a means for measuring time themselves, which significantly weakens the ties with the otherworldly and eternal. The sequence of light and twilight, evening and morning is a fascinating epistemic aspect symbolically: Houghton's (2003, 175–176) rendering of Augustine's literal interpretation of *Genesis* includes remarks about the word *day* understood as something else than everyday conception suggests – instead of a six-day course, God creates everything simultaneously in one eternal moment, and "day" refers to the angelic host, the intellectual light that observes and comprehends creation. In this respect, the treatment of the *literal* has a remarkable influence on how descriptions of time are understood. The passages quoted from *The Lord of the Rings* above incorporate much vocabulary that refers not only to times of day but times of year, too, references to summer and winter, for instance. However, in their case I perceive that the more fruitful reading is to expand the literal into something symbolic and abstract, such as interpreting the references to winter as remarks about the approaching end of an era – although, this reading is undeniably very self-evident.

Of the trees themselves especially the older one, Telperion, has many descendants and begins a chain of copies of its own. The saplings of Telperion that grew in Valinor travelled all the way to Gondor in Middle-earth, each tree slightly lesser than the one before. The diminishing is recognised and explicated, and so is the nature of the later trees as copies of Telperion:

> [– –] and Nimloth was in its turn descended from the Tree of Tirion, that was an image of the Eldest of Trees, White Telperion which Yavanna caused to grow in the land of the Valar. The Tree, memorial of the Eldar and of the light of Valinor, was planted in Minas Ithil before the house of Isildur, since he it was that had saved the fruit from destruction [– –]. (*The Silmarillion*, 349.)

The later trees are described to be *images* of Telperion, and this idea is further enhanced in Christopher Tolkien's clarifying chapter about the downfall of Númenor: "In the revision of the *Quenta Silmarillion* from the same period (X. 176, § 39) it is said of this tree that 'Yavanna made for them a tree in all things like a lesser image of Telperion, save that it did not give light of its own being'; its name is not given." (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 147). The remark about light is the most important one for it is the property of self-luminosity that distinguishes the saplings from Telperion itself: everything else can be replicated in the images but not luminance. It is indeed fitting what is said in the quotation about the tree being a memorial of light. Whereas the sun and moon are luminous and continue to emit the light of the Two Trees, despite being less powerful and more severely marred, the representation of light is different with the saplings. The light of the sun and moon is further refracted but of the same source; the trees are an image and memory of light, a symbol for something gone by.

As is evident in Flieger's reading, even the light, revealing as it is, is not timeless. Instead of being stable the light changes from gold to silver and back, and that which first seen from the perspective of mortal Middle-earth seemed eternal and unchanging is in fact also in flux and subject to constant movement. If steadiness and permanence are what characterise the world of Forms and separate it from the world of perception, in Tolkien's universe these two are not separate or entirely different. There are levels in the legendarium that are *closer* to the unchanging and permanent but reaching that state remains unachieved – there is timelessness, and there is an ultimate Idea, but they are with Ilúvatar and not accounted in the legendarium. Since primeval light is so often associated with the true and original it is necessary to point out that even in the Vision light cannot be treated as complete and infracted: the Ainur, when gazing on Ilúvatar's Vision, see colours (*Silmarillion*, 8). White light that contains all other colours must be broken in order to make these colours visible to the eye. Already in the Vision, the representative of the Idea in my reading, white light is shattered. Flieger (2002, 60) remarks that for the

Valar who descend to the world the light is already shattered as is their work. She returns to the topic a little bit later and points out that the splintering process of the White Light "nevertheless makes visible the colour spectrum, giving rise to light of many hues" (ibid. 70). While I find Flieger's analyses of this splintering and the relationship between White Light and spectrum more than adequate, I would like to emphasise the problem of the presence of colours *before* the material world even begins: I perceive that the Vision already presents light in its splintered state before creation even takes place. Whether this refracting is a mere foreshowing of what is to come or the current state of affairs is a question unanswered.

The gradual scale from things furthest from the ideal to things closest to it loudly echoes nothing more or less than the *history of an idea* and its development in philosophy, theology and (Western) thought in general. This history, particularly the principles of plenitude and sufficient reason, are traced in Lovejoy's aforementioned study, and one of the greatest dilemmas Lovejoy discusses is the theological dualism of a God that is both self-sufficient and creative. Another problem, and a more pressing one with respect to the interests of this section, concerns the question of whether the lower is derivative from the higher so that the cause, the higher, is always greater than its effect, or whether God himself can be temporalized and "identified with the process by which the whole creation slowly and painfully ascends the scale of possibility; or, if the name is to be reserved for the summit of the scale, God was conceived as the not yet realized final term of the process." (Lovejoy 1957, 317). The metaphysics of Eä for the most part presents a downward movement: the motion is descendent, proceeding downwards from the abstract and otherworldly. However, regarding the mimetic nature of metaphysics and the attitude towards the physical world and engaging in its course, Lovejoy's further remark about the problematic theological dualism should be taken into account:

> With this theological dualism – since the idea of God was taken to be also the definition of the highest good – there ran, as we have likewise seen, a dualism of values, the one otherworldly (though often in a half-hearted way), the other this-worldly. If the good for man was the contemplation or the imitation of God, this required, on the one hand, a transcendence and suppression of the merely 'natural' interests and desires, a withdrawal of the soul from 'the world' the better to prepare it for the beatific vision of the divine perfection; and it required, on the other hand, a piety towards the God of things as they are, an adoring delight in the sensible universe in all its variety, an endeavor on man's part to know and understand it ever more fully, and a conscious participation in the divine activity of creation. (Lovejoy 1957, 316.)

While Tolkien's universe often seems to value the otherworldly higher than the physical, changeable world, it is essential to emphasise that the tendency of lamenting for the irretrievable "original" and the unattainable otherworldly does not equal scorning the this-worldly: the goodness found in imitating God's work and engaging in the sensible universe, its variety, processes and unfolding Lovejoy writes about, is very much present in Arda. Turning away from the physical world is not desirable as such, and taking part in mimetic acts of making and creating is, as long as the hierarchical rules are not broken, encouraged. The remnants of light are inevitably less bright than their predecessors and the tree-saplings step by step further away from Telperion, but that does not mean that they are without value. The *adoring delight* and *conscious participation in the divine activity of creation* – or, using Tolkien's terms of an activity very similar, sub-creation – is characteristic to many peoples of Arda and will be returned to before the end of this chapter.

As a concluding remark to this section, alongside light darkness, too, is a matter worth addressing. My analysis so far has been much concerned with the question of so-called originality, whether concerning the Vision or irretrievable primary light. The defining characteristic of originality, that which in the legendarium is primary and the purest in form and in nature, is inevitably absent. This may

seem self-evident but it is a matter important to acknowledge. The Idea and its realisation are necessarily apart, and only the absence of the former can allow the existence of the latter – the two are mutually exclusive. This pattern can be seen in the creation of Arda at its clearest, for once the Music ceases and the Vision is seen and admired, the World begins – but only after both the Music and the Vision are gone beyond recall:

> But even as Ulmo spoke, and while the Ainur were yet gazing upon this vision, it was taken away and hidden from their sight; and it seemed to them that in that moment they perceived a new thing, Darkness, which they had not known before except in thought. But they had become enamoured of the beauty of the vision and engrossed in the unfolding of the World which came there to being, and their minds were filled with it; for the history was incomplete and the circles of time not full-wrought when the vision was taken away. (*The Silmarillion*, 9.)

The Ainur only become aware of darkness after perceiving something *other* than that, that is to say that darkness becomes apparent because of its negation: once the Vision disappears it leaves behind a void, dark space that seems new and unknown to the spectators. Simultaneously this new thing is named, and indeed it is referred to as a proper, written with a capital letter. In this sentence is implied one crucial notion on the epistemic system of Arda: when peering into Darkness the Ainur look at something they "had not known before *except in thought*" (italics mine). The fact that darkness has not yet been perceived does not mean it is necessarily unknown – knowing and perceiving are linked but not inevitably so, since ideas and concepts can exist prior to perception. The Ainur therefore have an *idea* of darkness, some pre-existing understanding of the concept of something that has so far remained unexperienced and unseen. This suggests that the legendarium allows the possibility of *a priori* knowledge, knowledge that precedes perception and is independent of experience and sensory observations. The terms a priori and

a posteriori can be used when talking about ideas and concepts, propositions or arguments but in this analysis my main interest is with ideas and concepts rather than making true or untrue remarks about the world and state of affairs.

2.5 Where Does Literature Stand?

> As with Plato, the ultimate authenticating force is always only implied: one can never actually reach it in a text, since it is embedded deep in the texture of culture. (Nagy 2004, 93.)

Plato's criticism towards literature, art and the much-discussed chains of copies evoke questions about the status and role of literature in the fictional world – all the more so, since Tolkien's universe is known for its tendency to weave books within books, as Brljak's (2010) article discusses. For hobbits, for one thing, tales of lore and entertainment have great significance. Their treatment and value within the community varies majorly: for some they are merely a pastime and enjoyable anecdotes, but for some, such as Sam Gamgee, the stories serve as serious evidence of something that is outside of their everyday experience and knowledge (see for instance Prozesky 2006, 22). Literature needs to be acknowledged as one of the epistemic constituents of Arda, and I will treat it primarily as a part of lore and historical tradition instead of a corrupting reflection, an accumulating copy, a mere product of the shadow-world as the Platonic approach probably would suggest at first sight. I will study Arda's literature and oral tradition paying attention particularly to the way they simultaneously constitute the fictional world and its stories and narrative: the world of fantasy grows and forms side by side with the unfolding of its stories. The many books within books are an example of this *par excellence* even though the emphasis on this process of tradition-in-making has diminished in the later, canonised texts of *The Silmarillion* compared to the earlier, more openly metafictional stories of *The Book of Lost Tales I & II*. By the parallel unfolding of the

world and its stories I do not refer to the idea of literature as something that builds and creates the world it speaks of, or, by extension, to the idea of language as constructing the world it describes. Both ideas are kindred to the issues this section discusses, but my focus is more on the parallel formation processes of the epistemic structures, the fictional universe and the course of the stories. The question is, again, that of both metaphysics and epistemology: the epistemic significance of literature is the chief matter of interest, but the metaphysical status of literature as a part of the unfolding universe and its unfolding stories cannot be ignored.

By asking where does literature stand, I seek to find two ways of positioning lore and literary tradition in Tolkien's fiction: first, I ask what is its relation to the supernatural, and second, what is its relation to both factual truth and wisdom. The connection between literature and the supernatural easily seems rather weak: apart from downright linguistic, verbal magic or spells Mary Zimmer (2004), for instance, studies in Tolkien's fiction, literature as such is rarely openly supernatural. Different manners of working with literature, whether by writing, preserving or reading it, are not at first sight processes necessarily connected to supernatural knowledge. However, there are cases in which Tolkien's world extends the supernatural to the very processes of writing and producing literary material itself: in *The Hobbit*, the dwarves, Bilbo and Gandalf receive help from Elrond in reading moon-letters of their map:

> "Moon-letters are rune-letters, but you cannot see them," said Elrond, "not when you look straight at them. They can only be seen when the moon shines behind them, and what is more, with the more cunning sort it must be a moon of the same shape and season as the day when they were written. The dwarves invented them and wrote them with silver pens, as your friends could tell you. These must have been written on a midsummer's eve in a crescent moon, a long while ago." (*The Hobbit*, 60.)

In *The Lord of the Rings* (*FR,* II, iv, 312), similar letters are carved on the secret door that leads to the Mines of Moria, and they are made with *ithildin* that only mirrors star- and moonlight. Gandalf manages to reveal them, but only because he knows what he is looking for: "'[u]nless things are altogether changed, eyes that know what to look for may discover the signs.'" (ibid. 311). In both cases, the element of the supernatural is relevant with respect to concealing knowledge and revealing it again: in order to be able to read the message, one must have sufficient knowledge about the workings of the moon-letters, and the circumstances must be right. The supernatural plays a part when knowledge is preserved for a specifically targeted group and hidden from others, and, as in these examples, the supernatural element is in the very act of writing (or carving) itself and in the materials used. Literature on a larger scale, however, is for the most part a constituent of the natural sphere, even if not completely cut out from the workings of magic.

Regarding literature's relation to truth, an interesting interplay is between the different connotations of history and mythology, traditions that in Tolkien's fiction can hardly be separated from one another. Flieger's essay "Myth and Truth in Tolkien's Legendarium" discusses Tolkien's fictional "mythology for England", as it is sometimes called, and the partly overlapping, partly contradictory versions, traditions and perspectives are of interest in the analysis. Flieger (2017, 158) stresses the importance of different viewpoints, arguing that the various stories present facets of their own, Elvish, human or a mixture, and they all introduce different angles. This is significant with respect to interpretation, Arda's inner belief-system and attitudes towards literary and oral tradition: as Flieger (ibid. 158) puts it, "it also means that they are all "true" in terms of those whose myths they are. [– –] It means that nothing in the legendarium should be taken as absolute. It means that all his narrators, interrogators, translators, scribes, compilers, redactors [– –] are each putting their individual spin on the story." She continues by stating that the repeatedly used phrases such as *it is told* show not only that the stories have their origin in oral tradition but also that there is no preeminent authority. Arda's litera-

ture, its many collections of books, historical recordings et cetera, is – perhaps self-evidently – a compiled whole of different perspectives, versions and beliefs, and epistemically superior works are hard to pick out – and even if that could be done, *absolute* truth and authority remain out of question. This is an aspect that must be kept in mind in the analysis to follow.

There are two temporal aspects that form the main point of interest in this concluding section: First, there is literature's ability to record historical events and convey knowledge about the past. The second noteworthy matter is the way the present reality goes through the transition and becomes a story; this aspect has been studied by Prozesky (2006) whose analyses provide some important ground principles for my reading. In order to understand the relationship between literature and historical knowledge, I turn to the English philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood. Collingwood (2005), known for instance for coining the term *historicism*, ponders the problem of historical evidence in a posthumously published book *The Philosophy of Enchantment. Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*. According to Collingwood, anything men have made can be used as historical evidence but the problem is finding the right way to interpret it. Where there have been no written documents to tell about historical events, nineteenth century advancements in archaeology have found new ways to gain knowledge from other kind of sources. Collingwood seeks to increase the form of expanding knowledge even further by considering the possibility of fairy tales as historical evidence. (Collingwood 2005, 115.) This is a relevant idea considering the prominence of different kind of stories in Tolkien's world, and the thought of tales as evidence is the one I chiefly draw on. It must be stated, though, that the approach is best applicable to the analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, too, since their perspective is largely that of hobbits and therefore very much tied to common, everyday experience; in other works, such as *The Book of Lost Tales I & II*, the making of literature is a process of a slightly different kind, as I will later explain.

Collingwood remarks that to call something a fairy tale is to attribute to it two central characteristics: When it comes to form, fairy tales are considered orally transmitted traditional stories from the past. Regarding content, it is not necessarily fairies that determine the classification but rather something that Collingwood calls faëry, féerie, fays' work or enchantment meaning by this that the subject matter contains elements that originate from the idea of magic[42]. Social institution is enhanced in that the stories are preserved by the community rather like arts of the agricultural society. Maintaining the traditional form of the story was appreciated, demanded, even, and those to deviate from the prevailing version were quickly corrected by others. Change, however, is inevitable, as Collingwood admits, and stories cannot be passed on from mouth to mouth without any alternations, even unintended ones: both the story and the language it is told in are living things and organically related to the social community they are a part of. (Collingwood 2005, 115–118.)

When writing about the changes that take place in stories, Collingwood emphasises that these alterations should not be treated as corruptions: "The tradition which conserves a story of this kind alters it by the same right by which it conserves it. [– –] There is here no question of authenticity *versus* corruption. As Cecil Sharp demonstrated in the parallel case of folk-song, every variant has an equal right to be considered authentic." (Collingwood 2005, 118). This remark is notable particularly with respect to the vast oral tradition the stories in *The Lord of the Rings* are presented to be based on. In her article "The Text-Tale of Frodo Nine-fingered: Residual Oral Patterning in *The Lord of the Rings*" (2006, 21) Prozesky argues that while the bookish, rather Edwardian-like Bilbo Baggins is well learned in written history and lore, practicing and expanding them himself, too, the wider

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[42] This conception comes close to Tolkien's previously introduced notions and definition of fantasy and *faërie* explained in "On Fairy-stories" (1983). Also, Collingwood's characterisation is not far from how the VanderMeer's define what they call barometers of fantasy, that is "the rate of fey": according to them, "the fey is an otherworldliness, a strangeness emanating from the kinds of associations generated by elements like fairies, elves, and talking animals rather than from ghosts or monsters." (VanderMeer 2020, 6.)

Middle-earth relies much more on oral tradition, and lore is kept alive and passed on in tales and songs: Prozesky parallels the men of Gondor and Rohan with Achaean civilisations or Homeric Greece in this sense. Taking into account the parallel developments of history, metaphysics and epistemic layers, what I find most interesting is what Prozesky writes about the passing of history into lore:

> Tolkien repeatedly shows the myth-making process in action, for example Sam and Frodo being turned into myth while they listen on the field of Cormallen (*RK*, VI, iv, 232; Flieger 136), and Boromir's final voyage to the sea entering the legend of Gondor (*TT*, III, I, 19). *The Lord of the Rings* itself can be seen as a written version of the Song of Nine-Fingered Frodo sung by the bard at Cormallen. (Prozesky 2006, 22.)

The ongoing present and those who experience it pass into tales as they are being told, and become woven into the legends they learn from. This serves as an example of what I meant in saying that the metaphysics and the stories unfold side by side, the events becoming mingled with the lore and tradition that record them but also, in some cases, predict them before they come to pass. Frodo's story, for instance, is part of legends in two temporal manners, as predictions and as historical recordings Prozesky writes about. Within the fictional world, such stories and historical lore are considered valid and trustworthy, which is an important characteristic of Arda's belief-system. This notion, however, is not without problems: Prozesky detects a clash between what, in lack of better words, I name fact and fiction, and writes that

> [o]verall, then, the old stories and lore of shared tradition, which are in harmony with nature and society, are shown as trustworthy (Scheps 47) in the world of *The Lord of the Rings*. This is in a certain sense paradoxical, since these old stories and the world that contains their lore are fictions, encountered in textual form as a novel by vastly varying readers from many different cultures who have no shared tradition. Yet this paradoxical position is one readers share

> with Bilbo, Frodo and the other hobbits, who also enter the legend-laced worlds of these oral traditions from a more literate background. (Prozesky 2006, 22.)

This observation Prozesky makes returns to the questions discussed in the Introduction, the complicated historical relationship between fiction, history, philosophy and truth. There I also quoted Attebery's argument on behalf of fantasy and myth, and the ending of this quotation reads "[i]n that literal untruth is freedom to tell many symbolic truths without forcing a choice among them" (Attebery 2014, 4). If this formulation allows the truth-aspect of fantasy to be studied earnestly in the field of literary theory, I see no reason for rejecting this argument *within* the world of fiction – the characters, in other words, have every justification to acknowledge the epistemic value of their lore.

However, one soon observes that there are here two separate things being discussed at once, and the same criteria do not apply to both of them: Firstly, there is the matter of *symbolic truth* which should not be denied. Secondly, there is the role of Arda's lore as *historical evidence* which requires correspondence with facts and past states of affairs in order to be considered accurate and justified, in other words, to be considered *knowledge*. What *truth* means is different in these two cases, and the criteria are much stricter for one than for the other. A question of its own is whether the stories within the fictional universe, such as the literary tradition referred to in *The Lord of the Rings*, can be neatly fitted into either category. Many of the stories, such as lore about the Ents for the people of Rohan (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, viii, 563), are treated as just that, fictional stories, but turn out to be factually true in the end. Symbolic and historical or factual truth do not need to exclude one another. The key difference is, I argue, that symbolic truth and wisdom conveyed by lore (whether factually true or false) is much harder to falsify, and perhaps with graver consequences if that is the case, having greater influence on conceptions about the world and moral issues, for instance. Factual truth, on

the other hand, can easily be re-evaluated when paralleled with new evidence if the correspondence between states of affairs and the stories becomes questionable.

Regarding wisdom conveyed by literary and verbal art instead of factual discourse, Shippey's (2007) essay "'A Fund of Wise Sayings': Proverbiality in Tolkien" (in book *Roots and Branches. Selected Papers on Tolkien*) includes very relevant observations about common knowledge and epistemic differences between Middle-earth's peoples and cultures. Shippey writes about Tolkien's philological interest in so-called survivor-genres and the knowledge they contained. According to him, survivor-genres are encountered in the modern period, existing in familiar, every-day forms, but simultaneously they are clearly very old, indicating a continuity between ancient and modern times. One of these genres Tolkien showed interest in is the proverb which Shippey calls very common knowledge, and very old. (Shippey 2007, 303–304.) According to him,

> [t]he seventy or so proverbs in *The Lord of the Rings* tell us a lot about the different societies, and people, who produce them; though in the end, I shall suggest, there remains a core of proverbial wisdom, shared out among different characters, which seems to me designed to *sound* traditional, though in fact it is original to Tolkien. [– –] But at the same time this proverbial core, as I call it, is not very like a core, being dispersed through the whole three volumes, and disguised by the very similar sayings which come from all directions. This seems to me to be very characteristic of Tolkien's way of working when it comes to conveying an 'ideology,' or a world-view: it becomes like magic in Lothlórien – you cannot put your finger on it, but "you can feel it everywhere" (*LotR*, 351). (ibid. 308.)

Shippey's formulation makes noteworthy remarks that may be extended beyond the workings of literature and proverbs within the fictional world into a larger pattern Tolkien employs when "conveying an 'ideology'," and is therefore kindred to the overall question of whether Tolkien is indeed constructing a philosophical

model in addition to the literary piece of art being created. The final remark in particular weaves language and literature into the discussion about the supernatural through the comparison of Tolkien's use of proverb with magic in Lothlórien: it is something very hard to specify and point out but emerges from the words and the air themselves. Literary and linguistic art, lore, proverbs or stories are not detached from the fantastic and the supernatural: linguistic magic is, of course, the most notable example of the connection between language and the supernatural, such as is the case in the spell of Barrow-Wights (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, viii, 146). While stories and literature as such are perfectly natural forms of preserving and passing on knowledge, the supernatural powers of language link literature to magic of Middle-earth.

Returning to the factual epistemic value of literature, what, then, is the role of stories such as that of Nine-Fingered Frodo as historical evidence? As a scholar with a background in the fields of archaeology, philosophy, history and art, Collingwood parallels examining ancient stories to archaeological findings: interpretation requires removing the many layers formed in the passing of time and so reaching the earliest stratum. The methods are not that far from those used by archaeologists and differ only, as Collingwood (2005, 118) puts it, "in that they are here applied, not to the relics of what is called material civilization, such as pots and knives, but to the relics of custom and belief." Fairy tales are closely connected to customs and beliefs, which in turn always have history. A problem in this approach is that stories cannot provide historical evidence of the customs of a certain population if the story has originated somewhere else and just been adapted to a new culture, and determining which indeed is the case is not simple. Whether a story has been diffused from one culture to another or been invented in several places independently of each other is a difficult question to answer. One of the main problems Collingwood seeks to disentangle is that of origin: the question is how to know where the stories have their utmost origin and how to pinpoint the changes

they have gone through as a result of time and distribution. (Collingwood 2005, 119–121.)

Collingwood's proposal to use fairy tales as historical evidence of customs and beliefs is epistemically interesting since questions of knowledge must somehow be contextualised to a certain belief-system and also to the prevailing notions about the trustworthiness of lore-masters and folklore. Collingwood's theory must, of course, be approached with caution here: comparing real-world fairy tale traditions as historical relics to storytelling practices within a fictional universe is not something that can be done unaware of the clear differences and problems of such combination of theory and literature. Organically developing oral traditions and artistically devised works of fiction cannot automatically be assumed to work similarly. Yet Collingwood's ideas are worth consideration in this context, too. It has not been uncommon among Tolkien scholars to draw from real-life mythologies and literary traditions, and in this broader context examining Arda's written and oral tradition with respect to Collingwood's theory does not seem unjustified. Historical perspective, for instance, has been a matter of interest in Korpua's (2015) study, where Tolkien's work is paralleled with historical novel. Korpua writes about the illusion of older eras and the juxtaposition between fictional and factual history:

> I will research Tolkien's creative methods in comparison with the historical novel, since Tolkien's intratextual references – references between his own texts – create an illusion of (fictional) older eras. The so-called fictional and factual history, the tools that authors of the historical novel use, become interesting in Tolkien's fiction because his *legendarium's* seemingly factual sources are created by the author. (Korpua 2015, 16; italics original.)

Korpua (2021, 6) has since returned to this intratextual quality of the legendarium, and he points out that this tendency is another connection between Tolkien and Plato, who also employed the structure of presenting stories within stories in his dialogues; of these the Ring of Gyges and the Atlantis myth are among the most

famous ones. Korpua's interest in this area comes close to Brljak's (2010) analysis of the metafictional characteristics of Tolkien's writing that I will soon introduce more clearly. Tolkien's fiction is in many ways a vast, layered collection of books within books, and it has been studied from this perspective, too. As a novel, *The Lord of the Rings* begins from Bilbo and Frodo Baggins's much anticipated birthday celebration and ends in the departure of the two characters as they sail into the west and leave Middle-earth for good. As a book, however, the story is accompanied with thorough forewords and several appendices which add to the story and explain the background of the events, the history of the fantasy world and its characters, peoples, languages and realms. The first two books of *The History of Middle-earth*, *The Book of Lost Tales I & II*, examine the early versions of the stories finally published in *The Silmarillion*, and they include a frame story in which a mortal man Ælfwine finds the shores of Tol Eressëa and there hears the ancient stories of the elves and records them to his best ability and accuracy, translating them into Old English. Ælfwine has since been faded to the background in later versions of the legendarium, but he appears in this role also in volume *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, for instance. The Elvish history is thus (in the early versions of the legendarium) presented as a whole that has gone through several recordings, translations and stages of oral tradition. The role of Bilbo Baggins and his *Red Book of Westmarch* that he writes with great enthusiasm but varying discipline (see for instance *The Lord of the Rings, RK*, VI, vi, 1013–1014) is somewhat similar to that of Ælfwine: both are within the fictional world viewed as intratextual explanations for the birth and survival of the written mythology. Tolkien's fictional universe attempts to present an account of its own origin and bridge the gulf between the ancient myths and the physical books they are contained in.

In its strong metafictional nature, Tolkien's work shares much with postmodernist fiction (see for instance Attebery 1992, 41). This metafictional aspect is taken as starting-point in Brljak's (2010) article "The Books of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist" that studies the many layers of Arda's mythology, in particular

the vast background information and the recurrent vistas in *The Lord of the Rings* that reveal details about the history of the fantasy world, creating a sense of depth. The sense of depth does not remain a mere illusion, for Tolkien indeed composed the mythical history. This work, as Brljak writes, results in echoes of echoes that reach far back towards antiquity and the moments where today's myths were present. According to Brljak, one of the crucial problems of Tolkien studies is that this metafictional framework is treated as just that, a framework, while Brljak would be willing to go as far as claiming that this framework is the very crown and cornerstone of Tolkien's writing. This is the main argument Brljak defends. (Brljak 2010, 1–3.) Regarding the epistemic value of the evolving mythology as it is presented *within* the world of fiction, the irretrievable past is a special point of interest:

> To those living in the Third Age, the events of earlier ages glimpsed in the "vistas" are something which happened, in the words of the bewildered Frodo at the Council of Elrond, "a long age ago" (*FR*, II, ii, 256). But already to Elanor, born in the final year of the Third Age, the War of the Ring was itself a thing of the past, before her time. [– –] Eventually, all of this would sink into the once-upon-a-time, and keep sinking in the course of untold ages – until *an* account, a distant sustained-third-person-narrative descendant of the original Red Book, surfaces in the hands of a (fictional) modern English narrator-editor. (Brljak 2010, 10; italics original.)

According to Brljak, the intratextual sources, both oral and written, have disappeared, and each new copy or textual echo (such as those written by Bilbo and Frodo, for instance) create another layer of intermediation and distance between the ancient history and the characters of the Third Age (ibid. 9–10). The irretrievable nature of the past is an important element in Brljak's analysis, as is the inability of the written accounts to fully comprehend this past. A matter not very different from this question of Brljak's is examined by Nagy (2004), whose words have been quoted in the beginning of this section. Nagy's main interests lie in the uses and re-

writings of myths in Plato and Tolkien, and he examines how the two authors relate to traditions. The traditions were for both mainly historical, and Nagy pays attention to the frames, imagery and motifs shared by the two authors, as well as the similarities of both using and creating myths. (Nagy 2004, 82–83.) The constantly resurfacing diminishing and the irretrievability that concerns both the light-motif discussed in the preceding section and the history Brljak studies have also been acknowledged in Nagy's (ibid. 88) treatment.

The questions Brljak is mostly interested in concern primarily the many layers and the sense of depth they create even though the past cannot be brought back, and this meticulous treatment of reproductions and layers once again brings to the fore the ongoing mimetic processes. As remarked, engaging in mimetic deeds and forms of creation is encouraged in Arda, and making literature is one of these forms – and, notably, one that enhances the artistic side of the phenomenon. Creating (historical) literature is a vital constituent of the cultures of the fictional world, but its relationship to truth is not simple. Regarding the metaphysical hierarchy, it would be rather a blind choice to treat literature as nothing more than a copy "thrice removed"; even for Plato himself, there is more to mimesis, as Santoro writes:

> Μίμησις, therefore, has to be understood as the dialectical interaction between the copy and the model, the phenomenon and truth, the manifested and the manifesting αλήθεια. The art-work is a manifestation of ideal truth, no matter how weak. It belongs to the idea. Consequently, not even in Plato can μίμησις be totally and exclusively understood as the mere act of copying or the passive « holding the mirror up to nature ». (Santoro 1980, 32.)

This formulation evokes questions about the artistic presentation and the recording of knowledge. In *Poetics*, the difference Aristotle makes between history and poetry is – if heavily simplified – that poetry represents that which could happen, while history states what has happened, and poetry is therefore the more philosophical of

the two: poetry demands grasping the logic of the events and their outcomes, representing the universal laws of probability. (Aristotle 2000 [c. 350 BC], 8.) This distinction already arose in the discussion about Prozesky's views, although differently put. However, in Tolkien's world, the poet and the historian are seldom separable. The lore-master, writer or minstrel records past events but in doing so creates literature not ignorant of aesthetic aspects. True, the writer does not in this case engage in devising of *plots*, as Aristotle's poets, and according to his criteria Bilbo and Ælfwine would hardly count as poets – the literary forms and devices do not suffice, because for Aristotle, the result would only be "history in verse". Yet I argue that this history in verse can be treated as aesthetically valuable literature in Arda, that does not merely "hold the mirror up to nature", or, in this case, history, but weaves something more, manifesting *aletheia* alongside manifesting history.

Since most of Arda's literature referred to in, say, *The Lord of the Rings*, is more or less concerned with historical events, there is not much room for analyses about literature that manifests *aletheia* alone, not being concerned with history or lore at all: most examples of other kind of literature or oral tradition are typically nursery rhymes or playful songs, such as those sung by Frodo in the inn of Prancing Pony (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, ix, 164–166). Proverbs, another category of survivor-genres alongside rhymes, as Shippey (2007, 309) discusses, are sometimes attributed to comical characters, and their meaning becomes banal or self-evident, and their epistemic value is slight. However, Shippey (ibid. 310–311) provides an example of a much more complicated case of what he calls "Shire-wisdom", Bilbo's poem about the Strider, or Aragorn. According to Shippey, it is only partly proverbial with respect to both form and content. I would like to add that while it manifests some form of *aletheia* (admittedly, in this case, somewhat banal) with statements such as "All that is gold does not glitter" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, ii, 255), it is also involved with historical knowledge, making predictions about Aragorn's future, the last two lines in particular: "Renewed shall be blade that was

broken / The crownless again shall be king" (ibid. 255). The interest in historical knowledge is present; only, in this case, the correspondence is yet to be actualised.

Even though this study cannot provide concluding answers to a question so vast, it is worth asking what the role of literary forms and devices is in conveying knowledge and whether literature is indeed able to offer something *more*. This notion is held by the narrator in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*. The narrator quite frequently comments on events and expresses his or her amazement evoked by the wonders of Elfland or other miraculous things. Alveric and Lirazel's son, Orion, whose heritage is half magical, is able to hear the horns of Elfland whence his mother came from:

> And how the horns of Elfland blew over the barrier of twilight, to be heard by any ear in the fields we know, I cannot understand; yet Tennyson speaks of them as heard "faintly blowing" even in these fields of ours, and I believe that by accepting all that the poets say while duly inspired our errors will be fewest. So, though Science may deny or confirm it, Tennyson's line shall guide me here. (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 62.)

The narrator's remark is notable in many ways, regarding both the epistemic value of literature, the friction between literary writing and science and the narrator's own position. The narrator's position comes to the fore immediately: he admits the limits of his knowledge regarding the ways of Elfland and its magical horns. His understanding of the supernatural he is trying to talk about is inadequate, and he chooses to rely on other poets when in doubt. His *belief* is that trusting poets is the right thing to do, assuming that they have been truly inspired in their writing. The second matter of interest is, of course, the striking juxtaposition between capitalised Science and poetry. Interestingly, Science is not employed to explore the secrets of Elfland but to evaluate poetry's adequacy in this task: "though Science may deny or confirm it". The narrator, however, is not interested in the doom of Sci-

ence – Tennyson's line is his guide nonetheless, and the matter is not explored further.

In this chapter I have proposed an approach that draws from Plato's notions on metaphysics and epistemology and given examples about the way Tolkien's legendarium is structured as a collection of replicas and chains. I have also introduced previous works that have paid attention to similar questions, especially Korpua's dissertation and Flieger's theory about the light motif, and contrasted my reading with these interpretations, pointing out both the similarities and the differences in the approaches. The analyses show, partly joining, partly diverging from the work of earlier scholars, that in Tolkien's legendarium the *genuine* and the *original* are, at least in the actualised reality, an illusion: in addition to the double-layered structure of the fictional universe, the actualised reality is further divided into different stages, some closer to Eä's rough equivalent of Plato's World of Forms, some more distant. Furthermore, I proposed that the layered metaphysics of Eä is not a passive characteristic that defines the static nature of the fantasy universe. Instead, the layered metaphysics is constantly seen in action both in creation that proceeds stage-by-stage and in the ongoing mimetic actions of making and re-creating. These are the conclusions my further analyses are built on, and the main questions I will focus on from now on concern the interaction of the metaphysical hierarchy outlined in this chapter and the epistemic hierarchy that is moulded side by side with it.

Since Plato's theory of Forms has been the main theoretical framework and the basis I have constantly reflected my reading to, it is at this point necessary to re-evaluate the role of Plato's writings in this study. I have used Plato's metaphysics and epistemology as a theoretical source but as remarked in the Introduction, Plato's dialogues are not academic compositions or strict philosophical studies in the modern sense: they are also aesthetic and even poetic pieces of literature due to which the relationship between literary and theoretical bibliography becomes sometimes problematic. Indeed, it can be said that the interpretations presented in

this chapter are a result of an analysis that is in fact multi-layered itself: not only have I interpreted the literary works of Tolkien but also my reading seeks support from interpretations made by others about Plato's literature. This relationship between literary fiction, philosophical literature and theoretical framework is also a point of interest in this study, and one that I hope to develop notions about as the analysis proceeds. When analysing Lothlórien's unique epistemic status in relation to Platonic perspective, my reading at times changes from applying a philosophical theory to a literary work to a parallel reading of two literary texts, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Republic*.

3. SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE

This work as a whole is concerned with the deviant, distinct forms of knowing that are made possible by the metaphysical and logical peculiarities of the world of fantasy. The preceding analyses, the second chapter in particular, have been focusing on the former half, the metaphysical structure of Arda and its nature as a world with both physical and incorporeal constituents. In this chapter I will turn to the latter half, the logical and conceptual rules that govern the world of fantasy and determine its epistemic laws. Some epistemic aspects already emerged in the previous sections: the possibility of *a priori* knowledge was briefly introduced, and the limits of the knowledge of the Valar was also discussed, particularly with respect to the Children of Ilúvatar and the true nature of their being. However, these questions have until now played a relatively small part. The hypothetical possibility of supernatural knowledge will now be properly contemplated for the first time, and the following analysis will focus on its relationship with magic and prevailing belief-systems in Tolkien's fantasy fiction. My aim is to find suitable ways to discuss the concepts of magic, the supernatural and power with respect to knowledge, all of which are easily intermingled yet certainly not interchangeable. The previously outlined – and meticulously studied by earlier scholars, as remarked – metaphysical structure of Arda will remain the necessary background for the future analysis, providing the laws and metaphysical principles that developed side by side with the epistemic system and influence it in many ways.

The supernatural aspect of knowledge is the deepening factor I wish to include more prominently in the ongoing discussion about philosophy and literature hoping that it will be able to provide new insights to the questions of knowledge and philosophy in fiction. The analysis begins by drawing its theoretical support

and source from the possible world semantics and modality, especially their treatments by Doležel (1998) and Ryan (1991 and 2019), and then moves on to examining the very concept of the supernatural and its definition with respect to magic and knowledge alike. The theoretical frame of possible worlds would intuitively seem very alluring from speculative fiction's viewpoint, but Thomas Martin (2019, 201) points out in his recent article that despite the promises possible world theory has to offer, fantasy studies have not yet put to use its full potential. The questions of knowledge, particularly with respect to private spheres of characters, have been discussed in this theoretical context in Ryan's study and these I will soon return to, hoping offer some new insights and possibilities of utilising possible world theory in the analyses of fantasy. As an example of supernatural knowledge, I will use foresight and divination and also address the severe problems of justification they inevitably bring with them. That being said, this chapter seeks to provide an adequate treatment of one of the most crucial problems this study is concerned with, that of the extension of knowledge and the justifiable applications of the concept. The approach I am proposing, the hypothesis of supernatural knowledge, is one that has potential to broaden the discussion about the epistemic qualities of fiction, speculative fiction in particular. Since Tolkien's work is largely considered one of the most archetypical and classical examples of fantasy and Tolkien himself as the genre's most influential author who has changed our imagination (see for instance Mendlesohn 2008, 17 and Korpua 2021, 1), I argue that a thorough analysis about his legendarium can produce insights that are widely applicable to other works within this genre in general.

3.1 Possible Worlds: on Alethic, Deontic and Epistemic Modalities

> 'Bother burgling and everything to do with it! I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!' It was not the last time that he wished that! (*The Hobbit*, 40.)

Bilbo's agony at the beginning of his journey with Thorin Oakenshield's company originates in the incongruence between the true state of affairs in the textual actual world and Bilbo's private wishes, his desire to be enjoying the comforts of his home instead of wandering in the wilderness. Bilbo's wistful recollections of home and the narrator's concluding exclamation are – partly for a comical effect – often repeated in the course of the story (see for instance p. 53, 169). In a more serious note, Frodo regrets Gollum's survival for he believes things would have taken a different course had he died (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, ii, 61). These examples present a friction between the actualised situation and individual character's contrasting hopes. Other examples include epistemic incongruences in which the state of affairs differs from character's beliefs: Sam Gamgee, for instance, believes that Frodo died in Shelob's attack while in reality he was merely poisoned and paralysed. This belief determines Sam's future actions and in doing so influences the course of events in the textual actual world: "'But what can I do? Not leave Mr. Frodo dead, unburied on the top of the mountains, and go home? Or go on? Go on?' he repeated, and for a moment doubt and fear shook him. 'Go on? Is that what I've got to do? And leave him?'" (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, IV, x, 748.) This example complicates the relationships between private beliefs and actualised scenarios in multiple ways because in an earlier predictive, magical vision (ibid. *FR,* II, vii, 371) Sam sees Frodo lying on the ground and thinks – correctly – that he is asleep; however, when the predicted moment comes, he thinks he was wrong at the time and assumes Frodo is dead until is a few moments later proven wrong: "'You fool, he isn't dead, and your heart knew it. Don't trust your head, Samwise, it is not the best part of you. [– –]'" (ibid. 758.) The textual actual world of Tolkien's fiction is surrounded by a network of various beliefs that complicate causal chains, temporal relations and, most importantly, the accuracy of truth-claims uttered about the state of affairs. These relationships I will begin to examine with the help of possible world theories.

The examples about the hobbits' thoughts, beliefs and wishes embody, using possible world theory concepts, the many frictions between textual actual world and the characters' private spheres Ryan studies, emphasising the benefits and contributions possible world approaches have to offer. According to Ryan (2015, 175), possible world theories emphasise virtual constructs that motivate the actions of characters, including fears, hopes, beliefs and plans. The commitment to virtual constructions and their cooperation with the real is one of the benefits of possible world approaches: instead of firmly separating the virtual and the real in textual worlds, possible world theories acknowledge the dialectical relations of the two domains. Also in realistic fiction, virtual events occur side by side with actual ones, but realistic fiction insists "on the difference between the actual core of the universe and its virtual horizon and in a subordination of the virtual to the actual." (ibid. 175.) The private spheres of characters are in Ryan's view worth examining for their own sake, particularly now that the actual core of textual universes has become less prominent thanks to the shift from realistic to modernist fiction, and because the relationship between private spheres and behaviour became more complicated. (ibid. 175.) Whether events of the fictional world are viewed as real as opposed to hallucinations, wishes, fears or dreams is a question Ryan calls "one of the most powerful strategies for taming textual chaos into an intelligible representation" (ibid. 176).

The importance of possible world theories, in short, comes down to two main aspects in this study: first, the significant epistemic role of private sphere experiences in Tolkien's world, such as dreams and visions; second, the definitions of the supernatural and the problems of the concept when applied to fantasy fiction – this issue already arose in the Introduction. As Jędrzejczyk-Drenda (2017, 7, 25) points out, the "nature" of fantasy worlds is hard to determine, and the supernatural and magical are often natural parts of these worlds. In this study, the *supernatural* emerges in comparison between the worlds of fantasy fiction and the actual world, for which reason the theoretical context of possible worlds is crucial.

The concept of possible worlds evokes several associations and images, and its applications and interpretations are understandably varying: Martin (2019, 201) writes that possible world theory "can be applied to texts, to realms with texts, to epistemic attitudes of characters as representations of worlds within texts, and so on." Of these examples, the last one shows closest kinship with the questions this study is concerned with. Estimations about the actualised state of affairs but also its possible – or impossible – alternatives are present in very mundane ways: in an earlier treatment of the issue, Martin argues that possible worlds are included in the very conceptual system presupposed by language and as such they are inevitably present in our speech. The problems of adopting possible worlds into semantics are very much due to the word's metaphysical import and the difficulty of expressing precisely what is referred to when discussing possible worlds. As Martin writes, possible worlds can be treated as if they were different planets advanced technology could reach in the future or that could be observed with powerful telescopes and are therefore a part of the actual world. On the other hand, he remarks that possible worlds can also be seen as mere metaphors that have not yet been properly explained. Martin then names a few scholars according to whom talking about possible worlds and making counterfactual statements about the actual world is devoid of sense and must be avoided – Quine in particular firmly sticks to the one actual world we experience. Goodman, then again, approaches fictional worlds not as possible worlds but rather as descriptions of the actual world, perceiving them as the varying faces of one reality – this aspect I will soon return to, in spite of the fact that Goodman's treatment concerns world-versions instead of possible worlds. This kind of approach that is strictly based on one-world-frame, according to Martin, leads to perceiving all forms of fiction as allegories. (Martin 2004, 82–83.)

My use of possible world theories follows Ryan's views and, on the other hand, the theories formulated by Doležel. Doležel, a literary theorist famous especially for his works that were inspired by analytic philosophy, presents a thorough study about literary fiction from the perspective of possible world theories in his

book *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998). His approach is a combination of literary theory and rigid philosophical analysis that mostly draws from modal logic and possible world semantics, areas studied by Saul Kripke and Jaakko Hintikka, for instance, both of whom are central scholars in Doležel's work. As remarked, the approach based on possible world theories is one of many angles to fictionality, a concept that has been studied in contemporary philosophy, aesthetics and literary theory. This interdisciplinary treatment and its necessity Doležel (1998, x) defends by remarking that "[a]nalytic philosophy has preserved the sober spirit of critical thinking at a time of bloated verbosity" – this formulation advocates the analytic approach against the more popular French and German philosophical currents in Anglo-Saxon poststructuralist criticism, and his argument is that different fields, including literary studies, analytic philosophy, linguistics and semiotics, for instance, must work together to form a unified theory of fictionality. Doležel does not deny realistic ontology: he points out that accepting the assumptions of realistic ontology does not mean that one is bound to commit to the postulates of literary realism, too. Rather Doležel aims his fiercest criticism to the immemorial doctrine of mimesis. According to Doležel mimesis, a notion that views fiction as a representation of the actual world, and mimetic reading especially are very reductive operations for they shrink the fictional universe to the mode set by the actual world experienced by human beings.[43] This, however, is not to deny the link between the actual and the fictional: Doležel proposes a bidirectional exchange in which the process of creating fictional worlds is influenced by the actual world and, on the other hand, fictional worlds are able to mould our understanding of actual

[43] As discussed in section 2.2.2 with respect to stages of creation, mimesis as a conscious, deliberate creative action is much at work in Tolkien's legendarium which means that the perspective adopted in this work focuses more on the mimetic processes taking place within the fictional universe than on the relationship between works of art and reality as such. However, the relationships and bidirectional influences between different possible worlds are a central part of the discussion about modalities of fiction in a broader sense for which reason Doležel's views on the matter are presented here. His remark about the bidirectional exchange is also relevant because of the philosophical discussion this study wishes to engage in: I argue that fictional (fantasy) worlds and their peculiar modal operations can show philosophical concepts such as knowledge in a new light, broadening the discussion in a manner that is beneficial for both disciplines, literary studies and philosophy.

reality. Even in this exchange firm, clear boundaries and distinctions between the two are needed in order to avoid confusion. (Doležel 1998, ix–xi; 1–2.)

The bidirectional exchange Doležel introduces can be a useful yet slightly dangerous idea if applied to this study without care. The first half of the relationship, the ingredients that are drawn from the actual world and used to create new fictional worlds, is rather a common idea in the context of fantasy literature: several works of fantasy, Tolkien's fiction among them, bear characteristics of medieval cultures or utilise medieval source materials, for instance (Drout 2004, 1). The influence actual reality has on fiction does not always have to be that precise: it can be argued that fiction must have some recognisable, familiar elements from the actual world in order to be comprehensible in the first place. Such lines of thought have been presented by Ryan, too, who calls her formulation *a principle of minimal departure*. This principle, in short, means that "we reconstrue the central world of a textual universe in the same way we reconstrue the alternate possible worlds of nonfactual statements [– –]. We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text." (Ryan 1991, 51). Again, here the idea is to divert as little as possible from the actual world or our representation of it. All in all, caution must be entertained when approaching fiction from the perspective that is inevitably tied to the actual world, as Martin points out – otherwise fiction is easily misread:

> Because we understand the fictional world as the centre of the system of reality as we read, to intrude our own world upon the text may cause us to misread the fiction. Bunyan's characters may conform to Goodman's prescription, but Tolkien's clearly do not. We may read some literary works like Bunyan's in light of our own world, but other fictions demand we read them on their own – and, if anything, we read our own world in light of them. (Martin 2004, 83–84.)

The opposite movement Doležel introduces, understanding the actual world in light of things drawn from fictional constructions, is a thought equally complicated. Fiction does have the potential to view reality in a new, broader light, but understandably not all conceptual deductions that are valid in the world of fiction can be applied to the actual world. This is a problem this study inevitably has to deal with: examining the special characteristics of knowledge in Tolkien's world of fantasy can ideally provide insight to the concept more generally also in the context of the actual world but such applications are easily taken too far. The purpose of this study is to explore the possibilities of supernatural knowledge *in the world of fantasy fiction*, and the outcomes of the analysis are first and foremost applicable to non-actual possible worlds of fiction. Yet I hope that the justified use of the concept of knowledge, its extension, will prove to be the kind of line of interpretation and inquiry that evokes questions and re-evaluations also outside the realm of fantasy, perhaps contributing to the discussion about knowledge in literary studies on a broader scale.

In his treatment *Ways of Worldmaking* from 1978, Goodman asks several significant questions about the nature, construction, truthfulness and genuineness of worlds, one of these questions being how worldmaking is related to knowledge. Goodman, whose study and chief points of interest share much with Ernst Cassirer's thoughts, emphasises that in arguing for the multiplicity of worlds he does not refer to possible worlds but to multiple actual worlds – this distinction, as Goodman writes, evokes questions about the interpretations of the very words possible, real, unreal and fictive. Goodman proceeds to introducing what he calls the different frames of reference, differences between systems that allow contradictory statements to be true within one, actual world: for instance, claims such as "the sun always moves" and "the sun never moves" can be true about the same world but differ from one another with respect to the frame of reference. (Goodman 1978 1–2.) The emphasis on relativity and context, and the incapability of escaping them, is uttered most clearly: "If I ask about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is

under one or more frames of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say? We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described." (ibid. 2–3). Regarding these different versions, whether mundane perceptual differences or differences between systematic, scientific and artistic views, Goodman remarks that instead of rightness depending on the world and implying it, the world rather depends upon rightness: a given version can never be tested by comparing it with a world that is undescribed or unperceived (ibid. 3–4). The world itself, then, the one behind the plurality of versions, Goodman addresses as follows:

> While we may speak of determining what versions are right as 'learning about the world' supposedly being that which all right versions describe, all we learn about the world is contained in right versions of it; and while the underlying world, bereft of these, need not be denied to those who love it, it is perhaps on the whole a world well lost. (Goodman 1978, 4.)

Goodman's approach to the study of these equally correct versions, whether scientific or artistic, for instance, is based on symbol systems, types and functions of symbols and their analytic study. Regarding some of the key arguments outlined in the second chapter of this work, particularly the absence – or, at least, the irretrievability – of the primary and the original, Goodman's notions of the world versions and his idea of plurality have much to offer. Goodman (ibid. 6) writes that both the Kantian theme that denies the matter of which the world is made and the non-Kantian theme that denies a unique world "defy our intuitive demand for something stolid underneath, and threaten to leave us uncontrolled, spinning out of our own inconsequent fantasies". Perception, according to Goodman, is blind and completely inoperative without conception whereas conception without perception is merely empty. I argue that the inevitable emptiness and fruitlessness of the search for the original discussed in the second chapter is a metaphysical default that continues to manifest itself epistemically in the knowledge-formation process-

es that are necessarily dependent on several cooperative developments and events, chasms of perception, interpretation, precognition and prediction, processes both natural and supernatural. The question is whether knowledge can be assumed to be able to reach something pure, original and genuine, something in the resemblance of truth if the world metaphysically speaking lacks all of these things. The metaphysical structure of the fictional universe, in other words, at least severely questions if not completely denies the original; the epistemic problem concerns the accessibility of truth and the original.

While this thesis – and, perhaps, the discussion tendencies about literary worlds more generally – relies more dominantly on possible world theories, Goodman's formulations are here acknowledged because of the subjective emphasis that produces interesting readings when set side by side with Ryan's subjective worlds of characters, but also because of the questions of interpretation that play a crucial part in the epistemic whole of Arda. Regarding the wider theoretical contexts and the interlacing discussions, both literary and philosophical, it is worth noting that the processes of worldbuilding as pondered by Goodman should not be confused with those outlined by Wolf (2012), for instance, as discussed in the beginning of the second chapter. The different approaches, as is also the case with possible world theories, share much of the same vocabulary and many common interests, including questions about truth and the constraints and objectives of making a world, but significant differences remain, too. Behind Goodman's approach to worldbuilding or worldmaking is a question that concerns the origins of matter and worlds, what they are made of and where is their beginning. Finding necessary and universal beginnings is, according to Goodman, best left to theology, but the process of building new worlds out of other worlds is a problem he seeks to resolve: worlds (or their versions) and matter do not emerge from nothing but have their starting-point in worlds that already exist, in other words, they are built from other worlds. For Goodman, worldmaking is remaking. (Goodman 1978, 6–7).

When discussing the problem of truth, Goodman argues that knowing is not a matter of determining what is true, neither exclusively nor primarily, and knowing more often than not seeks something else than a true or any belief. Goodman writes that when one seeks to grasp a treatise, to distinguish stylistic differences between works of art or to discern features in a musical piece or a picture one did not perceive before, the growth in knowledge that occurs does not happen by belief, formation or fixation but by the expansion of understanding. (ibid. 17–18, 21–22.) Importantly, Goodman states that "if worlds are as much made as found, so also knowing is as much remaking as reporting. [– –] Comprehension and creation go on together." (ibid. 22). This idea becomes intertwined with the roles of interpretation and imagination discussed in latter sections, and tightens the relationships between making and remaking, producing as well as understanding reality.

Moving on to the ways in which worlds are organised, Doležel separates two different kinds of macro-operations that together organise fictional worlds in a narrative. First of these is selection, the process that determines which constituents are admitted into the world. Selection defines the categories of the world and determines whether the world is one of physical or mental events, whether it is of intentional or unintentional processes et cetera. The second operation Doležel introduces is the formative operation which is the function that "shapes narrative worlds into orders that have the potential to produce (generate) stories" (Doležel 1998, 113). Of these operations modalities are the main formative processes. They are, according to Doležel, the very basic, inescapable rules and restrictions that have a great impact on all characters and their actions within the fictional world – in short, modality determines what is possible and allowed in fiction. Drawing from the formations made by logicians, G.H. von Wright and Jaakko Hintikka, for instance, Doležel discusses two different forms of modalities, the classic alethic modality concerned with truth and logical necessity and the new, deontic modality concerned with norms. Operations of both deontic and alethic modalities are ex-

pressed in similar formal structures that can be converted into logical quantifiers. (Doležel 1998, 113–114.)

Interestingly, the alethic modality which refers to the necessary or contingent truth about the world, the state of affairs, is sometimes hard to distinguish from epistemic modality that evaluates propositions with respect to knowledge and belief. In chapter "Modality: Overview and linguistic issues" of *The Expression of Modality* Jan Nuyts (2006, 8–9) writes that in the linguistic semantic analyses of modality this difference is often ignored, perhaps partly due to terminological and linguistic factors: grammatically epistemic and alethic modalities are not separated. The distinction is, according to Nuyts (ibid 9), problematic and criticized, and it has even been argued that there is no difference between logical truth and individual's beliefs about truth. Alethic and epistemic modalities converge but whether they actually merge or not is unclear.

The alethic and deontic modalities and their influence on the operations in Tolkien's fiction can be illustrated by returning once more to Aulë's unlawful attempt to create dwarves – the attempt that resulted in mere *making* rather than creating as I argued in the second chapter – the act is unsuccessful for two reasons. Creating life is impossible because it is against both deontic and alethic modalities when examined from the perspective of Arda's inner laws. Firstly, Aulë as a creature subject to Ilúvatar is not allowed to attempt such a thing for it is beyond his rights. This kind of law, however, could be broken: that which is not permitted can be done if one is willing to bear the consequences. Deontic modality works with the concepts of obligation, prohibition and permission (see for instance Knuuttila 1993, 182–183). Aulë breaks the rules though he does so with no malign intent, and he can therefore be said to act against the normative order of Arda. This, however, is not his true constraint: the true obstacle is the alethic restriction. Not only is creation forbidden from others than Ilúvatar but it is impossible, too. Within the logical parameters of Arda it is impossible for any other being than Ilúvatar himself to be primary creator able to bring things into life (excluding, of course, the natural

process of reproduction or unethically mutilating already existing life-forms in order to bring about a new species, as is the case of orcs whose origin and development in the legendarium is discussed in *Morgoth's Ring* (78, 123–124)). Ilúvatar, then again, as the creator-god is necessarily able to create by definition.

According to Doležel, epistemic modalities are expressed in different kinds of social representations including science, ideologies and cultural myths, and the epistemic order of the fictional world is imposed on the world by modal systems of knowledge, belief and ignorance. In terms of subjectivity and individual characters, Doležel writes that a character's reasoning and actions are determined by her epistemic perspective: "[t]he person of the fictional world is an epistemic "monad," perceiving himself or herself, other persons, and the entire world from a definite and distinct vantage point." (Doležel 1998, 126). In other words, the character's choices are highly dependent on what he or she knows, ignores or believes to be true in the surrounding world. Furthermore, Doležel argues that epistemic modalities have great story-generating energy: he presents two examples in which epistemic modalities affect the relations and events in fiction, first of these being, as Doležel calls it, *epistemic quest*. An epistemic quest has its beginning in the epistemic imbalance between characters, the uneven distribution of knowledge, that serves as a basis for a story in which some event or a secret remains unknown to some of the characters who may have false beliefs about the state of affairs. The very basic idea of a particular kind of epistemic quest, a story with a secret or a mystery, is the process of transformation in which ignorance or false beliefs are turned into knowledge. The second category, *deception*, foregrounds the communication between fictional characters and the fact that its truth-valuation is dependent on the state of affairs in the fictional world: the utterances and truth-claims the characters make are either true or false, they may be lies or rumours. Deliberate deception aims to encourage an ignorant person to take action based on false information; perhaps the best-known example of such deception, as Doležel writes, is conspired by Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*. (Doležel 1998, 126–128.)

In Tolkien's fiction epistemic quests or major secrets and mysteries characteristic of, say, detective stories, are not as such the motivating elements of historical events and pursuits, I perceive. The legendarium is full of quests and heroic tasks, the most obvious one being Frodo and Sam's journey to Mordor to destroy the Ring. However, even if the epistemic aspect of solving a mystery is not the main end in Itself, it still often is an inevitable part of completing the quest, whatever its core ambition is. Sacred knowledge is a recurring element in the stories, and often the hero needs to prove himself worthy of such knowledge – this is the case of Tuor, for instance, is finally led to the concealed realm of Gondolin as is explained in the many different versions of Tuor's journey in the posthumously published work *The Fall of Gondolin*. Underlying epistemic quests can also surface in a reading that pays special attention to the literal and figurative meanings of epistemically significant vocabulary, such as the (Neo)Platonic themes of enlightenment and ascending: when these are taken into account, the physical, concrete journeys and quests start to convey notable epistemic pursuits, too.

As the following analysis will show, particularly parts that concern dreams and visions, the inner worlds and mental processes of characters and their relationships with the textual actual world are a central matter. Therefore, I will dive deeper into Ryan's theories about knowledge-worlds, fantasy-worlds and others, and in this account also the epistemically relevant aspects of possible world theories become more poignant. As Doležel, Ryan (1991, 109–110) follows the basic notions of modal logic by dividing the events of a narrative into a few main categories, the actual, the possible and the impossible, and in a story the non-actual events are indeed important and noteworthy. Human minds and the thoughts of characters play a crucial role in the formation of the vast net of possible worlds of a textual universe. According to Ryan, not all mental processes yield possible worlds; however, possible worlds consist of materials collected by human mind. Ryan distinguishes from one another two different types of mental activities, those that include truth-functional, fact-defining propositions and those that do not. The latter

category includes emotions, perceptions and subjective judgements, while the former consists of thoughts, intentions and wishes that can be expressed as propositions. (ibid. 110–111.) Ryan makes an epistemically relevant remark about the constituents of the latter category: she calls them "emotions, subjective judgements, and fleeting perceptions before they are turned into knowledge" (ibid. 111). This is a distinction that becomes crucial in the fourth chapter – the epistemic significance of fleeting perceptions in particular is a matter of great interest, and one of the questions the chapter seeks to answer is already implied in Ryan's categorisation: at what point does the collected data cease to be mere impressions and perceptions, becoming knowledge instead – in this process, interpretation is most crucial.

In Tolkien's Arda, the differences between the epistemic positions of characters, their manners of acquiring knowledge and interpreting the information they receive, can be approached with the help of Ryan's theory about private worlds, their relationships with one another and their relation to the textual actual world. According to Ryan (1991, 111), the alethic operators relate the actual world to textual actual world (that is the image of textual reference world proposed by the text, the so-called authorised version of the textual world; abbreviated TAW) but the other operators, the deontic, axiological and the epistemic, relate the textual actual worlds to the private worlds of the characters. She writes that

> [t]he epistemic system determines a knowledge-world (K-world), cut out from the general realm of perceptions; the axiological system determines a wish-world (W-world), extracted from subjective value judgments; and the axiological system determines what 1 shall call an obligation-world (O-world), dictated by social rules of behavior. In addition to these constructs, which are conceived as either images of TAW (K-world) or as models of what it should be (W-world, O-world), the human mind builds possible worlds as escapes from AW, as true alternatives: dreams. hallucinations, fantasies, and fictions. Let us call them fantasy-worlds, or rather, F-universes. since their structure is that of a modal system. (Ryan 1991, 111.)

Again, here the K-world, determined by the epistemic system, is separated from the "general realm of perceptions", which already indicates the complexity of the relationship between sensory perception and knowledge-formation. Certain noteworthy remarks are made about the role of dreams and hallucinations as possible-world constituents and the structure of fantasy universes as modal systems, and the time for their examination comes a little bit later in this chapter. Regarding the larger structure of textual worlds and narrative universes, the key idea is that in the text's system of reality there is an actual world that is surrounded by alternative possible worlds (ibid. 112). Of these the knowledge-world, K-world, requires closer examination and provides important tools for the discussion about the epistemic nets woven in Eä.

The modal operators of necessity, possibility and impossibility find their counterparts in K-worlds, only under another names: necessity translates into knowledge, possibility into belief and impossibility into ignorance. The K-worlds of the characters may or may not be correspondent with the textual actual world, meaning that they either become realised in it, or they can produce a conflict with it. In the latter case, K-worlds can either be incomplete or they can include propositions contrary-to-fact when compared to the textual actual world. (Ryan 1991, 114–115.) According to Ryan, the operator of knowledge (necessity, modally speaking) seems straightforward: a given proposition is known by a character if "he or she holds it for true in the reference world and p is objectively true in this world" (ibid. 115). Things become much more complicated when belief and impossibility are taken into account. A K-world can originate either from third-person or first-person perspective, and since no external access to the reference world is offered in the case of first-person perspective, the K-world is either complete or incomplete in its relation to the reference world but not mistaken. The situation is different with third-person perspective in which "the modal operators of the K-world are computed by comparing the truth value assigned to proposi-

tions by the subject with the objective truth value in the reference world" (ibid. 115).

Determining the truthfulness of propositions is not an easy task, and I perceive that such thing as an *objective truth value in the reference world* is very difficult to reach and extract from the fabric of textual worlds – of course, it must be kept in mind that propositions more often than not concern very mundane things and beliefs about how things are instead of profound truths of the world. There is, however, another point Ryan makes that I want to take a closer look at. According to Ryan, as said, knowledge world is one of the alternative possible worlds surrounding the textual actual world, and in the cited passage (1991, 111) she characterises K-worlds as images of textual actual world. My treatment of Tolkien's legendarium approaches it as a two-layered metaphysical construction as outlined in the second chapter, but another possibility an epistemic reading could benefit from would be to incorporate K-worlds as a layer of their own into the metaphysical structure. There would then be an idea of the world, the physical world itself and, on top of these, a net of beliefs that forms an image of the other two, drawing ingredients from both – the concluding section of the fourth chapter returns to this thought, asserting that knowledge has business with perceptual and ideal world alike, only in different ways. Time for this discussion comes later; now, after the undeniably lengthy but important rendition of possible world theories, it is time to see how they work with the knowledge-formation processes of fantasy fiction, and what is their role in determining the supernatural, magic and the role of language.

3.2 What Counts as Supernatural?

> They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along [– –]. (*The Hobbit*, 14.)

All agents in the actual world are subject to several modal constraints, but in worlds of fiction these modalities can be manipulated and altered – the constraints characters and actions are restricted by do not necessarily correspond the restrictions that prevail in the actual world. Exploring alethic modality in fiction is closely connected to the second chapter: alethic modalities are the very basic rules and conditions of a fictional world and their role is to determine what is necessary, what is possible and what is impossible. These rules include causality, time and space and the action potency of characters among other things. Doležel (1998, 115) makes a distinction between natural and supernatural worlds in reference to alethic modality and remarks that a fictional world, too, can be natural: "If the modalities of the actual world determine what is possible, impossible, and necessary in the fictional world, then a natural fictional world is formed." This kind of fictional worlds are also physically possible since they do not postulate entities or happenings that the laws of the actual world would not allow. Supernatural worlds, then again, are physically impossible: things that are not possible in the actual world can occur. Here Doležel points out that physical and logical possibility are not interchangeable concepts nor do they always go hand in hand – several possible worlds that are not physically possible can still be considered possible worlds for as long as they do not contain logical contradictions. He claims that modal criterion as justification for distinguishing natural and supernatural worlds frees one from ontological commitment and scientific notions of laws of nature. (Doležel 1998, 115–120.)

Doležel's treatment of the supernatural is mainly based on the idea that supernatural fictional worlds violate the laws of actual world. These violations are primarily done by redistributing the so-called M-operators, the alethic modalities, and Doležel presents three categories to illustrate how this rearrangement determines the structure of supernatural worlds. Firstly, a supernatural world allows the existence of physically impossible beings, such as gods and spirits. These beings may have properties and abilities that the natural world does not allow. Because

supernatural creatures are sometimes described as personified forces of nature, also nature phenomena that in the actual world are unintentional events can become intentional actions in the supernatural world. Secondly, certain natural-world persons can be granted capacities that ordinary people lack in that world, an ability to fly, for instance. According to Doležel, this results in hybrid creatures and heroes of myths, legends and fairy tales who, despite remaining mortal and subject to main natural properties, can perform supernatural acts. Doležel's third category includes personified inanimate objects that can become agents with mental life and ability to communicate, for instance. Alongside inanimate things he also mentions animals that are, most clearly in fables, presented as full characters with human properties and capabilities. (Doležel 1998, 115–117.)

Doležel's categories, particularly those of physically impossible beings and natural-world persons with supernatural abilities, evoke questions about the different epistemic abilities of fantasy-world inhabitants. This is also where the concept of the supernatural seems to escape its definitions or categories: epistemic abilities, such as foresight, are not necessarily supernatural in the sense that they *physically* violate the laws of nature, that is, the laws that apply to the actual world. Epistemic processes apart from clearly perceptual phenomena are mostly internal, they appear as superb powers of deduction or ability to comprehend complex causal processes, or as mental powers of divination or telepathy, for instance. They are not logically contradictory nor do they always violate laws of nature – and yet, when paralleled with actual world parameters, there is something about them that *does not go*. This is why I include conceptual criteria and justification in my treatment of the supernatural: supernatural knowledge deviates from the laws of the actual world with respect to justified application of concepts. It allows forms of knowing that would not be accepted in the actual world – that is, in modern discussion, since knowledge-formation processes such as prophecies are relevant in the history of epistemology.

Supernatural epistemic abilities in Tolkien's world emerge in different ways. They can be physical in cases of extraordinarily powerful senses such as superb eyesight, or they can be mental, allowing transmission of thoughts or "looking from mind to mind" (*The Lord of the Rings*, *RK*, II, vi, 1010–1011). They can be the result of the qualities of the being herself, as is the case of deities and, to a degree, Elves: at least Elrond, Círdan and Galadriel are capable of foresight (see for instance McBride 2020, 78, 111). On the other hand, characters without unusual abilities can occasionally experience supernatural epistemic phenomena enabled by divine intervention or a magical object, such as seeing-stones, the *palantíri*; this is what happens to Peregrin Took. (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, xi, 605–607). Both of these cases are related to Doležel's theory of redistribution of M-operators and how they illustrate the structure of supernatural possible worlds. While the spectrum of supernatural epistemic abilities in Arda is wide, there are, of course, also perfectly natural differences that come down to cultural and linguistic backgrounds, learnedness and education, for instance – of these Shippey (2007, 309–310; 312–313) makes a few remarks with respect to Tolkien's use of proverbs and the wisdom – or bluntness – they convey. However, there are also deeper, metaphysical differences that set limits to certain epistemic operations.

Some of the metaphysical qualities are not directly linked to epistemic capacity but they have impact on it nonetheless. The clearest example would be the immortality of Elves (or, when it comes to deities, the Valar) that enables the acquisition of superb epistemic capital thanks to the advantage of living for thousands of years: the Elves may study, learn, gain experience and absorb knowledge through perfectly natural means but the time they can afford to spend on these matters is almost endless. Arguably, this perspective on time also influences the arts Elves choose to engage in and develop: according to Attebery (1992, 60), "[t]he elves have eons to refine their arts, but they know that anything made by them will crumble before their eyes", and therefore they "concentrate, in latter days, on song and speech", arts that survive longer than monuments. A more interesting question

and one that complicates the distinction between natural and supernatural concerns the influence immortality has on perspective and the cognitive skills of analysing past and present events. I argue that the unique temporal perspective of immortal creatures leads to heightened understanding of causal relations and chains of events, allowing wider and deeper comprehension of the whole. These examples are of supernatural, metaphysical qualities that by extension lead to epistemic powers that surpass normal capacities.

In addition to the epistemic upper hand enabled by long life-span, there are other qualities and abilities that are more directly linked to the supernatural. One specific type of knowledge named in Tolkien's fiction is *óre*, which translates to heart and refers to inner mind, and it can be a result of either deep reflection or transmitted from other beings such as the Valar or Eru himself (McBride 2020, 95; *The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix E, 1152). Óre is acknowledged in the epistemic system but its reliability is debated: as Kreeft (2005, 78) points out, Frodo frequently chooses to "follow his heart over his calculating reason and his experience, and most of the time the choice turns out to be crucially right"; Samwise Gamgee, on the other hand, is less successful in following his intuition in chapter "The Choices of Master Samwise" in *The Lord of the Rings*.[44] Some epistemic phenomena can be seen as borderline cases, such as strong instincts that may or may not be of supernatural origin: Legolas and Aragorn sense the prevailing hostility as they are chasing orcs, feeling unnaturally weary for "[t]here is some will that lends speed to our foes and sets an unseen barrier before us: a weariness that is in the heart more than in the limb." (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, ii, 438). On the other hand, certain beings such as the Valar and at least some of the Elves are capable of wordless communication, transferring thoughts from one mind into another. The nature and extension of such communication is given a great deal of thought in *Morgoth's Ring*.

[44] Regarding the interactions between epistemology and ethics, Kreeft (2005, 78) remarks that unlike the more canonical sources of knowledge, reason and experience, the trustworthiness of the "third eye" depends on moral goodness, which makes virtue one constituent of epistemology. Frodo, being aware of the limits of his own wisdom, relies on tradition and advice, and when forced to trust his instincts, he is in Kreeft's interpretation saved by his morals, not his epistemic methods.

In chapter "Myths transformed" it is stressed that other minds are not inspected, and thought-transference is not equal to mind-reading:

> [n]o one, not even one of the Valar, can read the mind of other 'equal beings': that is one cannot 'see' them or comprehend them fully and directly by simple inspection. One can *deduce* much of their thought, from general comparisons leading to conclusions concerning the nature and tendencies of minds and thought, and from particular knowledge of individuals, and special circumstances. [– –] Minds can exhibit or reveal themselves to other minds by their action of their own wills (though it is doubtful if, even when willing or desiring this, a mind can actually reveal itself wholly to another mind). (ibid. 398–399.)

This restriction specifically concerns the minds of equal status, and the power of thought-transference is often greater when communication takes place between characters whose place in the "spiritual hierarchy" is different. Melian the Maia, for instance, communicates with Beren, a mortal man, without words: "[t]hen Beren looking up beheld the eyes of Lúthien, and his glance went also to the face of Melian; and it seemed to him that words were put into his mouth." (*The Silmarillion*, 195.) McBride (2020, 78–79) writes that the Elves exhibit powers of telepathy, mind-reading, even, or what he calls a sixth sense to varying degrees, the ability of "knowing about things far off". This skill enables passing on knowledge without the usually necessary help of some physical element, such as sound in case of speech, or a visual element of writing, drawing or signing, and therefore involves a supernatural element. This kind of communication also complicates the role of language: when thoughts are transmitted from one mind into another, is this done in the form of images, linguistic content or other?

One of the most direct examples of such transmission of knowledge and thoughts is found in *The Lord of the Rings* in the silent conversation between the three Ring-bearers, Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond:

> Often long after the hobbits were wrapped in sleep they would sit together under the stars, recalling the ages that were gone and all their labours in the world, or holding council, concerning the days to come. [– –] For they did not move or speak with mouth, looking from mind to mind; and only their shining eyes stirred and kindled as their thoughts went to and fro. (*The Lord of the Rings*, *RK*, II, vi, 1010–1011.)

The conversation is described as looking into one another's mind, and focus is also on movement: physically the three characters are said to be still, but their thoughts went to and fro. The expression "speak with mouth" is noteworthy regarding the role of language in telepathy. Oral use of language is excluded, but it does not necessarily indicate that the communication process as a whole is without words or linguistic structures. However, looking from mind to mind can also include visual elements and imagery, which implies that this kind of transmission of thoughts may involve different abstract forms of communication. The true nature of silent linguistic communication is also a noteworthy matter in the case of the *palantíri*. Regarding the forms of knowledge the stones were able to convey, it is essential that they only transmitted visual data, not sound, for instance: the exchange of thoughts is described as silent speech that was "already formalized in linguistic form in their minds or actually spoken out loud" (*Unfinished tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*, 398). This suggests that in spite of the supernatural aspects of communication of the stones and the missing element of sound, the interaction and the messages themselves are not extralinguistic.

Another example of a silent exchange of thoughts is a conversation between Manwë and Ilúvatar, for instance, even though the hierarchy is in these cases much stricter: Manwë's pleas for advice are closer to praying than a conversation between two equals. His better understanding of the Vision and the role of Ents and Dwarves, the re-emerging of the unfolding image, is a result of him asking for guidance:

> Then Manwë sat silent, and the thought of Yavanna that she had put into his heart grew and unfolded; and it was beheld by Ilúvatar. Then it seemed to Manwë that the Song rose once more about him, and he heeded now many things therein that though he had heard them he had not heeded before. And at last the Vision was renewed, but it was not now remote [– –]. Then Manwë awoke, and he went down to Yavanna upon Ezellohar, and he sat beside her beneath the Two Trees. And Manwë said: 'O Kementári, Eru hath spoken, saying: "Do then any of the Valar suppose that I did not hear all the Song, even the least sound of the least voice?" [– –]'" (*The Silmarillion*, 40–41.)

In this example, the visual nature of inner exchange of thoughts is foregrounded, but the linguistic aspect is not excluded, either: Manwë gains understanding seeing the Vision unfold in a new way, but he also receives divine guidance in a form that can be quoted directly – his communication with Ilúvatar is also verbal. Divine communication is one of the most central forms of supernatural knowledge in Tolkien's universe, and for instance McBride's (2020, 99) study largely examines how the divine visibly and invisibly makes its presence known to those living in the world: his approach includes direct interventions as well as more subtle manifestations and according to him, in the Third Age the Valar "certainly have motivation for divine intervention" because of the presence of evil. Of these manners of intervention, my interest is in cases in which knowledge is communicated to other beings, often suddenly and unbidden in forms of dreams, intuition or visions.

Regarding epistemic abilities, an interesting question is whether communicating with the divine is dependent on the hierarchically higher divine being alone or if other characters, mortal ones, for instance, sometimes have a unique predisposition that makes them able to reach towards the divine for guidance. Hierarchical communication of foreknowledge occurs not only from Ilúvatar to the Ainur but also from the Ainur to other beings: one of the most notable examples of publicly announced divinations is the Prophecy of the North, or The Doom of the Noldor uttered by Mandos, the judge of the Valar who "knows all things that shall

be, save only those that lie still in the freedom of Ilúvatar." (*The Silmarillion*, 19). The Prophecy of the North is given after many Noldorin Elves take part in kinslaying, and Mandos warns them about the problems and sorrows to follow. In this case, Mandos is the possessor of supernatural knowledge, being able to tell the future, and parts of this future are revealed to the Elves by his words (or the words of a figure standing on a rock the Elves *assume* to be Mandos). (*The Silmarillion*, 93–95.) It is noteworthy that the prophecy is sometimes called the Curse of Mandos (*The Silmarillion*, 161, 196, 199), because the epistemic and factual positions of prophecies and curses are quite different: curses in a supernatural possible world can be seen as word-utterances that seek to alter future states of affairs whereas prophecies report them in advance, more or less successfully. Yet the Curse of Mandos, in spite of its epithet, is not really comparable with curses such as that of the Barrow-Wights the purpose of which is to produce a death-like sleep (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, viii, 146). Mandos's utterance falls better to the category of prophecies.

While the possible world theories are the primary context in which the supernatural is approached in this work, Tolkien's own view on the supernatural can hardly be omitted when asking the headline's question, what counts as supernatural. In his essay "On Fairy-stories" Tolkien contemplates the supernatural as follows:

> *Supernatural* is a dangerous and difficult word in any of its senses, looser or stricter. But to fairies it can hardly be applied, unless *super* is taken merely as a superlative prefix. For it is man who is, in contrast to fairies, supernatural (and often of diminutive stature); whereas they are natural, far more natural than he. Such is their doom. (Tolkien 1983, 110.)

This notion on the supernatural is clearly very different from the one applied to this study, but it needs to be addressed. Tolkien's view focuses on the idea that fairies are the ones that are natural compared to men who are not (anymore). This

kind of approach perceives supernaturality as being *above* nature, detached from it in some way. The supernaturality of humans could thus be seen as being cut from nature, disconnected with it. Emphasising the aspect of being above or beyond something evokes associations to certain posthumanist views and *more-than-human*[45] modes of experience and existence. Kaisa Kortekallio, who studies mutant narratives, conscious engagement in post-humanist imaginaries and the malleability of readerly experience in her recent dissertation, characterises her approach as speculative, stating that her strategy "begins by accepting a potential state of things (reading can be both embodied and more-than-human), and proceeds by enacting that state as carefully as possible." (Kortekallio 2020, 18). Kortekallio's aim is to show that the currently dominating, detached humanist mode of reading is not the only possible alternative, and her method in proving this claim is not dissimilar to the textual laboratories In the worldbuilding processes of science fiction. Paralleled with the *super*natural the most obvious difference is, of course, the emphasis on *(non)human*: depending on the definition, to be supernatural is not merely to be above human existence and experience but beyond nature itself in a broader sense. However, taking into account Tolkien's view on humans as being more or less cut away from nature and all things natural, the aspect of humanity is certainly most relevant. Regarding the possibility of supernatural knowledge, it should also be asked which knowledge-acquiring and knowledge-possessing subjects in the fictional universe can be considered human in the first place. Kortekallio (2020, 22) writes that many posthumanist theories seek to deconstruct ideas of individual consciousness, subjectivity and rationality that are often considered necessary if one is to build relatable fictional characters and also necessary to subjective experience in the form it is currently understood.

[45] Kortekallio (2020, 22) uses concepts such as mutant and more-than-human rather than the term posthuman because the latter sometimes produces "a deceptively easy break with the human"; mutant in her study refers to science fictional presentations of enmeshed subjectivity while more-than-human is used when talking about the material and experiential entanglement with nonhuman environments and actors.

In this study, I perceive, it is important to not to become too fixated on the vocabulary used to characterise the different peoples inhabiting Tolkien's fictional universe. While *Men* alone are through their very name immediately and directly associated with humans, the other *Peoples*, too, possess enough shared social and cognitive traits in order to be treated similarly. Harri Hietikko (2008, 132), for instance, argues in his dissertation that in spite of their differences, the peoples of Middle-earth share certain human characteristics such as free will, ability to communicate through spoken language and acknowledging the possibility of death. In this context, even though Elves, Ents, Dwarves and Hobbits are not strictly speaking human, they are not *non*human either, not strange and completely alien to human experience. Supernatural knowledge, however, may bring into discussion other aspects and forms of consciousness that are much further removed from human comprehension. The Mirror of Galadriel, for instance, can be seen as an enchanted object that produces informative but possibly deceptive visions, but another interpretation, one that shows the Mirror as a conscious agent of its own, should also be taken into account as a genuine possibility. If the Mirror is allowed to work freely, as Galadriel explains, it "will also show things unbidden" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 371), which indicates operations detached from the person using the magical object. Such form of consciousness would already be very far from human experience, reason and understanding, and these questions will soon be returned to: the supernatural in such cases can be interpreted as a characteristic that has its origin in a spell or enchantment, but on the other hand it can also be attributed to the inanimate object itself, the Mirror that becomes conscious and capable of thought and communication.

Supernaturality in the sense Tolkien uses it is hardly applicable to this study as a concept, and my treatment is based on the more logical view that draws from modalities as outlined by Doležel – one exception to this general tendency is the concluding section of this chapter, "Knowing the supernatural" in which I examine the possibility of gaining knowledge about the divine or otherworldly, that is things

more or less literally *above* nature: the supernatural is there approached as the object of knowledge. The core question in the treatment of supernaturality is whether the logically possible fictional world violates the natural laws of the actual world and is in that sense physically impossible, or, when extended to epistemological peculiarities, how the limits of justification are stretched. This is the basis on which the analysis of supernatural knowledge is constructed. An important conceptual issue is the relationship between the words *supernatural* and *knowledge* – supernaturality is not to be attributed to knowledge without caution for the concept of knowledge and its use must remain justifiable. In this discussion Tolkien's view about the supernatural otherwise inapplicable to this study is taken into consideration again when contemplating the very word *super*natural – supernatural knowledge, if such a characterisation can successfully be defended, implies the possibility of knowing something more, something above regular and natural. This is a possibility I will shortly return to when discussing the ability of fantasy to broaden our idea of reality and open views into something more.

Applying the concept of the supernatural justifiably to a world of fantasy and speculative fiction has its problems (see for instance Jędrzejczyk-Drenda 2007, 25). Some preliminary reasonings I gave in the Introduction, and will now provide more thorough arguments here to conclude this section. It could be argued that in a supernatural possible world nothing is truly supernatural, because the laws governing the world in fact make them *natural*, inherent and self-evident constituents of reality. In spite of this possible criticism, I have chosen to talk about supernaturality for two main reasons. Firstly, the theoretical context my study leans on very much draws from ancient and medieval philosophical discussion, and particularly the dream-theories and divine aspects of knowledge-formation are a part of not only the philosophical views of the time but also of the prevalent belief-systems and theological currents. Secondly, the concept of the supernatural is one way to bring together the different scholarly and literary materials, discussions and laws this study is concerned with.

In the context of ancient and medieval discussions and belief-systems, knowledge-providing, guiding dream-visions and divine interventions, for instance, and the very existence of divine agents to begin with, are taken as genuine, actual world constituents, whose ability to defy the natural laws and modalities of the physical world formed a central part of medieval modal theory (see for instance Knuuttila 1993, 62–63). Even if such phenomena would not need to be called *supernatural* in a world of fantasy, they certainly are just that in the actual world these theories discuss – from modern perspective they cannot be treated as actual constituents of the reality.[46] The supernatural is a useful perspective for examining and conceptualising the problems that arise when divine entities and theological aspects are included in modal theory: Knuuttila's discussion about necessity and possibility in the 1200s takes into account for instance Aquinas' notions about divine omnipotence and, what is particularly noteworthy regarding the later analysis, supernatural causation. Knuuttila (ibid. 132) writes that

> [a]ccording to him [Aquinas], God cannot violate absolute necessities. This means that the miraculous events, taking place against the common course of nature, must always occur through a separate supernatural causation. They do not qualify natural necessities. There are things which are impossible for inferior causes to perform, though they are possible to the divine cause. Miraculous acts do not change the nature of things; through them is actualized something which otherwise lacks a cause in nature [– –].

[46] With respect to the medieval framework, interesting questions arise also concerning the relationship between supernatural and unnatural. Knuuttila (1993, 67–68), for instance, discusses the problem of accepting as possible something that never occurs, something that is not exemplified in nature – this question has been raised by Marcellinus, for instance. Explaining Augustine's views on the matter, Knuuttila writes that "[h]e [Augustine] also mentions the idea, repeated later by Peter Damian and many others, that miraculous events are not unnatural. Our concept of nature is based on observational regularities, but total nature is God's will or providential design, which itself provides natural history with all kinds of exceptional events." (ibid. 68). Such remarks clarify the way in which inexplicable and miraculous events were incorporated in the philosophical discussion of medieval periods. Notably, the word used here is *unnatural*, not supernatural; however, I argue that divinity and phenomena such as miracles can also be called supernatural.

Causation behind beliefs and knowledge-formation are of interest in the fourth chapter, and Knuuttila's remarks should be kept in mind there: it is not always possible to detect a physical, natural causal chain behind perceptual phenomena, but this does not mean that there is no causation at all – the cause can be divine, or, by extension, supernatural. That being said, the medieval theories on modality and perception and their supernatural aspects applied to the actual-world belief systems give valid reasons for writing about the supernatural.

From this gulf between the theoretical, real-world background and supernatural possible worlds of fantasy arises the second reason for writing about supernaturality. As emphasised in the Introduction, caution must be entertained when applying rigid philosophical concepts such as knowledge to a context that follows very different criteria and restrictions – the use of the concepts must remain justified. I perceive that discussing supernaturality is one possible way to bring together the philosophical, conceptual framework and the distinct characteristics of fantasy fiction. The cognitive, epistemic and perceptual phenomena worlds of fiction are able to conjure must be discussed and addressed using the vocabulary and concepts that are available at the moment, despite the fact that they are not always quite as suitable as one might hope. Knuuttila (1993, 152–153) compares the views of two 14th century writers, Ockham and Holcot, and their attitudes towards the possibilities of strange entities, articles of faith and the inexplicability of the Christian concept of Trinity, for instance[47]. In spite of their differences, both writers hold that one could understand strange entities by learning a new system of symbolic representation. Knuuttila (ibid. 153) summarises that

[47] Medieval modalities often faced problems when they had to work with Catholic doctrine, which shows for instance in Holcot's and Augustine's thinking. Knuuttila (1993, 154) writes that in Holcot's approach, determining whether something is contradictory or not depends on whether it is seen in light of natural reason or in conformity with Catholic doctrine. Augustine, then again, spoke of God as the author of two books, which became a popular idea in medieval theology. According to Knuuttila (ibid. 154), "[t]he divine authorship of the book of nature gave certain legitimation to natural philosophy and theology which, in the Augustinian tradition, was thought to be improved by divine revelation, which included truths available only through faith."

> [i]f something which cannot be conceptualized in it is claimed to be possible, it must be treated as an element of a world which is totally different from the one connected with our mental language. In so far as Ockham and Holcot assumed that alien possible objects cannot be understood, because understanding them would demand us to leave human language as the universal medium of human understanding, a critic could remark that it is not necessary to leap in one bound to another world which we do not understand. We could also proceed step by step and construct new modes of understanding, thinking that semantic relations, instead of being inaccessible, are inexhaustive.

This is precisely where I think the concept of the supernatural can avail: the epistemic occurrences that may not meet the criteria of (modern) epistemological discussion – even if they do not defy the natural laws of the actual world but rather the principles of justification and conceptions – must nonetheless be approached with the help of such concepts if any discussion is to take place at all. Entertaining the possibility of supernatural knowledge is one way to allow the concept of knowledge to be stretched a little bit further to cover the epistemic phenomena in fantasy worlds so that it is not necessary to abandon all concepts and theoretical frames that in this field are the main medium of understanding and explaining. Eventually, the importance of the concept of supernatural comes down to bringing together different perspectives, those of theoretical, philosophical discussion and those of fantasy fiction; on the other hand, the same occurs within the fictional world itself, too, since different characters perceive supernatural phenomena very differently. Magic, for instance, is natural to some and supernatural to others. McBride (2020, 74) acknowledges the different perspectives to magic and the supernatural, writing that "[w]hile Elves such as Gildor and Glorfindel lack the power of the Valar, the Maiar, the Istari, or even Tom Bombadil, they do possess powers and abilities that appear supernatural to other residents of Middle-earth (as evidenced by Sam Gamgee's desire to witness Elf magic)." In spite of the undenia-

ble problems, I argue that the word *supernatural* has its place also in worlds that are by their metaphysics and world-building process supernatural to begin with.

3.3 Knowledge, Magic and the Supernatural

The purpose of this section is to outline ground principles for discussing two intertwining yet often misleadingly identified concepts, magic and supernatural. Both play an essential role in the epistemic system of Arda but the use of the two words calls for precision: especially the concept of magic has many sides and manifests itself in many ways in Tolkien's fiction and, as I will soon argue, does not necessarily have much to do with the supernatural despite the obvious, immediate associations of the word. Magic is at times discussed within the fictional world, and particularly hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings* approach it from a very mundane, inexperienced point of view; they are also themselves said to have magic of a kind, albeit of very "ordinary everyday sort" (*The Hobbit*, 14) – this kind of quality, in spite of being called *magic*, has little to do with supernaturality. Finding themselves very close to the natural end of the spectrum of the supernatural, hobbits also tend to use the word as an umbrella-term for various unfamiliar phenomena, as Galadriel points out:

> 'And you?' she [Galadriel] said, turning to Sam. 'For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy. But this, if you will, is the magic of Galadriel. Did you not say that you wished to see Elf-magic?' (*The Lord of the Rings FR*, II, vii, 371.)

> 'Are these magic cloaks?' asked Pippin, looking at them with wonder. 'I do not know what you mean by that,' answered the leader of the Elves. 'They are fair garments, and the web is good, for it was made in this land. They are Elvish robes certainly, if that is what you mean. Leaf and branch, water and

> stone: they have the hue and beauty of all these things under the twilight of Lórien that we love; for we put the thought of all that we love into all that we make. Yet they are garments, not armour, and they will not turn shaft or blade. But they should serve you well: they are light to wear, and warm enough or cool enough at need. And you will find them a great aid in keeping out of the sight of unfriendly eyes, whether you walk among the stones or the trees. [– –]' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, viii, 380.)

The two passages above speak of magic in very similar terms, viewing it In light of two perspectives. In the first passage Galadriel offers Sam and Frodo a chance to look into her enchanted mirror whereas in the latter quotation Peregrin Took marvels the fine handicraft of the Elves. What these two passages seem to suggest is that phenomena or objects are referred to as magical only by those unaccustomed to them: the makers of magical-seeming things see them as natural while appreciating their quality, beauty and the work behind them. The latter example about the elven-cloaks says much about the handiwork and craftsmanship of the Elves, and I would argue that what seems magical to the hobbits is in fact supreme quality, not magic or supernatural as such. It is noteworthy that not everything labelled as magical is truly supernatural in the end – given the hesitant, doubtful attitude of the Elves one acceptable interpretation would be to treat magic as a perspective-dependent quality, following the approach McBride (2020, 74) refers to. When writing about magic, especially with respect to the supernatural, it must be acknowledged that the denotations of the word, whether used as an adjective or as a noun, are not always the same.

It is not uncommon for magic to be commented and discussed in the legendarium, and not without criticism. The word *magic* is not always used systematically in Tolkien's work, or at least its interpretations are many and varying. In *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, for instance, the word often appears as an ability or cunning wielded by a person or poured into a powerful object such as a magic ring or a mirror. Then again both novels differ significantly from many other literary

works in the legendarium: *The Silmarillion*, *The Book of Lost Tales I & II* and *Morgoth's Ring*, for instance, are very different both in structure and style, and the evolution of the fictional world, its stories and their shaping is of course a matter that has its influence also on the use of certain concepts, magic included. This notion, as demonstrated in the examples above, is much tied to a mortal perspective from which things natural to the Elves or the Ainur seem magical. Another conception of magic, closer to innate power that resides in a person or land, is found for instance in *The Fall of Gondolin* in which the word is often used more broadly to denote powers embedded in land or an innate ability of a person (see for instance pages 46 and 100).

It seems nigh impossible to make a clear distinction between the different forms of magic yet their overall source rather systematically can be found in the soul or spirit of a mighty creature, an elf or an ainu for the most part. This power can be poured into land or a physical object which then appears magical in itself to a person unaware of the process of its making. The magic, if such word is to be used, is then an intrinsic part of a conscious being, and the instantiations of this power in the physical world are parts of their maker. The most striking and indubitably best-known example of this would be the Ring of Sauron. In *Morgoth's Ring*, especially in the last chapter "Myths Transformed", the motif of shattering one's power by embedding it in the physical world is examined with great metaphysical accuracy. Morgoth, the predecessor of Sauron, reached ultimate dominance over the physical matter of Arda but while gaining that power he became wholly incarnate, bound to his physical form unlike other angelic beings. Sauron's power was relatively smaller than Morgoth's, but it was concentrated: the power he had was divided between the Ring and Sauron himself, whereas Morgoth's significantly greater might was disseminated all over the physical world – the entire Middle-earth was Morgoth's Ring, figuratively speaking, and all physical beings were influenced by him. Sauron could be vanquished by destroying his Ring; similar destruction of Morgoth would have required the ultimate disintegration of the physical

world of Arda since Morgoth's power was ubiquitous. (ibid. viii–ix, 394–401.) Regarding the concept of magic, the difference between the two dark lords is complex: Sauron's Ring can easily be seen as a magical object especially from the perspective of everyday life represented by the hobbits, but the marring influence of Morgoth does not turn all of Arda into something that could plainly be called magical. Partly due to this magic and (supernatural) power are concepts that are not always entirely distinguishable from one another.

Any interpretations made about the supernatural qualities of knowledge depend on the exact position of magic: it is important to find out where the word "magic" can rightly be attributed to and where it cannot, and also where magic and the supernatural do not necessarily have much to do with one another. The nuances revealed in such analysis help to unravel the cluster of shady, indefinite meanings evoked by the words *supernatural knowledge*. Magic of language is also a point of interest in this chapter and as such brings together knowledge and the supernatural in their most intertwined form. This is not to say that other forms of magic would be irrelevant regarding knowledge: magic wielded by a powerful character through a magical object, for instance, can provide access to knowledge otherwise beyond reach. In such cases the relationship between knowledge and the supernatural is somewhat different: supernaturality is not attributed to knowledge itself but rather to a vehicle that enables knowledge. Language, then again, as something that conceptualises achieved information and makes it intelligible, is much more tightly intertwined with knowing, thinking and sharing knowledge.

3.3.1 Knowledge and Magic of Language

The concept of magic is important not only because of its ability to stretch the epistemic possibilities in a world of fiction but because of its strong position as one of the key elements of fantasy literature. It is my assumption that the role of magic in distinguishing epistemically possible from epistemically impossible is something

that can be applied to a much wider context in the realm of fantasy fiction: magic, as I hope to show, often works as a connecting bridge between knowledge and the supernatural and is therefore helpful in situations where knowledge is acquired through supernatural means but the term supernatural cannot properly be attributed to knowledge itself. Martin (2011), for one, has pondered the role of magic in his article "Merlin, Magic and the Meta-fantastic: The Matter of *That Hideous Strength*" in which he analyses the revived Arthurian elements set in a more modern context in C.S. Lewis's book *That Hideous Strength*. Merlin, according to Martin, can be seen as a representative of magic. Magic itself is as formidable an element as he who wields it: "Magic is a key feature of the story and, like Merlin himself, represents an ambiguous potency pursued by both sides whose battles constitute the main narrative conflict." (Martin 2011, 66.)

Language, magic and incantations are also a point of interest in Martin's work. He analyses Lewis's *Narnia*-series, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* in particular, in order to illustrate the uses of meta-fantastic moments in Lewis's fiction, and his examples include speaking pictures that start to change as they are being beheld alongside books that mingle both pictures and words into a sense-confounding whole. This tool, presented in varying forms by several historical writers such as Horace and Plutarch, is that of *ut pictura poesis*, as in painting, so also in poetry. Martin, drawing from Sidney's "Defence of Poesie", argues that the poetic has communicative power to convey information through speaking pictures and that this ability works as a countermovement towards readerly solipsism and linguistic nominalism. Poetic pictures can make readers aware of things formerly unknown to them and completely unexperienced by them. Examining *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,* Martin gives as an example a magician's book that Lucy, one of the protagonists, reads. In the book pictures and words begin to intermingle, and the word becomes a portal and a spell, confusing Lucy's physical senses and her awareness of the immediate material reality, making the reality conveyed through language the primary one. (Martin 2011, 73–75.)

> The fantasy writer uses the best effects of poetry as image making to conjure a fantasy world the reader has not before known, even as the writer tells us a verbal spell being cast. By achieving this most difficult of challenges to language, by bringing the faraway close and making the unknown known, fantasy's 'ut pictura poesis' rescues the potency of language in all its forms. (Martin 2011, 75.)

This characterisation of fantasy as a result of making images through poetry, utilising the full potential of language in order to make the unknown known, is a very relevant idea considering the wider context of fantasy fiction and its epistemic qualities. Martin highlights the difficulty of overcoming incredulities of many kinds when facing the extraordinary, both linguistic and philosophical. Yet this problem of incredulity does not concern writers of fantasy fiction alone, nor any literary artists in extension – according to Martin it can even be seen as a problem shared by all language users. For fantasy authors, however, the problem can be yet greater because of the extraordinary nature of the elements in her stories. Lewis's solution is to strengthen the poetic faith by utilising the aforementioned *ut pictura poesis* -tradition. (Martin 2011, 72–73.) Making known things that *could* be – even if they remain forever non-actualised – is something fantasy fiction often does much more broadly than realistic literature. Here lies an argument against the still prevailing notion about speculative fiction as a form of literature that is not concerned with serious topics and lacks depth (about such claims see for instance Roine 2016, 16). Truth and knowledge in fantasy are not things that should only hesitantly be included in the discussion about deeper significance and philosophical aspects of literature: their unique qualities emerging in and revealed by fantasy should be acknowledged, too.

Martin's treatment of language, magic and the fantastic echoes Tolkien's (1983, 138–140) views on the creative, transformational power of language and a writer's skill to devise a world in which a green sun is believable. This also evokes

questions about the relationship between language and reality, and the coexisting allegorical and literal senses of words. Shippey makes interesting observations about Tolkien's dichotomies between allegorical and literal, using his Beowulf-renditions as an example. According to him (Shippey 2003, 54), Tolkien's view was that for the Beowulf-poet, dragons were not something detached from reality, and he writes that "[e]qually certainly dragons had to the poet not yet become allegorical, as they would to his descendants [– –]. Yet even to the poet a dragon could not be mere matter-of-fact." Dragon was not just a simple beast nor a mere allegory, and there was also balance between pagan and Christian viewpoints, between a literary vehicle and mythic suggestions. Shippey (ibid. 54–56) continues by pointing out that Tolkien, not that unlike the Beowulf-poet, did not consider dragons as symbolic creatures but ones that had their origin both in fact and in invention – in Tolkien's view, fantasy is not completely invented or made up.

These conceptions about the intersections of fact and invention are interesting when paralleled with the idea of fantasy as familiarising the strange and distant. Making the unknown known is a matter worth pondering in a context broader than language, writing and imagery alone. Ursula Le Guin discusses fantasy and children's literature, focusing on the unjustified scorn and overlooking they have endured in academia and the long-prevailing emphasis on and favouring of realism compared to the more speculative genres. Regarding the expanded yet often ignored possibilities of fantasy to broaden perspective and offer "something more", Le Guin (2007, 87) writes that

> [i]n reinventing the world of intense, unreproduceable, local knowledge, seemingly by a denial or evasion of current reality, fantastists are perhaps trying to assert and explore a larger reality than we now allow ourselves. They are trying to restore the sense – to regain the knowledge – that there is somewhere else, anywhere else, where other people may live another kind of life. The literature of imagination, even when tragic, is reassuring, not necessarily in the sense of

> offering nostalgic comfort, but because it offers a world large enough to contain alternatives, and therefore offers hope.

It is the offering of alternatives Le Guin writes about as well as the idea of exploring wider realities that evoke the most intriguing questions regarding the possibilities of fantasy, not only its language but its predispositions and viewpoints, too. This assumption is indeed one of the conditions for exploring the epistemic possibilities of fantasy fiction in the first place, that is to say accepting fantasy's unique abilities to broaden the use of the concept of knowledge, using it in a manner much larger than we now allow ourselves, if following Le Guin's characterisation of how fantastists treat reality; this expansion is also further justification for talking about *supernaturality* with respect to knowledge. If Le Guin's formulation is studied a bit more carefully, paying attention to the chosen words and expressions, it is soon noticed that the used language can to a great degree be paralleled with the rhetoric and vocabulary adopted by possible world theories: Le Guin writes about literature of imagination that offers a world *large enough to contain alternatives*, suggesting that somewhere things may be different and exploring these alternatives by creating other, elaborate worlds. What remains unresolved, however, is what exactly is the difference fantasy fiction specifically makes when it comes to knowledge and expanded possibilities of comprehension. This is something Le Guin's thoughts seem to circulate but not directly address. It is the remark made near the end that deserves specific attention, that is Le Guin's idea of the attempt of the fantastists to "regain the knowledge" about the alternative existence and modes of life. In the last chapter the process of regaining knowledge becomes the primary matter of interest, and this remark will resurface in new light.

Both Martin and Le Guin's writings heavily emphasise the ability of language to 1) conjure new worlds, 2) bring into attention things novel and formerly unthought of, and 3) explore the borders between possible, impossible, alternative and probable. These would be instances of the linguistic power wielded by fantasy

and imaginative writing itself, as Martin and Le Guin's formulations suggest, and they form very concrete connections between language and the supernatural: the former conjures the latter in spite of the laws of the physical world and in doing so, as Le Guin writes, allows a reality larger than the one currently accepted. Language and magic, then again, is a pair often seen at work together within these fictional worlds. The most obvious and direct instance of the cooperation of magic and language would be that of spells and incantations that are a matter of interest in Mary Zimmer's article "Creating and Re-creating Worlds with Words. The Religion and Magic of Language in *The Lord of the Rings*." Tolkien himself, as Zimmer acknowledges, has likened the verbal magic of incantations to everyday use of adjectives meaning that they both mould reality through abstraction and generalisation. Realising that nouns and adjectives used to describe them can appear apart from one another allows one to see that things could be different – grass can be said to be green but other characterisations could be attributed to it, too (Zimmer 2004, 49–50; see also Tolkien 1983, 121–122). This notion is, of course, deeply rooted in everyday speech and uses of language and its magical aspects as such are not apparent straight away. Yet the importance of this notion becomes clearer once it is observed in context with the possible world frame, especially given the nature of possible worlds as something inherent to everyday language as remarked: the way things are is not necessarily the only way they can be, and language is more often than not connected to the questions of possibility, impossibility and contingency. Magic, according to Zimmer (2004, 50), awakens possibilities that have not been actualised: "The magician, in other words, merely strives to realize the possible worlds implied in the structure of language; all magic is linguistic in inspiration."

The two types of linguistic magic Zimmer focuses on are word magic and name magic. Word magic refers to incantations whereas the latter has to do with tabooing of proper names and the changes in names as a result of changes in the being itself. The basic assumption in Zimmer's treatment and one that she adopted

from Ernst Cassirer is that there is a chain of causality between language and things in Tolkien's fiction, and in her analysis she studies this causality in the context of Christian-Neoplatonic principles present in *The Silmarillion*. Given the overall Platonic undertones this study is much influenced by it is especially this notion in Zimmer's analysis that is vital: she claims that in *The Lord of the Rings* material reality is verbally re-created through language following the same Christian-Neoplatonic principles that created that very same reality in the first place. This Neoplatonic analysis regarding creation through Word in particular joins the approaches discussed and further devised in the Introduction. One of the types of verbal magic Zimmer introduces, earlier written about by Carveth Read, is that of indirect magic, an incantation that imitates a situation and by uttering a wished result or a state of affairs creates such situation and causes it to materialise in the physical reality. As an example Zimmer gives Gandalf's words against Saruman who is losing his power: Gandalf declares Saruman's staff broken, and as a result the staff indeed breaks. (Zimmer 2004, 50–52.)

Some of the most memorable instances Zimmer (2004, 67) mentions include the powerful but enigmatic character Tom Bombadil whose songs have magic-like powers, and also Barrow-wights, frightening creatures the four hobbits encounter in the early stage of their journey. Bombadil's verbal magic is a case far from simple: Bombadil, whose nature and place among the creatures of Arda is left a mystery, wields a very strong but restricted might. His magical or magic-like powers only reach as far as the borders of his land, and beyond them he has no influence. Within these limits, however, even the Ring of Power does not have control over him: Bombadil may wear it without becoming invisible, and he is also able to see those who wear the Ring even though others cannot (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, vii, 138–139). Taking into account the enormous significance of land, the physical area within which Bombadil's power endures, it is difficult to say what is the role of language and incantations in his magic: in his case, magic is closer to that discussed earlier using as an example Morgoth's power over the physical matter of Arda, that

is magic restricted to and originating in land. Be it as it may, Bombadil's song-like incantations are indeed a very fitting example of indirect verbal magic, as Zimmer (ibid. 66-67) describes it.[48]

Verbal magic, Zimmer's indirect verbal magic in particular, is a phenomenon tightly intertwined with the modalities of fiction at least in two ways: firstly, it can be approached as expressions of so-called wish-worlds, or W-worlds; secondly, its workings and very existence within the fictional world is very much dependent on the modal restrictions set for said world. Explaining the workings of indirect verbal magic further, Zimmer (ibid. 68) writes that "[i]f one wishes to produce an effect in the material realm, one forms a "cause" which resembles it in the ideal realm; if one wants a broken stick one models in words a broken stick which resembles the one desired." Ryan's (1991, 117–118) category of W-worlds is very concretely kin to such magic and, again, in a manner most literal in a world of fantasy. Ryan, treating W-worlds as one category of private worlds of characters, defined by the laws of desire and actions and states of affairs a certain character strives for, writes that

> [a] W-world is theoretically satisfied in T/AW if all the propositions labelled good are true in T/AW; it conflicts with T/AW if one of the dysphoric states or unwanted actions is actualized; and it stands in a neutral relation to T/AW – the character judging the state of T/AW acceptable – if the nonrealization of the desires does not lead to dysphoric situations. [– –] Should an action or state be intensively desired, its nonrealization would be the object of an equally strong fear. (Ryan 1991, 118.)

In Tolkien's world, there are characters – such as Gandalf – who are able to resist temptations and the allure of power and succeed in fighting for what in the fiction-

[48] Tom Bombadil's word magic and name magic have also been addressed by Kreeft. Kreeft (2005, 101) writes that things are received in their names, and argues that from this thought follows that "the power of things comes to us in the power of their names". Tom Bombadil, he suggests, is the clearest example of this in The Lord of the Rings: Tom's own words and songs have power over the land and everything that grows there, and uttering his name (within the borders of his land) conjures help.

al world is esteemed *good*. The verbal magic Gandalf uses serves these purposes, and their function is to preserve and to protect, to enable finishing Frodo's quest. In addition to this broad-scale purpose, (verbal) magic also serves as a means to realise private wish-worlds, that in Gandalf's case are parallel with the overall moral system. The example of Barrow-wights that Zimmer introduces is also very illustrative in this situation, providing another aspect quite far from Gandalf's benevolent use of linguistic power. The Barrow-wight utters an incantation that in great detail describes a state of affairs yet unrealised but one that he wishes to make true with the help of his spell:

> Cold be hand and heart and bone
> and cold be sleep under stone
> never more to wake on stony bed
> never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead
> In the black wind the stars shall die
> and still be gold here let them lie
> till the Dark Lord lifts his hand
> over dead sea and withered land. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, viii, 146.)

This spell is used to curse the hobbits with deathlike sleep. The wight's intention and desire are expressed in a form and tone of command, cold *be* hand, cold *be* sleep; after the third line the expression changes and becomes more descriptive while the perspective is steered towards the future – the failing of Sun and Moon as well as the Dark Lord's rising powers are matters more distant (although perhaps not *that* far) from present moment. The coldness spreading into the hobbits, on the other hand, is something that begins right away as the incantation proceeds, and the private W-world of the wight expressed in the spell starts to become realised. This process is then interrupted by Tom Bombadil who manages to save the hobbits.

Magic of language can work as a means to realise W-worlds of characters, either in harmony with the overall moral system of the world or in conflict with it. Regarding the modalities of the fictional universe, it is important to emphasise what Zimmer (2004, 52) writes about the fundamental status of verbal magic: "[b]ehind the principle that verbal magic works through resemblance lies the more fundamental assumption that verbal magic works at all – in other words, the assumption that language can directly affect the world of things." The possibility of supernatural linguistic operations is thus recognised in the legendarium and this, as I intend to show, has epistemic significance, too. It is Zimmer's treatment of 'name-magic' that is most relevant here. The idea of true name, as Zimmer writes, is what brings together the concept of name-magic and the Christian-Neoplatonic thought: true names in language and the divine idea express precisely the form of the thing they name. Name and being can resemble one another in a way that is either perceptible or intelligible: onomatopoeia, as in Gollum's name, would be an example of the former case whereas the latter can be illustrated by words whose meaning is connected to their referents through concepts – Zimmer gives as an example Sam's daughter Elanor whose name signifies a flower and etymologically means 'star-sun', creating a connection between the flower and the child through a concept of beauty and fairness. The overall attitude towards naming is serious in the legendarium and names should be chosen as a result of proper reasoning. This idea is broadened especially in Ent-language that contains the whole world, more or less: all names given by the Ents keep growing alongside their referents and their expanding history. (Zimmer 2004, 53–56.)

The ability of language – particularly Ent-language – to incorporate the world and its beings almost exhaustively provides the most interesting epistemic aspects.[49] Etymology of names allows one to know much about the being itself,

[49] The power of names also appears in manners more subtle, magical or not: according to Shippey (2003, 149) the theme of identity of humans and nature, the namer and the named, frequently emerges in Tolkien's work. Names have a tight connection to the entities they refer to, be they places or plants, for instance; moreover, the peoples themselves are a part of this interconnection, too.

and more so, of the world, as Zimmer (2004, 55) writes: "[i]f words provide "epistemic access" to their referents, one can know the world through language." If this is the case, to know language is to know the world. The power of names can cause changes in other manners, too, changing the state of affairs in a certain situation: McBride (2020, 102–103) writes that Varda's name surfaces frequently in *The Lord of the Rings*, in Elven-hymns but also as sudden exclamations in need of help. According to McBride this indicates a belief that Varda, or Elbereth, is able to help and protect, and Frodo indeed is rescued against a Ring-Wraith on Weathertop. What remains to be determined is whether it was Varda's mere name that suffices, as Aragron suggests (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, xii, 205), or whether the divine being herself intervened.

Before moving on to foretelling, dreams and visions, one final matter about the magical properties of language and its relationship to wisdom needs to be addressed. Chad Chisholm's (2019) article "Saruman as 'Sophist' or Sophist Foil? Tolkien's Wizards and the Ethics of Persuasion" studies the use and power of oratory and rhetoric in Tolkien's fiction, and alongside ethics Chisholm's treatment dives deep into the questions of cleverness, knowledge and historical sense of myth. According to him, the philosophies, ethics and passions of the characters of Tolkien's world are revealed by rhetoric, and he treats Gandalf and Saruman as representatives of Sophist and Classical views on rhetoric. Gandalf, for instance, uses an Aristotelian approach of Classical Rhetoric in *The Hobbit* when he is trying to confuse the trolls or persuade Beorn, and his method draws from his knowledge of his audience, their strengths and weaknesses. Gandalf's method is skilful, albeit he does sometimes violate the Classical rule of committing to honesty; however, Gandalf only stretches the truth when it must be done if one is to adhere to the logos of Middle-earth. (Chisholm 2019, 89–91.)

As an example Shippey (ibid. 150) mentions Fangorn that is name for both the ent and the forest he lives in, and in Tom Bombadil's case the namer has access to some kind of magic through the identity of name and thing. Bombadil himself is inseparable from his land.

Chisholm (2019, 89) emphasises the ubiquitous relevance of rhetoric, writing that "throughout much of Tolkien's fiction, the lines of a constant battle are fought not only with weapons and magic arts, but more often with opposing rhetorics and their philosophical implications." In *The Silmarillion* it is established from the beginning that the narrative and stories contain an aprioristically existing *logos* that comes close to the concept of implied author. Chisholm characterises this logos as a love of life and adherence to truth, and only after the logos was firmly set, it was followed by an *ethos*, the world's characteristics and values. (ibid. 90.) Saruman's use of language and skill of speech are addressed by Gandalf at the Council of Elrond, and the different commitments to truth of the two characters are revealed. Gandalf reports Saruman's attempt of persuasion, saying that "'[h]e drew himself up then and began to declaim, as if he were making a speech long rehearsed.'" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, ii, 266). In his speech, Saruman openly admits his willingness to overlook ethical issues in pursuit of higher values – including capitalised Knowledge:

> We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means. (ibid. 267.)

Saruman's descent and his hubris the cause of which is dominantly the misuse of his significant intelligence and pursuit for knowledge was very briefly mentioned in the Introduction but has not been discussed since[50]. Chisholm's analysis of the

[50] Knowledge and responsibility in fiction is an issue Attebery (2014) discusses in his analyses of Le Guin's and Larsen's literary works. According to him, the function of situated knowledge is to acknowledge its own limitations and being located within certain identities and cultural positions, but also to be responsible of what it knows and how this knowledge is used. Different forms of knowing, such as science, history and myth, are situated, and both Larsen's and Le Guin's work, the latter in particular, are pervaded by a strong sense of responsibility about the things one knows. (Attebery

rhetoric and philosophical positions in Middle-earth helps to unravel this dangerous and corrosive side of knowledge and truth-seeking, also with respect to the supernatural. The key is in Chisholm's (2019, 90) formulation according to which Tolkien is "using his words and his textual characters as tropes for his worldview, and the logos of that worldview is this: that both a love and life of adherence to *truth* is more important than the pursuit of self-interest, empowerment, or even expediency." While Gandalf only bends the truth when necessary when striving for the good, being first a philosopher and a rhetor second, as Chisholm puts it, Saruman is an archetypical Platonic representative of Sophist Rhetors for whom truth is dethroned by persuasion. Another significant difference between the two wizards is that Gandalf works under an ethos of possibility, Saruman's rhetoric is used to conjure a mood of impossibility. Saruman's rhetoric of impossibility often goes hand in hand with the sense of impending doom, a fate that cannot be escaped such as the dominance of Sauron. The characters faced with Saruman's rhetoric must commit to the values of Tolkien's world and overcome the despair. (ibid. 91–92.) The way Chisholm (ibid. 94) views Saruman's linguistic power is most noteworthy: he writes that it is Saruman's ability to use language not only to communicate knowledge and ideas to others but to construct and reconstruct the audience's understanding of reality that is his main strength. Compared to Gandalf's use of dialogue, Saruman treats his audience as masses that can be malleated and manipulated by language.

What, then, is the role of skilful speech and rhetoric with respect to the magic of language? Chisholm, again drawing from Classical tradition, illustrates his arguments with the help of the case of Helen of Troy and Paris's skill of persuasion – Helen cannot be considered culpable for the Trojan War because she was helpless before such skilled rhetor who managed to deceive her. Returning to Saruman, Chisholm states that

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2014, 199.) Saruman's attitude towards the remarkable knowledge he wields is downright immoral, whether considering his scientific endeavours and mutilation of nature, such as orc-breeding, or twisting the course of history.

> [n]evertheless, Saruman would not need to be the mightiest magician because the power of rhetoric, as Gorgias asserts, springs not from preternatural powers but from a natural human concupiscence or, as Gorgias puts it, the "opinion in the soul" that is inclined to merge with the influence of oratory: [– –] (Chisholm 2019, 95.)

Saruman is a rhetor but also a being of divine, supernatural origin and, as Gandalf explains, well-learned in Ring-lore and dark devices: of all the wizards, he has "long studied the arts of the Enemy himself" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, ii, 264; see also ibid. I, ii, 49). The supernatural powers and skilful oratory merge in Saruman's alluring, convincing speeches that so easily enchant his audience – rhetoric itself as a skill may be part of the natural world, having its origin in human traits, but it may yet cooperate with magical properties, particularly in case of someone as powerful as Saruman. However, the role (or, at least the importance) of magic in Saruman's persuasion can be questioned as for instance McBride (2020, 56) points out. According to Chisholm, the words of the wizards are more important than their magic. This remark, while perfectly justified, does not necessarily exclude the possibility of treating Saruman's *enchanting* voice and speeches to be literally just that – enchanting. The sense of being under a spell or charm when listening to Saruman can be seen as a synergy of the art of speech and the power of magic he wields, and these two together result in the remarkable ability Chisholm writes about, that is the power to alter the scenarios and views on reality. This mutilation of reality Saruman achieves through language, which leads way to one very fascinating epistemic dilemma of Tolkien's universe, that is the friction between truth and language.

Regarding the questions of truth, Saruman does not shun extreme methods: according to Chisholm, Saruman does not only disagree on the interpretation of past events, in this case, the many sorrows and losses of war, but goes as far as questioning his audience's notion of reality itself. Saruman, whether seen as a Sophist or not, both misunderstands and misuses the power of speech and persua-

sion. Chisholm argues that Saruman's folly is that he relies far too much on his own ability of persuasion and oratory, underestimating the importance of his audience's willingness, mood and disposition. (Chisholm 2019, 96–97.) This, I perceive, is one of the greatest examples of Saruman's hubris – his formidable skills and knowledge turn against him because of his own blindness. It is particularly dangerous that Saruman is willing to forsake the truth in order to gain power and dominance over others. Chisholm's (ibid. 98) remark about the difference between absolute and probable knowledge sheds light on Saruman's character:

> [– –] clearly those persons who desired to hold power over others through language—like a Saruman who desires more than white but "many colors"—would have found Gorgias's underlying assertion useful, which is that absolute knowledge is impossible to attain and so rhetors must concern themselves only with probable knowledge, and this can only be done through language.

Chisholm utters the very defining remark about truth right before concluding his article: he writes that unlike Saruman, Gandalf uses his rhetoric to lead others to truth *regardless* of whether it is profitable or grants victory – Gandalf always encourages others to learn the values of Middle-earth but also to "discover and remember the absolute truths and forms of their shared world, and thus find peace and certainty at the center of their souls" (Chisholm 2019, 100). Saruman, on the other hand, is not at all concerned with absolute knowledge. What I find most remarkable about Chisholm's treatment is Saruman's attitude towards absolute truth: it remains to be determined whether it is indeed Saruman's metaphysical notion that absolute knowledge or truth does not exist or whether he just considers it objectively existent but beyond reach and as such something that should not be pursued in vain. The alternative Saruman chooses to follow is some form of partial truth or mutilated truth, even – and this mutilation is achieved through language. The *probable* knowledge Chisholm writes about suffices for the practical ends Saruman wishes to achieve, and it is truly handy when others need to be lead astray and betrayed.

While Saruman's treatment of knowledge and truth, his pursuits and shameless combinations of magic, speech and language, quickly complicate the relationship between language, truth and reality, his primary means of altering and mutilating the views on reality are in the end more than commonplace: many of his purposes are achieved by something as ordinary as lying.

To sum up, the key difference between Gandalf and Saruman eventually comes down not only to their use of language and speech and their attitudes towards their audience, but also to the ethics of knowledge and truth-seeking, including Saruman's apparent wisdom and foolish trust in his own abilities that are revealed to be hubris. Following Chisholm's thinking, Saruman's gravest mistake is the deliberate deception of others, using and spreading knowledge in a manner that serves his own ends. Another fault, equally reprehensible, is that Saruman refuses to acknowledge *truth*, or at least his attitude towards it is indifferent: Saruman denies absolute knowledge, as Chisholm writes, and chooses to focus on probable knowledge that is concerned with language. Already at this point I would like to draw attention to the different uses of knowledge Gandalf and Saruman adopt. Gandalf is committed to the truth no matter what the circumstances, regardless of the practical value of knowledge and information – an approach that is almost a direct antithesis to Saruman's skilful and cunning but unethical plotting. The practical value of truth and knowledge compared to their inner, absolute value and the risks of using (magically acquired) knowledge will be a matter of interest in the section that now begins.

3.3.2 Knowing the Future: Dreams and Visions as Knowledge

One possible place to begin the unravelling of what I call *supernatural knowledge* is with supernatural abilities often possessed by supernatural beings. Returning to Doležel's categorisation of supernatural entities, one way to determine where the supernatural stands with respect to knowledge is to approach supernaturality as

something that characterises different beings in the fictional world. This kind of treatment would perceive supernaturality as a quality or perhaps a set of abilities unique to beings that can only exist in a supernatural possible world. As introduced earlier, Doležel's categorisation includes physically impossible supernatural beings, natural persons with supernatural abilities (including epistemic ones) and personified inanimate objects. Supernatural knowledge occurs in all of these categories albeit with different emphases: human beings may have a gift of foresight, for instance, without any other supernatural powers, and on the other hand magical objects can provide access to knowledge that would otherwise remain out of reach. In this section I will use foresight as an example of supernatural knowledge partly because of its tendency of overlapping these categories, partly because of its prominent role in Tolkien's fiction and its crucial problems of justification. Before entering the analysis, I will briefly go through Ryan's remarks about the internal worlds and mental processes of characters and their relationships with the textual actual world.

Prophetic dreams or visions that enable seeing into the future are a frequently recurring motif in Tolkien's fiction.[51] Due to their enigmatic nature as experiences that are both mental and sensory at the same time, visions will also be examined later on in the fourth chapter. Their treatment and the approach are, however, different: whereas chapter four seeks to understand the physical and perceptible nature of mental visions, this section is concerned with the very idea of dreams and visions as knowledge. Such notion cannot be taken for granted, and therefore the overall, prevailing belief-systems in the world of fiction as well as the problems of

[51] While my interest is primarily with the workings of the supernatural and the otherwise unattainable object of knowledge that is brought within the extension of acquaintance and understanding through visions and dreams, it should be acknowledged that the dream-motif also serves other, external functions in the narrative. As I will soon show with the help of Lynch's (1988) study, dream-visions are a literary genre and device of their own, and as a mode and form of telling they also help to structure the story and delineate its timelines, for instance. *The Lord of the Rings* is a relatively long book with plenty of side-tracks and digressions from the main storylines, and reporting dreams about past or future events can help to set different situations in a more coherent timeline and in a more understandable causal relation with one another; examples will follow in the analyses.

justification-in-hindsight must be addressed. In order to illustrate both the problems and the possibilities of foreseeing, I will be referring to certain historical belief-systems and seer traditions and in doing so contextualise the phenomenon not only to other works of fantasy fiction but to the historical myths of seeing, too.

The realm of dreams is not explored in speculative fiction alone nor is the relationship between dreams and knowledge contemplated only with respect to the mythical, fantastic or mystical. The philosophical aspects of dream visions have been thoroughly studied by Kathryn Lynch (1988) whose book *The High Medieval Dream Vision. Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form* explores dream narratives as one of the prominent literary forms of the High Middle Ages and endeavours to redefine the concept of dream visions with respect to the philosophical debate of the time. She analyses for instance the role of dream visions as part of the prevailing medieval synthesis of reason and revelation claiming that medieval vision poetry can be approached analytically by beginning with the philosophy and poetic theory of the time – earlier studies have often neglected or trivialised confrontations between modern and medieval sensibilities regarding the supernatural, for instance. While Lynch acknowledges the great diversity of vision form, she also points out that earlier studies have not properly attempted to define the genre. (Lynch 1988, vii; 1–3.)

Lynch's material includes vision poems such as *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Boethius, Chaucer's early poetry and *Roman de la rose*, and she focuses on poems dominated by the generic forms of the high medieval philosophical vision. She recognises literary vision as a genre of its own, and, furthermore, distinguishes the subgenre of philosophical visions that shares the overall structure of the genre in general but is also defined by its subject, motifs and such content-related characteristics. Works within this subgenre, Lynch argues, tend to be very intertextual and include elements such as nature, reason, genius and the limits of human knowledge. She emphasises a historically conscious approach and in doing so examines vision poems in terms of diachronic change side by side with the philo-

sophical paradigm shifts of the time. New evidence is accommodated to the existing system until they begin to displace presuppositions. (Lynch 1988, 1, 4–11.) Alongside philosophy these changes take place in poetry, too, making it increasingly self-conscious and aware of its own conventions: "[n]o less than prose tracts, then, philosophical poetry may begin to examine not only the principles of philosophy but also its own first principles. Indeed, these poems do both." (Lynch 1988, 12).

Tolkien's work is remarkably rich with visions, dreams and dream-like states of mind in which it is difficult to say whether one is truly awake and whether the surrounding reality is in fact how it seems. The dream-motif has been studied in the context of medieval dream theory by Amy Amendt-Raduege (2006), whose article "Dream Visions in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" emphasises the medieval themes in Tolkien's literature while acknowledging its modern nature. As Lynch, Amendt-Raduege recognises dream visions as one of the most prominent and important motifs of medieval literature, and she states that many of the visions seen in *The Lord of the Rings* follow the medieval conventions. Some of the key characteristics include for instance the strikingly visual nature of the dreams, symbolic landscapes and figures of authority that appear in the dreamer's experience. (Amendt-Raduege 2006, 46.) I will later return to Amendt-Raduege's interpretations and continue the analysis within the medieval dream theory context, aiming to unravel the epistemic nature and role of dreams.

Whenever dream theory is discussed it is hard to avoid two very influential texts, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (54–51 BC) and its much later commentary *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* written by the Roman grammarian and Neo-Platonic philosopher Macrobius in c. 400 AD. Macrobius's book was an important Latin source of Platonism in the Middle-Ages, and in addition to that it had remarkable

influence on early medieval dream theory. Macrobius presents five categories of dreams, three of which are prophetic[52]:

> All dreams may be classified under five main types: there is the enigmatic dream, in Greek *oneiros*, in Latin *somnium*; second, there is prophetic vision, in Greek *horama*, in Latin *visio*; third, there is the oracular dream, in Greek *chrematismos*, in Latin *oraculum*, fourth, there is the nightmare, in Greek *enypnion*, in Latin *insomnium*; and the last, the apparition, in Greek *phantasma*, which Cicero, when he has occasion to use the word, calls *visum*. (Macrobius 1990, 87–88 [III: 2]; translated by William Harris Stahl.)

The last two categories, *insomnium* and *visum*, have their origin in the concerns and worries of waking life and consciousness and as such they are, according to Macrobius, of no use when foretelling the future; however, "by the means of the other three we are gifted with the powers of divination" (ibid. 90 [III: 8]). The category of *oraculum* consists of dreams in which an authority, either a parent, priest or a god, even, appears and reveals what is about to happen and what is not going to happen, what is to be done and what is to be avoided; *oraculum* offers not only knowledge but guidance and advice, too. *Visio*, then again, occurs when in a dream

[52] The classification, despite being heavily associated with Macrobius and particularly because of the account given in *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, is not of Macrobius's original thinking: instead, it is largely based on Artemidorus's similar theories formulated in *Oneirocritica*, as is marked by Stahl in his commentary on Macrobius's work. Stahl writes that while Macrobius's account could at some points be seen as a free translation of Artemidorus's theory, there are also divergences between the two writers. Furthermore, it is unclear whether Macrobius included some of the changes to Artemidorus's text devised by intermediaries or if the borrowings of both Macrobius and Artemidorus are independent of one another and can be traced back to the same source. The proposed sources of the two writers include Porphyrys's commentaries on *Timaeus* and *The Republic*, for instance. According to Stahl it is clear that the medieval scholars (and readers) were not quite capable of fully grasping the classical thought, not least because of the long chain of intermediate sources from the original Greek authors which often results in misinterpretations and falsification of sources. (Stahl in Macrobius 1990, 9–10; 87–88.) The chain of influences and origins may be impossible to trace, but the importance of Macrobius's writings stands: as Stahl writes in the Introduction of his translation, Macrobius and other polymaths of his kind and age "were largely responsible for keeping alive a knowledge of the liberal arts and classical philosophy and science in the early Middle Ages" (ibid. 9). Despite the inevitable problems Stahl admits that Macrobius's account of the dream classification makes the commentary one of the most important and influential books written about the topic in the Middle Ages (ibid. 13).

is seen something that in the future happens the same way as It appeared in the vision, becomes true, in another words. Finally, an enigmatic dream, *somnium*, covers the true meanings and significance of things with shapes and ambiguity so that they must be interpreted in order to reveal the deeper meaning. Of these prophetic dreams it is *visio* that is in this study the most interesting one particularly with respect to the problems of justification: the definition of *visio* implies inclination towards the correspondence theory of truth. Instances of *oraculum* occur in Tolkien's fiction, too, and it will be analysed alongside *vision* as one of the two dominant means of acquiring knowledge through dreaming. In this study it is not an end in itself to try and categorise the many and multi-faceted dreams described in Tolkien's fiction; rather, the theory aids in studying the prophetic nature of the dreams and visions and, if certain examples can be placed under one of the three categories, opens new ways to examine the epistemic differences between visions. Enigmatic dreams, for instance, do not offer information in a straightforward manner but require interpretation and, as such, engage the dreamer in a process of inferences much more tightly than, say, *visio* would.

The medieval dream visions, especially the philosophical ones, are something to be acknowledged in this study for two main reasons. First, dream visions have to do with the synthesis of reason and revelation and therefore have epistemic significance especially with respect to justification. Second, medieval imagery more generally is largely associated with fantasy fiction, especially Tolkien's work. There are several ways for fantasy to draw from medieval subjects, images and details with lesser or greater reference to the source. Fantasy fiction often creates pseudo-medieval worlds and, in this case, also follows some of the tendencies of medieval literature. (See for instance Drout 2004, 1). The epistemic relevance of prophetic dreams is notable and complex throughout Tolkien's fiction, and these visions defy the natural limits of knowledge in at least two ways: For one thing, the manner of gaining knowledge is something that the modalities dominating in the actual world regard as impossible. Second, to allow the possibility of foresight is to bring into

the sphere of knowledge things that normally would remain far beyond, things that can only receive verification in hindsight. Accepting this latter comment in particular means that the concept of knowledge is already being stretched and the basis of its use is becoming uncertain. In this and in the following section I aim to provide acceptable reasoning for my notion according to which dreams and visions can be treated as a source of knowledge and that knowledge, under certain circumstances, can concern the future, too.

The problem of foreknowledge is deeply intertwined with the modal structures of the fictional world but also a central matter of discussion in medieval modal theory. Here the questions of future contingents and (in)determinism re-emerge: an indeterministic world, according to some medieval notions, allows very limited possibilities for foreknowledge, if knowing the truth and falsity of clauses is only through the existing conditions (Knuuttila 1993, 60). Thomas Aquinas, for instance, gave much thought to the reconciliation of divine foreknowledge and contingency: the whole history is eternally present to God and he can therefore apprehend it, and things that are considered actual are necessary with respect to God's knowledge and the fact that nothing can "prevent the actual providential plan from being carried out" (ibid. 133). These aspects, if extended to Tolkien's world, are another proof of how tightly intertwined the metaphysical and epistemic structures of the fictional universe are: metaphysical questions of determinism and indeterminism and the varying potencies of divine entities greatly influence the possibilities of knowledge-formation. The element of the supernatural, I argue, can expand these possibilities and stretch the metaphysical and epistemic limits. Very often – and very characteristically to Tolkien – this expansion of the possibility of foreknowledge happens through dreams and visions.

Roughly, at least two types of foreseeing can be distinguished in the legendarium, here treated apart from the foreknowledge the Ainur draw from the Vision which is a much more complicated case: an important difference lies between foresight as a conscious attempt to peer into the future by using magical

objects or spiritual powers, and foresight as an unintentional, sudden, flash-like occurrence. One of the characters most associated with foreseeing and predicting is Galadriel[53] whose gift is rather unique because of her ability to enable and extend foreseeing to others. An interesting similarity can be found in two passages concerning time-bound knowledge and human restrictions. One of the passages is rather a famous quote from *The Lord of the Rings* in which Galadriel allows Sam and Frodo to take a look at her magical mirror; the other one is from the largely fictional biography of Cyrus, *Cyropaedia: Or the Institution of Cyrus* (370 BC) by Xenophon. Including the latter here may seem out of context, but its purpose is to help to show in practise the issue addressed in the Introduction, that is the context of the supernatural. The supernatural appears not only as one dividing factor between the actual world and the possible world constructed in the analysed material, but is also embedded in a large part of the historical context of the theoretical corpus. While *Cyropaedia* is mostly fictional, its real-world context nonetheless acknowledges the supernatural elements presented in it, and the belief-system of Xenophon's time – and Plato's time. The two passages include remarks about future-related knowledge that bear great resemblance to one another:

> But the Mirror will also show things unbidden, and those are often stranger and more profitable than things we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be. But which it is that he sees, even

[53] Sarah Downey (2011) analyses Galadriel's character as an instance of Tolkien's many resonances with medieval allegorical tradition. The tradition and imagery Galadriel is associated with is the encounter of authoritative female figure in an earthly paradise. Downey (ibid. 102) argues that while the previously studied connections to Morgan le Fay, Titania and Virgin Mary are noteworthy, "another branch of medieval literature, the Christian dream-vision, seems just as likely, if not more so, to have informed the character of Galadriel as she appears in *The Lord of the Rings*." Since my interest is more in the dream-vision phenomenon itself and its epistemic value instead of individual characters, I will in the future analyses mostly refer to Amendt-Raduege's (2006) interpretation; however, Downey's article is an excellent example of the many medieval undertones in Tolkien's work and the vast academic interest dream-visions evoke in different contexts.

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> the wisest cannot always tell. Do you wish to look? (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 371.)

> So human wisdom knows no more how to choose the best, than one who should determine to act as chance and the lot should decide. The gods, child, who are eternal, know all things that have been, all things that are, and all that shall happen in consequence of every thing; and, when men consult them, they signify to those that they are propitious to, what they ought to do, and what not. (Xenophon 1810, 82 [C6: 47]; translated by Maurice Ashley.)

The contexts of the two passages are, naturally, very different and so is their treatment of decision-making and counsel. Galadriel, whose insight and knowledge are vast and nearly second to none in Middle-earth, is uncomfortable with giving advice, and in this sense the Elves tend to be very contradictory for they appear reluctant to offer guidance and yet they often do. A good example is elf-lord Gildor whom the hobbits meet as they are leaving the Shire. Gildor says that "Elves seldom give unguarded advice, for advice is a dangerous gift, even from the wise to the wise [– –]" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, iii, 86), sharing Galadriel's epistemic hesitance, and yet both elves *do* advice the hobbits in the end. The possible problems of knowing the future and particularly when combined with free will and different intentions at work in Arda are addressed by Shippey (2003, 190) who argues that even though it often seems that some things are bound to happen regardless of individuals' choices, this conclusion would be erroneous: prophecies can be fulfilled in numerous different ways. In another context Shippey (2007, 317) continues on the topic, stating that since the superior Power allows free will actions to come together in ways that cannot be predicted even by the wisest, the greatest wisdom is "to know the limits of wisdom", an attitude that the Elves based on the quotation seem to adopt. Acting based on foreseen things can be dangerous for some, and misinterpretations often occur (ibid. 316).

The dangers of foresight are also in some cases intertwined with the assumed divine source of foreknowledge: it is important to acknowledge that while visions often have their source in divine intervention, this is not always the case. As Whittingham (1998, 222–223) points out, "[f]requently, a special foreknowledge helps those on the side of the good. Other times, this help comes in the form of an intuitive prompting that leads someone in a certain direction or a force that arranges events over time to achieve a particular outcome." Later, she also remarks (ibid. 223) that this belief can be erroneous: the Elves sometimes believe that the Valar have sent them help even when they, in fact, did *not*. That being said, foresight can be a great aid but also lead to disaster, which makes it an interesting constituent of Arda's epistemic whole: foreknowledge is accepted and acknowledged as a form of knowledge as such, but its practical value causes issues. [54]

While the attitude towards foreknowledge is somewhat cautious in Arda, the remark made about seeking council from gods in *Cyropaedia,* then again, is more encouraging. Knowledge of the gods is considered infallible and all-encompassing, and through the advice received from deities also humans otherwise unable to make fully informed choices may act more wisely – at least as long as the gods are favourable. Michael A. Flower writes on the importance of shared belief system when examining the prominent role of seers and divinatory rituals in Ancient Greece, also referring to *Cyropaedia* as one example. According to him, the rites of divination were not merely ubiquitous but authoritative, too. Flower addresses a problem that, despite the different material that is being analysed, is also present in this study: he brings up the difficulty of understanding and taking seriously the role

[54] Also *The Hobbit* acknowledges the possibility of prediction and the preservation of foretold knowledge in literary and oral tradition: the clearest example of this is the foretold return of the King under the Mountain. The return is still part of the lore of the people of Lake Town, and when the dwarves arrive to take back their kingdom, "[s]ome began to sing snatches of old songs concerning the return of the King under the Mountain; that it was Thror's grandson not Thror himself that had come back did not bother them at all." (*The Hobbit*, 190). In spite of the fact that foreknowledge and the prominence of epistemic anomalies in general receive much less attention in *The Hobbit* (which may, of course, also have something to do with its length), the book is still for the most part congruent with the epistemic system woven in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*.

of divination in another culture when the perspective is that of modern scholars with very different belief systems. (Flower 2008, 104–105.) Flower emphasises the importance of cultural and historical context and recommends examining the phenomenon as a part of the belief system it belongs to:

> The various rites of divination, taken together, constituted a rational and coherent, as well as a socially useful, system of knowledge and belief for the Greeks. It was socially useful in that it aided decision making, circumvented indecision, and arbitrated disputes. It was logical in that it was predicated on an implicit set of beliefs that made sense for the Greeks: that the gods are concerned for the welfare of humankind, that they know more than humans, and that they are willing to share some of that knowledge by way of advice. (Flower 2008, 105.)

The level of certainty, too, is higher in *Cyropaedia*: the eternal gods have epistemic access to everything that is to happen in consequence of all facts whereas the mirror is said to show things that may come with respect to the future. The epistemic modalities regarding future events seem to differ from one another. The modal verb *may* in Galadriel's line specifically indicates uncertainty, and her unwillingness to give advice could stem from this inability to know the outcomes for sure, but the differences in perceiving and experiencing time between Elves and mortals could also offer an explanation to this reluctant attitude. Another matter that arises from here is that of causality indicated in *Cyropaedia* but not in the quoted passage about the mirror; this I will soon return to.

It is at this point necessary to pay attention to one conceptual question especially because of the ancient theories and literature this study partly engages in. The question is that of *phronesis* and *sophia*, two terms for wisdom that have been treated both separately denoting different things and nearly interchangeably in history[55].

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[55] The role of *phronesis* has not been entirely neglected in the analyses of Arda. Randall Colton discusses wisdom and leadership in his article "Modeling Leadership in Tolkien's Fiction: Craft and Wisdom, Gift and Task" (2018). Colton's study focuses on the "Hitler problem" of leadership and

An account on these concepts has been provided by Trevor Curnov (2011) in his article "*Sophia* and *Phronesis*: Past, Present and Future". He contemplates the entire concept of wisdom and asks what kind of thing wisdom is instead of trying to find a specific definition for it. One of Curnov's (somewhat hesitantly suggested) hypotheses is that wisdom is something that is encountered in certain people, and his question is what is this quality that separates wise people from others and makes them recognisable. Words and actions, according to Curnov, are the indicators: they are the signs one recognises and they emerge from wisdom. His treatment then moves on to the differences between phronesis and sophia, and he chooses to focus on an Aristotelian notion: Plato's use of the terms is at times vague, not making a clear distinction between the two. Aristotle, then again, treats the terms with greater nuance and precision. Essentially the difference lies between knowledge that is pursued for its own sake not having practical value and knowledge that has to do with decision-making and action, the ability to see what is good and beneficial. Curnov emphasises that the terms are to a degree overlapping: whereas *sophia* only concerns principles, *phronesis* has to do with both principles and particulars. (Curnov 2011, 95–100.)

Knowing the future is not against the laws of Arda, its logic and rules – this modal condition alone is a strong defence for treating prediction as knowledge and exploring supernatural knowledge more generally in the first place. However, the epistemic modalities implied especially by Galadriel in the quoted passage evoke questions about the true value of this knowledge. Galadriel's unwillingness to give advice based on things that she knows thanks to her foresight can find its explanation in the difference between *phronesis* and *sophia*. One of the problems of foreknowledge is its usability, its relevance regarding choices made and actions taken in

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the use of literary narratives in leadership studies. According to him, leadership in these narratives, Tolkien's fiction as an example, is primarily a matter of practical wisdom, not so much of morally neutral craft. Given the chief interest and the context of the article, Colton focuses on the questions of leadership but also presents some more general ideas about the role of reflection and pondering for practical wisdom, using the Council of Elrond as an example of a pause for reflection before taking (or continuing) action. (Colton 2018, 401, 408–409.)

the world – it is only natural to ask what good foreknowledge can do if it is not to be used as a guide of actions and its practical value therefore remains unutilised. While acquiring foreknowledge in Tolkien's world is usually not a bad thing as such, using such knowledge in decision-making is far more complicated.

There certainly are cases in which foreknowledge is used successfully: this applies to Círdan, the original keeper of Narya, one of the three Elven-rings. Círdan foresees Gandalf's fate and as a result, surrenders his ring to Gandalf, "[f]or Círdan saw further and deeper than any other in Middle-earth, and he welcomed Mithrandír at the Grey Havens, knowing whence he came and whither he would return." (*The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix B, 1113). The surviving people of Gondolin, then again, are saved because of preparations allowed by foreknowledge: before the fall of the elven-realm, the king's daughter Idril becomes ill at ease, and a secret passage is at her request prepared out of the realm: "[b]ut Idril Celebrindal was wise and far-seeing, and her heart misgave her, and foreboding crept upon her spirit as a cloud." (*The Silmarillion*, 289). In this case, it is important to notice that the *foreboding* is very vague instead of a specific foresight of singular events or images that can easily be erroneously interpreted and not placed in the right context. However, often partial glimpses to the future and the inability to comprehend complex causal chains and dependency-relations of events and states of affairs make it both dangerous and difficult to use foreknowledge in decision-making. Shippey (2007, 380) ponders the dangers of speculation and action based on hypothesis, and he writes that

> [i]ts [speculation] ancient and literal sense is, however, the practise of looking in a *speculum* – a mirror, a glass, a crystal ball. Frodo and Sam 'speculate' when they look in the Mirror of Galadriel, and it is a temptation to them. It tempts Sam to abandon his duty to Frodo and go home to rescue the Gaffer: this would be disastrous for the whole of Middle-earth.

Speculation as a word is perhaps not one that produces immediate associations with *knowledge*; quite the contrary. All in all, despite the occasional, successful applications of foreknowledge, the interpretation I suggest states that future-related knowledge should be primarily judged in terms of *sophia* rather than *phronesis*. When approaching the history and use of the two terms etymologically, the inconsistencies of this interpretation become visible: in Roman culture *phronesis* has often been interpreted as equivalent to *prudentia* (Hariman 2010, 39). In Cicero's text *De officiis* appears a claim that the Latin *sapientia* is correspondent with the Greek *sophia*, and similarly *prudentia* corresponds *phronesis*. This view was largely taken to represent the shared notion among Romans despite the fact that before Cicero's specific statement no such comparison was commonly adapted at the time, and the use of the words has been unclear (for further discussion concerning the concepts and their cultural nuances see hariman 2010 37–40). The significance of this lies in the shades of meanings the Latin word *prudential* has: alongside sagacity or knowledge it can also denote foresight. In my analysis I choose to use the Greek terms in order to avoid unnecessary confusions in their interpretations, but the rather ironic translational complexity had to be acknowledged. Yet I stand by my reading according to which foresight is a matter of *sophia*, not *phronesis* despite the unfortunate etymological connotations that in Roman context appear between *prudentia* and foreknowledge.

Emphasising the non-practical side of foreseeing is not concordant with Flower's (2008, 104–106) remarks about the everyday value of seers and divinatory rites introduced above. Claiming that foreknowledge is a form of *sophia* merely because it cannot be used to guide decision-making and actions obviously is not justification enough – besides, there are exceptions to this tendency, and I will return to these later. I argue that deeper and more acceptable reasons for this notion can be found in the very acts of *seeking* this knowledge especially in cases where it may not be of any help. When Frodo and Sam prepare to look into the Mirror they are both aware that certain knowledge is not guaranteed. They choose to look

nonetheless, not knowing whether their observations concern the past, the present or the future or if they have any reliable basis in the first place. Galadriel reminds Sam of this after he sees all the restlessness going on in the Shire: "'Remember that the Mirror shows many things, and not all have yet come to pass. Some never come to be, unless those that behold the visions turn aside from their path to prevent them. The Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds.'" (*The Lord of the Rings*, *FR*, II, vii, 372.) The motif of fulfilling a prophecy (although the things shown in the Mirror do not exactly fall into this category) by taking action with the intention to prevent this very prophecy from happening echoes the kind of hamartia many tragic heroes such as king Oedipus succumb to.

Seeking knowledge with no intention of using it to plan future deeds emphasises the value of this knowledge as such: it is not weighed over its instrumental value but rather aspired for its own sake. This quality brings the overall question of the ties between literature and philosophy to the surface and also clarifies why Tolkien's fiction is particularly fruitful and suitable for this kind of analysis. Knowledge-seeking, whether useful or not, is valued, and knowledge is often discussed and contemplated, its trustworthiness is weighed and the reliability of the manners of acquiring it questioned. The importance of discussion that at some point becomes very conceptual and philosophical is clear – one of the most intriguing conversations, that between Finrod Felagund and Andreth, will be analysed in chapter four.

I will now return to the dream categories that I briefly forsook while discussing the relationship between prediction and wisdom. Amendt-Raduege's (2006, 48–49) aforementioned article names a couple of instances of dreams that fall to the category of *visio*: these are seen by Frodo in the house of Tom Bombadil, and they turn out to be true in hindsight. The second dream foreshows Frodo's journey away from Middle-earth and his first glimpses of the Undying Lands, and this is specifically indicated in the last chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*. This dream fits to the category of *visio*. However, Amendt-Raduege's another example is more prob-

lematic. In the first dream dreamt in Bombadil's house, Frodo sees Gandalf's escape from Saruman's tower Orthanc on top of which he has been held captive. Amendt-Raduege (ibid. 49) acknowledges that the dream is in the Council of Elrond said to be late, for at the time of Frodo's vision Gandalf had already escaped. While the accuracy of Frodo's dream and its truthfulness are indeed noteworthy, I would hesitate to treat the dream as *visio*. The temporal order of the dream and the real-world events is partly against this reading, that is, if one is to adopt the classification favoured by Macrobius according to which *visio* is prophetic. The chronological order of events significantly influences the epistemic interpretations: Frodo receives information only afterwards, and for this reason the dream cannot provide prophetic knowledge about the future. The dream is epistemically noteworthy but not as a form of divination and not as *visio*. If the chronological order of events is given further thought, also the external relevance of recounting the dream comes to the fore: telling about the dream in the Council helps to keep separate and seemingly very disconnected events in the right order, clarifying the sequence, causal relations and perhaps also helping the reader to keep on track. That being said, talking about dreams, explaining, interpreting and describing them is also a matter of form, style and structure that influences the literary work as a whole.

Frodo's second dream (or, as Shippey 2007, 374 emphasises, an experience that "may not be a dream", but perhaps more like a moment of insight) fits the vision category much better. Frodo hears a singing in his mind and sees a rain-curtain which turns "all to glass and silver, until at last it was rolled back, and a far green country opened before him under a swift sunrise." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, viii). This dream is a direct foreshowing of Frodo's later arrival to Valinor. Observed side by side with another earlier dream, the sea-element, particularly its sound, becomes prominent. At an early stage of his journey, Frodo hears "the sound of the Sea far-off; a sound he had never heard in waking like, though it had often troubled his dreams." (ibid. I, v, 112.) McBride (2020, 106), discussing divine interventions, associates such water-elements with vala Ulmo and yearning for the

divine: "Frodo's experience of sea-longing, which overcomes him during his last visit to Rivendell, provides further evidence that such longing stems from desire for the divine; in contrast with Legolas, Frodo has never seen the sea, except in a dream." The recurring sea-element can be seen not only as a prophetic clue of Frodo's final journey to the Undying Lands but as something much deeper: the sounds of the Sea echo the Music of the Ainur (see *The Silmarillion*, 8), which links those who listen to it – or dream about hearing it – to the divine and to a time before creation of the physical world itself. This is a very noteworthy aspect regarding the epistemic desire to reach towards the otherworldly, a matter further discussed in the fourth chapter.

The wavering boundaries between dreams and reality, being partially conscious or only half-asleep as Frodo's case above implies, are central in Tolkien's fiction, and they are also connected to the supernatural. Tolkien's fiction tends to present supernaturally manipulated states of consciousness in which dreams become intertwined with enchantment. The element of the supernatural works in these instances in a way that much differs from that of, say, the dreams the hobbits have at the house of Tom Bombadil: (most of) these dreams occur in a natural state of sleep, but some aspects of their content weave connections to the supernatural. Being in a dreamlike state induced by enchantment is different: the sleep in itself has its origin in supernatural powers or processes, but that does not necessarily mean that the dreams dreamt would convey significant information or broaden understanding. An example can be found in *The Hobbit* (142–143) in which dwarf Bombur stumbles into an enchanted river while journeying through Mirkwood, and immediately falls asleep. When he wakes up, he recalls his dreams:

> 'Why ever did I wake up!' he cried. 'I was having such beautiful dreams. I dreamed I was walking in a forest rather like this one, only lit with torches on the trees and lamps swinging from the branches and fires burning on the ground; and there was a great feast going on, going on for ever. A woodland king was there with a crown of leaves, and there was a merry singing, and I

> could not count or describe the things there were to eat and drink. (*The Hobbit,* 147.)

Bombur's dream features the woodland king, the chief of Mirkwood's elves, celebrating in the woods, and as such it does include elements that are congruent with the textual actual world but are not yet familiar to the company. However, the epistemic relevance of dreams in *The Hobbit* is not always quite congruent with the overall interpretations of dreams in *The Lord of the Rings*. First of all, the dream-motif is not as prominent and frequent as it is in the latter; second, the causal chains and temporal aspects between waking life and dreams are less refined. In chapter four, "Over hill and under hill" the company is sleeping in a cave in the mountains, waiting for the storm to pass, and Bilbo dreams of something that is actually happening at that very moment:

> He dreamed that a crack in the wall at the back of the cave got bigger and bigger, and opened wider and wider, and he was very afraid but could not call out or do anything but lie and look. Then he dreamed that the floor of the cave was giving way, and he was slipping-beginning to fall down, down, goodness knows where to.
>
> At that he woke up with a horrible start, and found that part of his dream was true. A crack had opened at the back of the cave, and was already a wide passage. (ibid. 66–67.)

The practical significance of this dream – at least the fact that because of it Bilbo suddenly wakes up and manages to warn Gandalf just in time before the goblins attack – is clear as it is more or less congruent with actual state of affairs at the present moment. Its epistemic relevance, however, is not great. A very similar example can be found in the twelfth chapter where dragon Smaug dreams of "a warrior, altogether insignificant in size but provided with a bitter sword and great courage" (ibid. 207), as Bilbo really is spying Smaug's cavern. In both cases, the

nature and function of dreams comes closer to a primitive warning instinct than a supernatural epistemic phenomenon; besides, both dreams occur very close to the moment of waking up, which means that waking observations may become confused with dream-life images. These dreams do not easily fall to the category of *visio* or to that of *oraculum* that I will now turn to.

Oraculum, a dream in which an authority reveals something about the future and sometimes also advices one to take action, appears in chapter "The Council of Elrond" in *The Lord of the Rings*. Boromir, the son of steward of Gondor, travelled to Rivendell urged by a dream seen both by himself and by his brother Faramir:

> 'In that dream I thought the eastern sky grew dark and there was a growing thunder, but in the West a pale light lingered, and out of it I heard a voice, remote but clear, crying:
> *Seek for the Sword that was broken*
> *In Imladris it dwells;*
> *There shall be counsels taken*
> *Stronger than Morgul-spells.*
> *There shall be shown a token*
> *That Doom is near at hand,*
> *For Isildur's Bane shall waken,*
> *And the Halfling forth shall stand.*
> Of these words we could understand little, and we spoke to our father, Denethor, Lord of Minas Tirith, wise in the lore of Gondor. [– –]' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*,, II, ii, 253.)

For Faramir and Boromir the dream most certainly holds many riddles: first of all, Imladris (i.e. Rivendell), a place of a nearly mythical reputation; second, Isildur's Bane which refers to the Ring, and finally the Halfling which is another name for hobbits, a people that has been largely forgotten in other realms of Middle-earth. McBride (2020, 110–111) contemplates whether the source of the dream is in Eru himself or in the Valar, for while it clearly includes supernatural elements and guid-

ance, the Valar's powers of predicting the future and communicating it to peoples of Arda are limited. Either way, the link between the west and the divine is clear in the dream, and therefore I incline to read it as *oraculum* with its commanding and instructing voice. However, there are some enigmatic elements, too. The dream itself is not enigmatic, it does not veil its true content in strange shapes or symbols, and it fits better to the criteria of *oraculum* than those of *somnium*. Yet the element of interpretation central to *somnium* is present; only in this case it is not the dream as a whole that must be unravelled but the poem in the dream. The divine instructions are perfectly clear to someone learned in the history of the Ring, and its significance is revealed line by line in the Council. As becomes evident as the story proceeds, and indeed partially already in the Council, the words uttered in the dream come to pass: Frodo the Halfling stood forth and took the Ring for his burden, and Isildur's heir Aragorn draws the broken sword that is soon remade. The prophecy of a divine authority is fulfilled, and Boromir follows its instructions to learn its significance in Rivendell. Epistemically the dream engages the dreamer in literary puzzle-solving and inference. First, the dreamer is required to take a leap of faith and obey the voice without fully understanding its meaning. After that he must again rely on epistemic authorities, primarily Elrond, Gandalf and Aragorn, and accept the evidence they have to give both in words and in objects, such as the sword.

The role of inference and rational problem-solving is important particularly with respect to one defining characteristic of medieval dream literature, the marriage of reason and revelation discussed in Lynch's study. The crucial question of medieval dream theory was how one could know whether his dream was true and his imagination divinely inspired. According to Lynch (1988, 31–32), knowledge formation through dreaming requires both imagination and reason: imagination provides the first stage by conjuring images or phantasms after which reason by abstraction appropriates the images or their universal ideas to itself and thus reach-

es towards truth. In this cooperation it is imagination that causes the problems.[56] Rational reason is usually reliable, but if imagination in the beginning started creating false images, this fault is difficult to mend later. The world in which imagination operates and whence it rises is often unreliable: as Lynch (ibid. 32) writes, "[t]he intellect participated in the essence of divinity; imagination was part of the variable world of sense." If the perspective is broadened slightly, also the medieval theories on modality gave much thought to the relationship between imagination and reason: Maimonides, for instance, pointed out that certain Islamic theologians, the Mutakallimun, based their conception of possibilities on imagination, not intellect (see for instance Knuuttila 1993, 104). Boromir's dream is divinely inspired, the Valar of the west are behind it, but the difficulty of seeing the difference between idle folly and divine source is real for the dreamer. Dreams, hallucinations, reason, foolishness and the divine intermingle and work together, producing mental states anything but easy to unravel. What Plato writes in *Timaeus* seems very fitting to illustrate the problems of prophetic knowledge:

> And herein is a proof that God has given the art of divination not to the wisdom, but to the foolishness of man. No man, when in his wits, attains prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession. And he who would understand what he remembers to have been said, whether in a dream or when he was awake, by the prophetic and inspired nature, or would determine by reason the meaning of the apparitions which he

[56] Another problem with dreams and the workings of imagination is the difficulty of determining the cause behind them. Knuuttila (1993, 105), when discussing 13th century modal views and Maimonides' theory, particularly the role of imagination in conceptions of possibility, writes that "[w]e cannot know unrealized divine possibilities and we should not speculate about them, because we cannot decide whether they are truly attributed to God or attributed only by false imagination." A similar problem concerns also dream-visions; a much later and admittedly very different but still relevant example is, of cause, provided by Cartesian scepticism. The dream argument and the idea of evil demon question everyday experience and the reliability of the senses and reason: we can be confounded by an evil genius so that we consider real things that are only illusions and dreams (Descartes 2000, 12–13). In this case, the problem of unreliability does not arise from the content of the dreams themselves but the very impossibility of making a distinction between visions, illusions and reality in the first place.

> has seen, and what indications they afford to this man or that, of past, present or future good and evil, must first recover his wits. (*Timaeus*, 35.)

The relationship between madness and reason, imagination and inference, is the source of many of the most important questions about dream-based knowledge, and another aspect, that of the cooperation of imagination, perception and reason, will be discussed in the fourth chapter alongside Ritva Palmén's views. What can be drawn from both Lynch's and Plato's formulations is that to know something through dreaming is to compromise: one has to be willing to let go of full control and rational state of mind and to enter a state much more veiled, uncertain and ambiguous. Yet balance must be kept – reason cannot be abandoned entirely, only suspended for a little while so that imagination may enter without being held back by waking mind[57]. Recollecting, pondering and reasoning, as Plato argues, return once the dreamer is in his right mind and ready to explore the true meanings of the things he saw. This process is often reflected in Tolkien's work, and a great effort is made to understand dreams and visions in hindsight, as is the case for instance in Boromir's dream. It is noteworthy that dreams are being interpreted and cogitated afterwards even at the point where they are no longer able to give new information: in the aforementioned Council of Elrond Frodo tells about a dream in which he saw Gandalf entrapped on top of Orthanc. At this point the events are far behind and the situation has changed, but the dream and its meaning are still briefly discussed. These efforts to understand dreams and to place them fittingly in the unfolding of events in the waking world further enhance their epistemic significance and strengthen the justification for treating dreams and visions as an acceptable albeit ambiguous source of knowledge.

Finally, returning once more briefly to the formulation in *Cyropaedia*, the words "and all that shall happen in consequence of every thing" deserve attention.

[57] Imagination and ancient and medieval theories written about it, both theological and philosophical, will be further discussed in the fourth chapter. I will introduce Palmén's study about Richard of St. Victor's theory of imagination and examine it side by side with Tolkien's notions about creation through language and the ability to conjure supernatural worlds of faërie.

The problem of causality is certainly one that complicates the examination of foreknowledge and possibilities of predicting the future. The Ainur, for instance, having seen Ilúvatar's Vision and taken part in its weaving, know much of things that are to happen but not everything. The Vision complicates the entire conception of foresight, for it includes many different forms of perceiving, interpreting, forgetting and recollecting, and much that was hidden and known to Eru alone: "Yet some things there are, that they cannot see, neither alone nor taking counsel together; for to none but himself has Ilúvatar revealed all that he has in store, and in every age there come forth things that are new and *have no foretelling, for they do not proceed from the past*." (*Silmarillion*, 6; italics mine.) Such remark, I argue, problematizes the conception of causality in Tolkien's fiction and is also an excellent example of the intertwined, nearly inseparable nature of metaphysical laws and epistemic structures in Tolkien's world. In this formulation it is implied that future incidents can be known as long as they spring from the past, have their reason and cause in preceding conditions. The ambiguous notion of foresight as a gift or an ability also needs to be re-evaluated in this light: if the process of causation is given as an absolute condition without which foresight is not possible, foreseeing seems to be little more than a highly developed set of skills of inference combined with vast and detailed knowledge about the past. Foresight in this sense could be reduced into a mere ability of inference, memory and disposition to find connections between seemingly independent and non-related incidents. That being said, it is worth asking what is the role of speculation in the different processes of knowledge-formation, and at which point it becomes unjustifiable even in a world that allows supernatural knowledge.

An interpretation that treats foresight as an inference skill severely questions foresight as a form of supernatural knowledge. Sure, recalling past events with such precision and following causal chains with understanding so great that making acceptable and often correct claims about the future *is* an ability that is nearly supernatural as such – but foresight itself could not be seen as supernatural in any way,

reduced like this. Logically this is what the passage above suggests, but several other remarks in the analysed literature, some of which are also given in this chapter, argue against such an interpretation. Often the moments of foresight are astonishing experiences much closer to divine messages or sudden dreamlike visions than cool, logical inferences of a sharp mind. This, I argue, is an indication of the link to the supernatural: if the manner in which knowledge is drawn from dreams is in Tolkien's world similar to the process introduced by Lynch in the context of medieval dream visions, the role of (divinely inspired) imagination cannot be denied. While later reasoning, interpreting and pondering, studies of causes and effects may be firmly rooted in the workings of a rational mind capable of abstraction and logic, imagination is inseparably tied with the supernatural.

The position of visions with respect to supernaturality and their place in fantasy-worlds needs to be clarified. When examining the alethic constraints of fiction and the ways supernatural fiction can manipulate them, producing possible worlds that are logical but not natural, Doležel (1998, 117) writes that "[t]he alethic contrast between the natural and the supernatural is bridged by intermediate worlds". These worlds include for instance dreams and hallucinations, and they are possible human experiences. They are, according to Doležel, perfectly natural despite the fact that within the frames these states create physically impossible things may happen: dreams can include impossible persons, objects and events. This potential of intermediate worlds is utilised in realistic fiction, too: as an example Doležel mentions *The Double* by Dostoevsky in which dreams have a proleptic function. (Doležel 1998, 117–118.) Tolkien's (1983, 116) view on using dreams in such manner as a framing-device for supernatural elements, fantasy and fairy-tale is very critical: according to him, it is like putting "a good picture in a disfiguring frame." His criticism comes down to reducing fantasy into something lesser, indeed undoing it. If such reductionism is accepted, there will be little left to analyse in terms of supernatural knowledge acquired in a visual experience that surpasses natural boundaries in one way or another, such as in dreams or visions. Therefore, the use

of dreams as a framing-device should not be confused with other functions they have within the fictional world.

Regarding the structure and hierarchies of the fictional universe, dreams bring variation to the private worlds of characters and the relationships woven in between them and with the textual actual world. The problem now encountered is at heart about the correspondence between the character's private dream world and the textual actual world, and this relationship determines the truthfulness of the visions; it is also a relationship that can best be approached with the help of Ryan's categories of private worlds. Particularly the previously omitted category of fantasy worlds now receives more attention for various reasons: Firstly, dreams are, as the analyses have shown, tightly intertwined with the supernatural and the transitions between different temporal, spatial and ontological levels. Secondly, they form one central group of private spheres in Tolkien's fantasy universe. The connections between K-worlds and F-worlds are a very fruitful subject for analysis, and the relationship between F-worlds and the textual actual world and the primary narrative system provides significant information about the epistemic laws of Eä, too.

The private domains of characters, as outlined earlier, consist of beliefs, wishes, obligations, forgeries and such fabrications – not all inner constructs are authentic, some are deliberately deceiving. The final category of private spheres Ryan introduces is that of fantasy worlds, or F-universes: these she describes as complete universes created by the mind, and they include hallucinations, dreams, fictional stories and fantasies. The structure of an F-universe is correspondent with that of primary narrative systems: it includes an actual F-world that is accompanied by various private worlds. Recursive embeddings are also a possibility, meaning that fictional characters can write fiction or characters of a dream may have dreams. (Ryan 1991, 118–119.) Regarding the epistemic hierarchies of fiction, one of Ryan's most notable remarks about the F-universes is their position in the dreamer's belief-system at a given moment of time. Ryan (ibid. 119) writes that

"[f]or the duration of a dream, the dreamer believes in the reality of the events he or she experiences, and the actual world of the dream takes the place of T/AW." In other words, for as long as the dream endures, the dreamer's belief-system finds its reference-world in the dreamt reality, and the correspondence is therefore no longer between the textual actual world and the character's beliefs about it.

The structure of beliefs and their reference-world Ryan presents is well fitting but becomes rather complex when observed side by side with the hypothesis of supernatural knowledge conveyed through dreams and visions. The analyses above discuss visions the purpose of which is to provide information applicable to the textual actual world; this means that the beliefs formed within the dream should in some manner be transferred into the textual actual world without losing their validity and justification in spite of the changed hierarchy and change of reference-world. This problem paves way for another significant issue that will be studied in the next sections, that is the extension of foreknowledge and the questions of correspondence and frames of reference. These problems I will try to solve with the help of Ryan's (1991, 113–114) division into factual and actualisable domains and the alternative possible worlds: in order for the knowledge provided by dreams to be truly valuable, it should concern the actualisable domain, not just any private spheres, for instance. I argue that the very possibility of acquiring information about the actualisable domain, not just any alternative possible world, is what justifies calling foresight or divination a form of *supernatural knowledge*; this argument I will explain more clearly in the final sections of this chapter.

Based on the analyses and arguments presented so far, categorising prophetic dreams as mere hallucinations would be short-sighted in the wider context of Arda as a world of fantasy and its defining characteristics. One of these is the fact that foreseeing is literally possible within the logical parameters of Arda: Tolkien's creation as a supernatural, physically impossible world allows foresight as an acceptable form of knowing. This is a quality postulated in the fictional world, recognised as a relevant part of its epistemic whole. However, the accepting utterances

on behalf of foreknowledge given in the literary material are not saying enough yet: the fact that the fictional world allows divinatory knowledge does not tell anything about the restrictions and criteria of this knowledge nor does it give any instructions regarding the interpretation of such knowledge. These problems I will soon turn to in the concluding section of this chapter in which the main issue to be solved is one of justification.

3.3.3 The Mirror and Knowledge about Unactualized Possibilities

The Mirror of Galadriel was briefly discussed alongside Xenophon's work and the cited passage about knowing the future. The analysis of the mirror does not find its place in this study easily: many of its peculiar characteristics concern perception, modalities and mental abilities alike, and as such the mirror as a supernatural epistemic device intersects most of the chapters in one way or another[58]. However, I see fit to include the analysis in this chapter for the mirror so clearly foregrounds the supernatural aspects of knowledge allowed in a world of (speculative) fiction alone: the mirror is – although hesitantly and controversially named as such – a magical object only partly controlled by those who use it. Here the supernatural is attributed to the object itself as a property of an inanimate device. At this point also the aspect of nonhuman – or more-than-human – consciousness introduced

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[58] In addition to the many possibilities of interpretation contexts, the mirror produces another connection to Neoplatonism, since mirrors are linked to the way many Neoplatonists approached and explained the material world and visible objects. According to Remes (2008, 58), the sensible world is the final step of emanation and as such farthest removed from the One, the source: matter "functions as a kind of surface or mirror for the images of forms to be manifested." Such view is presented in the metaphysical system of Plotinus, for instance. The role of matter is to receive the form, and this applies both to overall metaphysics and more specifically to the generation of embodied human beings and the immaterial status of the soul. Importantly, for Plotinus the mirror "does not add anything substantial to the image. It may distort it or fail to display all of its details, but it does not help in creating the figurations." (ibid. 109.) The epistemic properties of mirrors and their role in the construction of worldview are intertwined with both reflecting that which already exists, the material world, and, as is the case in the Mirror of Galadriel, in showing something by doing the very opposite, producing new images from within. This is an important difference in the two views: the Mirror of Galadriel enables supernatural insight precisely by *not* reflecting things but by showing something else entirely.

with Kortekallio's (2020, 22) and Le Guin's (2007, 86) views arises again: the mirror's workings can be controlled and steered from outside only to a degree, which makes the mirror an active participant and agent of its own. The images reflected in the mirror do not form in a vacuum but are rather generated in a communicative process of at least two but possibly more conscious parties, as I aim to show.

The mirror is not a static object – in a way it is recreated every time someone wishes to use it. It consists of a silver basin which is filled with clear water from the fountains of Lothlórien, and the mirror is ready for use after Galadriel has breathed on its surface (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 371). The viewer would then gaze into the water, and visions would appear on the surface – sometimes single images, sometimes events. The mirror of Galadriel can be interpreted as belonging to the tradition of hydromancy, water-divination, and the various practices of scrying in a broader sense. The different forms of scrying, including crystal gazing as a common example, share the idea of peering into an object and trying to detect messages that are then further interpreted. The used objects may include mirrors, crystal balls or other reflective surfaces – Nostradamus, for one, is believed to have predicted the future by the method of gazing into a bowl of water and receiving visions (see for instance Suzuki 2012, 185).

The mirror is not the only example of scrying Tolkien's fiction has to offer: the most notable supernatural devices used in Middle-earth include *palantíri*, seven round seeing-stones that are used in a manner quite similar to crystal balls. Attebery (2014, 208) briefly mentions the *palantíri* in his analysis of the metafictional nature of fantasy, and he emphasises the role of certain fantasy symbols as "narrative signposts" that work as encouragements to read creatively. Such metafictional tools include voices and languages but also magical visions: "[a]ny form of magical vision, from Coyote's eye to the farseeing palantirs in Tolkien's Middle-earth, indicates the acquisition of knowledge and thus should be looked at carefully to see how the viewer's perspective affects what can be known." (ibid. 208). The *palantíri*, like other objects that open the gates of hidden knowledge, are dangerous tools

that may cause great harm to those who use them (see also Shippey [2007, 316]). What the *palantíri* and the mirror have in common is the communicative element, and in the case of the mirror also the aspect of non-human consciousness is relevant. When Frodo gazes into the water, there are at least two, perhaps three parties involved: Frodo himself, Galadriel who is aware of Frodo's visions, and finally Sauron, whose searching eye is the last thing the mirror shows Frodo (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 373–374). Sauron's involvement differs from the other persons Frodo sees: when the Eye appears, the Ring "grew heavy, heavier than a great stone, and his head was dragged downwards. The mirror seemed to be growing hot and curls of steam were rising from the water." (ibid. 374.) The mere vision of Sauron's Eye causes a physical change, and it could be argued that this indicates some level of Sauron's presence. In addition to these (more or less) human-like beings the mirror itself can be considered a part of the communication chain of different consciousnesses: as Galadriel remarks in the scene, [w]hat you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell." (ibid. 371.) This suggests that the mirror is on some level an object capable of thinking and acting. This possibility significantly changes the basic distinction between a magical or supernatural object that allows access to knowledge, and knowledge that is supernatural – if the mirror itself as a conscious being is involved in the process of knowledge-formation, one becomes closer to what can be called *supernatural knowledge*.

The ways the mirror problematizes knowledge temporally, topically and mentally are many: First of all, its supernatural power is most dominantly present in its ability to show things that are distant or unreachable both in time and in place and as such inaccessible by natural means. Secondly, the problems of justification and reliability are great – as noted earlier, even Galadriel herself solemnly encourages care and critical thinking, doubt, even, when interpreting the visions conjured in the mirror. The third and probably the most complicated problem concerns the modal structure of the fictional world, including the aforementioned causality but also broader laws about the prevalent state of affairs, whether in the past, present

or the future, and their necessity. The third aspect is the primary focus of this section, and analyses of the mirror as a device that opens views into alternative possible worlds is also able to strengthen the claim that in a world of fantasy it is indeed justifiable to call foreseeing knowledge.

One way to approach modalities is to focus on one of the most basic historical distinctions between modal notions, that between modern, synchronic modality and the preceding diachronic approach favoured especially in the ancient tradition and discussed by Aristotle in particular. The diachronic conception of modality focuses on the temporal interpretation: a singular future event cogitated from the perspective of the present may or may not occur. This view of possibility is, however, restricted, and the alternative scenarios cease to be possible at the moment when one of the alternatives is actualised. Diachronic modality does not recognise simultaneous alternatives: the singular alternatives are transient and vanish once they have been made empty by the actualised alternative. The synchronic approach, then again, recognises the genuine possibility of alternative chains of events and focuses on the logical contradictions between alternatives. (Knuuttila 1993, Preface, 31–33.) The change and development of modal theories was contributed to by many medieval scholars, but particularly John Duns Scotus. Regarding the larger theoretical frame of this study, Duns Scotus's work is remarkable especially because his approach paved way to modern-day possible world theories. Knuuttila (1993, 143), for instance, argues that while Duns Scotus's modal theory never specifically referred to the notion of possible worlds in a technical sense, his treatment can nonetheless be described as "an intuitive predecessor of possible world semantics". According to Knuuttila (ibid. 147), Duns Scotus very much influenced late medieval and modern theories especially because he "systematically developed the conception of modality as referential multiplicity with respect to synchronic alternative models." The revolutionary formulations question – or deny, rather – the principle of plenitude, but its place in the modalities of Tolkien's Arda is unclear, as I will soon discuss.

The simplest way to define the epistemic quality of the Mirror of Galadriel would be to say that it has the ability to allow previews of *unactualized possibilities which may or may not occur*. As Galadriel's great hesitation reveals, contingency is dominant in the workings of the mirror. The mirror shows things "that yet may be", but there is no way to tell which of the visions will come to pass. Prediction is therefore a problematic word to be used in this context – the mirror does not make known the finite future in itself but rather some of the alternate ways of its unfolding. My interpretation is that in this case the metaphysical and the epistemological laws of Tolkien's Arda differ from one another. The creation as it is told in *The Silmarillion* and afterwards analysed by several scholars such as Korpua (2015, 50–51 and 2021, 68–69), who discusses the problems of free will and future, implies some degree of predestination: the unfolding of the universe and history are previewed in the Great Music and the Vision, and even though not all details and ends are revealed to the Ainur, the fate of the world is either way laid bare to Ilúvatar himself. Arda's degree of fixedness is a very debatable issue, and for instance McBride (2020, 22) argues that the Music does not rigidly determine the new-made world but is more like a rehearsal of the production of history.

I would argue for a moderate view on Arda's metaphysical fixedness: there is room for free will even though the great lines of history were drawn before the newly designed world physically came to be – but not entirely revealed for the Ainur, since "the history was incomplete and the circles of time not full-wrought when the vision was taken away." (*The Silmarillion*, 9) Epistemically, the plenitude of alternatives lingers: those who look into the mirror receive glimpses of things that may have occurred in the past; things that may be passing as they watch; things that could at some point become true. Seeing is always uncertain, and the seers may find affirmation only afterwards. Yet it is fitting to say that the mirror's viewings offer knowledge that concerns possibilities: it is knowledge that concerns that *which could be*, whether it becomes true or not. The visions may not be compatible or coherent with the actualised reality but logically they hold nonetheless, being con-

tingent alternatives to the prevalent state of affairs. Equally the claims made about the future based on things seen in the mirror – such as when Sam sees his father being driven away from his home – may be true in an alternate possible world, if not necessarily the actualised one.

The basic distinction between diachronic and synchronic modalities is good to acknowledge because of the dominantly temporal and chronological mazes woven by the mirror, let alone those that are created once the images are interpreted. However, more help can be found in the division between factual and actualisable domains as discussed by Ryan. Time is one of the key components in Ryan's theory, mainly because textual actual worlds are entities existing primarily in time and consisting of successive events, and propositions about states of affairs hold true at a given moment of time. Examined side by side with some of the other theoretical cornerstones of this study, Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*, for instance, and the principles of plenitude and continuity, Ryan's views on the actualisable world provide deepening insights into the discussion. (1991, 113–114.) According to her, the textual actual world "comprises a set of general laws that determine the range of possible future developments of the plot out of the present situation" (ibid. 113) – this leads to the distinction between the factual and the actualisable domains. The actualisable domain can be seen as a possible world of a kind as the relation of temporal accessibility connects it to the current situation of the textual actual world; however, it is not just another alternative possible world created within a character's mind, for instance, but an absolutely existing possibility. In short, actualizable domain refers to those future states of affairs allowed by the general laws of the narrative universe; the factual domain is the sum of different states, laws and events the actual world of the narrative universe is made of. (ibid. 114; see also Ryan 1985, 720.) Regarding the epistemic accessibility of different possible worlds, it is the actualisable domain that provides the most interesting – and, probably, the most difficult – questions.

The division Ryan suggests is most relevant when the knowledge offered by the mirror is taken one step further. It is an epistemically relevant statement as such to claim that the mirror gives information about possibilities, but an even bigger claim would be to say that the images provide knowledge about the actualisable domain. If this notion is adopted, the mirror would provide access to the absolutely and objectively existing consequence of events, or at least one of the alternatives that the general laws of the fictional universe allow compared to mere speculated scenarios or different imaginings of the characters, for instance. The problem of causality, too, comes to the fore: Ryan (1991, 113) writes about the "possible future developments of the plot out of the present situation", which indicates the necessity of causal relations. Tempting as this interpretation about actualisable domain is, it can hardly be accepted: the mirror, as Galadriel emphasises, is most uncertain and dangerous to use, and the showing of things that "yet may be" clearly states that not all things seen in the mirror are going to be actualised – some of them never come true and are therefore counterfactual, in other words, false and impossible. Therefore, I would rather argue that taking into account the actualisable domains and the correspondence between them and the predictions is more relevant when evaluating justification, inevitably in hindsight. This is an idea I will further develop in the final section.

3.3.4 Extension of Knowledge – Reliabilism and Justification

It is my hypothesis that what eventually produces incongruences between the conception of knowledge in a supernatural possible world and the actual world is justification, that is what belief-systems and suppositions are based on and what kind of processes are behind them. The criteria that need to be met in order to call something *knowledge* in Tolkien's universe differ from those of the actual world, and sometimes the difference comes down to concepts and inference, sometimes to processes that physically violate the laws of nature. Furthermore, as the ancient and

medieval theoretical context has already shown, there are significant differences also within the actual world and the history of epistemology. This section examines the believability and reliability of supernatural processes of acquiring knowledge in Arda's belief-system, and draws from the main branches of justification theories.

Within the field of epistemology, the theories of justification are many yet their common aim is to form and comprehend notions about the process of justification, to determine what are the reasons behind holding beliefs and how doubt can be reduced – not all means are seen equally acceptable. The analyses of knowledge and of justification often intersect in the conversation and not surprisingly so: the two concepts share a long history, and already in Plato's famous formulation of knowledge as a justified true belief both are present. The core problem justification theories usually strive to unravel is the relationship between belief, believer and reality, finding sufficient reasons for holding beliefs and their trustworthiness with respect to either internal or external forms of justification. Basis is sought from unquestionable core beliefs that serve as the fundamental ground for other beliefs (foundationalism); from coherent belief-systems and mutual support between compatible beliefs (coherentism) and the reliability of the process through which knowledge is acquired (reliabilism), to name a few famous and dominant branches (see for instance BonJour 2010, 181, 186–187). In the light of what has so far been said about the supernatural nature of knowledge and where the supernatural can be attributed, the most fruitful approach seems to be that of reliabilism: in most cases it is the means used to acquire knowledge that are in one way or another supernatural, and the severest counterarguments against this kind of knowledge are naturally targeted at these means, too. Reliabilism, in short, focuses on the reliability of the process that is being used when acquiring knowledge, this process and its soundness serving as the justification for holding a certain belief (BonJour 2010, 209–210.)

Both foundationalism and coherentism certainly provide interesting aspects to the belief-systems, knowledge-formation and justification in Arda, but because

of the emphasis on the supernatural focus will remain on reliabilism. From a foundationalist point of view, the analysis would focus on Arda's basic beliefs, certain core truths that can be taken for granted and based on which all other, further beliefs receive their justification. An approach that draws from coherentism, then again, would focus more on the entirety of the belief-system itself as it is woven in the fictional universe. Coherentism focuses on the relations between beliefs which makes it an internalist approach to justification as opposed to views that focus on the relations between beliefs and something external (BonJour 2010, 187). In this sense, coherentism differs from for instance reliabilism, because the latter favours an externalist approach – justification originates from something else than other beliefs or experiences directly accessible to consciousness. According to BonJour (2010, 187), there are several versions of coherentism, and their approaches to the nature of coherence differ from one another, although the basic idea remains: at core, coherence is primarily a property of a system of beliefs. One of the requirements is logical consistency, which means that logically inconsistent beliefs could not in any possible world be true at the same time. Yet this does not mean that all beliefs that do not conflict with one another could be considered justified by consistency: there may be a set of completely unrelated beliefs that do not contradict merely because they have nothing to do with each other and never intersect – in such cases, consistency is not justification enough, and other, stricter criteria are required. (ibid. 187–188.)

With respect to the supernatural, the most central problem coherentism has to deal with concerns sensory perception and the evidence it provides. BonJour (2010, 190) writes that coherentists could completely deny the justificatory role of perception and merely treat it as the cause of observational beliefs. However, if a less drastic approach is adopted, an alternative would be to give perception *some* justificatory significance when including the larger background beliefs in the treatment:

> The idea here is that the justification of these *observational* beliefs (as they will be referred to here), rather than appealing merely to the coherence of their propositional contents with the contents of other beliefs (so that the way that the belief was produced would be justificationally irrelevant), might appeal instead to a general background belief that beliefs caused in this specific way (and perhaps satisfying further conditions as well) are generally true, where this general belief is in turn supported from within the system of beliefs by inductive inference from many apparently true instances of beliefs of this kind (with the alleged truth of these instances being in turn established by various specific inferences falling under the general heading of coherence). (BonJour 2010. 191.)

The role of the supernatural in the case of observational beliefs, say, when it comes to assessing the reliability and justification of beliefs based on scrying or divinely-inspired dream visions analysed before (the nature of which is both inner to the mind *and* perceptual, as the last chapter discusses), can be approached by studying the general background beliefs BonJour writes about. Even if the cause of the belief itself, that is the perceptual evidence provided by a vision, for instance, is not in itself considered justification, the *method* of supernatural sensory experience can be justified by the coherence of larger set of beliefs. This is to say that as has already been hinted albeit not explicitly discussed, the belief-system of Arda does acknowledge the validity of supernatural means of (visual) perception. The support of coherence and consistency would then concern the notions of the general reliability and soundness of sensory perception and, in this case more importantly, the aspect of the supernatural in it: in short, the individual, propositional content of beliefs that are based on scrying and things seen in visions can be justified in the context of coherence theories because the whole of the belief-system of Arda validates the manner in which they are generated. However, this aspect very much foregrounds the *cause* of the beliefs, and the fact that the beliefs produced in a certain way are generally true; this emphasis steers focus towards reliabilism, which is

in my opinion the more fruitful context in which to study justification with respect to the supernatural.

One of the earliest and the most thorough analyses presented about reliabilism is "A Causal Theory of Knowing" written by Alvin Goldman in 1967. The paper seeks solutions to the inadequacies regarding formulations *S knows that P* pointed out in the famous Gettier's problem[59]. Goldman's analysis focuses on empirical propositions alone, and as such needs to be kept in mind also regarding the next and final section of this study that focuses on perceptual knowledge and, accordingly, empirical truths. Goldman's answer to the Gettier paradox draws attention to the causal relations between propositions, an aspect that has formerly been mostly neglected in the traditional analysis. He also chooses to keep the focus away from inference, in other words he analyses perceptual knowledge independent of further inferences made about the perceived external things. (Goldman 1967, 357–359.) Regarding causal chains connecting a fact (*p*) and a person's belief of *p* based on perception Goldman writes as follows:

> Suppose that *S* sees that there is a vase in front of him. How is this to be analyzed? I shall not attempt a complete analysis of this, but a necessary condition of *S*'s seeing that there is a vase in front of him is that there be a certain kind of causal connection between the presence of the vase and *S*'s believing that a vase is present. [– –] That our ordinary concept of sight (i.e., knowledge acquired by sight) includes a causal requirement is shown by the fact that if the relevant causal process is absent we would withhold the assertion that so-and-so *saw* such-and-such. (Goldman 1967, 358–359.)

This view is further cogitated in chapter four where the focus shifts to perceptual knowledge. Problems arise especially in cases where people perceive something

[59] The Gettier-problem is an argument against the traditional definition of knowledge devised by Edmund Gettier. In his analysis Gettier shows that a belief can be untrue or true by accident and as such totally unjustified, for instance. Gettier's arguments aim to prove that the traditional analysis of knowledge is inadequate and allows loopholes. (BonJour 2010, 40–41.)

that is not actually, physically present – this particular issue will be analysed with respect to Goldman's further examples about problematic causal chains. Regarding epistemic evidence, the causes behind beliefs, the analysis of knowledge acquired through supernatural means faces problems similar to those dealt with in the actual world: it has by now become apparent that the ties between the process of acquiring knowledge, the evidence that supports one's beliefs, and the actual states of affairs cause the greatest issues. In the preceding sections I have treated different kinds of supernatural phenomena, the images seen in the Mirror of Galadriel, for instance, as epistemic evidence. The role of these images as evidence is unclear since the reliability of the process remains to be estimated. This is where the main hypotheses I have made in the Introduction come to the fore most clearly, and the ravine between knowledge and supernatural knowledge begins to deepen: the world of speculative fiction accepts the kind of evidence and processes that would not be held reliable in a more natural world of fiction, let alone the actual world. This kind of knowledge is, as has been pointed out, treated with extreme caution and hesitation, particularly when used in decision-making.

The ever-problematic Mirror of Galadriel must be discussed also with respect to processes of acquiring knowledge. It has been said more than once – both by Galadriel herself in the chapter quoted from *The Lord of the Rings* and in this study – that the mirror is not to be trusted too easily, and action must not be taken based on its visions. However, the reliability of processes hides an interpretational fault especially if one is too eagerly steering doubt and criticism towards the supernatural aspects of knowledge. When explaining the working of the mirror, Galadriel concludes her introduction by saying "[b]ut which it is that he sees, even the wisest cannot always tell." It is reasonable to argue that it is not the mirror itself that is unreliable after all – the possible fault lies in the process of interpreting and reasoning rather than the process of scrying. Using a magical tool for scrying, something that mere common sense and centuries of rational thinking define as epistemically unjustified foolishness, is in Tolkien's fiction an epistemically justified

means for seeking knowledge – both with respect to the previously pondered coherence theory and the theory of reliabilism now at hand. I want to emphasise that this general justification of means of foreseeing concerns the *methods* themselves, without saying anything about the persons using them: the seers' varying inadequacies and misinterpretations, their possible lack of skill, bring along risks. The weak link in the process as a whole is the fallible human reason, the restricted ability of interpretation. It is not the means that are feeble and unsure but those who use them. Also, with the *palantíri* it is the strength and will of mind of the beholder that determines how the magical tools can be used and if they in the end prove to be harmful rather than useful:

> Now these Stones had this virtue that those who looked therein might perceive in them things far off, whether in place or in time. For the most part they revealed only things near to another kindred Stone, for the Stones each called to each; but those who possessed great strength of will and of mind might learn to direct their gaze wither they would. Thus the Númenóreans were aware of many things that their enemies wished to conceal, and little escaped their vigilance in the days of their might. (*The Silmarillion*, 350.)

The dangers of misinterpretations have been discussed by Shippey (2007, 316), according to whom "[w]hat you see in the *palantír* is true, for the *palantír* does not lie, but it is normal to draw from it a wrong conclusion [– –]." This speaks for the reliability of the method itself, the supernatural process of drawing informative images from a magical object, but the reasoning process that then begins produces problems. The *palantír* shows things that really are true, but deducing the right context is the truly trying part. The skill and will of the viewer set limits to the reliability of scrying and interpreting visions, whether seen in a magical object or in a dream. Regarding the *palantíri*, the importance of strength and ability is handled more thoroughly in *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* (393) where it is explained that the surveyor of the stone could with considerable effort distinguish

small details in the visions, such as enlarge certain figures by hard concentration, but it was both difficult and tiring. In this case, the viewer's capability is relevant not only with respect to the rational process of interpretation but is extended to the very perceptual experience itself and the content of the vision.

Alongside the emphasis on skill emerges an interesting epistemic peculiarity of the fictional world, one that is very important and revealing when it comes to determining the ways in which conceptions of knowledge in speculative fiction may differ from those in realistic fiction or everyday understanding of knowledge. Returning to Lynch's (1988) medieval dream study, the world of fantasy clearly weighs imagination and reason with a different scale than realistic or actual world would. Imagination, if understood as the conjuring of images from what hopefully is a divine source, is the reliable part of the process. While imagination in the medieval dream context was the unsure actor likely to err, the roles are here switched: it is reason that may lead to incorrect interpretations, and the mental abilities and strength of the viewer or dreamer determine the outcome of the process of knowledge-formation and its success. Justification by reliability favours in Tolkien's world the supernatural, the divine and the imaginative while presenting the reasoning mind as the weak link of the process. Same applies not only to the sudden visions and dreams unasked for and unsought, but also to the more conscious and deliberate processes of seeking knowledge using supernatural means, such as using magical mirrors or seeing stones, the *palantíri*. This is not to say that rationality, reason and interpretation would in any way be scorned or belittled in the belief-system of Arda, only that their reliability has its limits and that the fictional worlds allows possibilities of knowledge that the mind cannot always keep up with. Inference is no longer the sound and trustworthy part, but still it is most certainly necessary and without it the supernaturally acquired evidence never becomes knowledge.

3.3.5 Knowing the Supernatural

One last aspect of supernatural knowledge is yet to be discussed. This final section of chapter three has its starting-point in Tolkien's aforementioned essay "On Fairy-stories" and the very concept of *supernatural*. Focus will now shortly move away from supernatural knowledge and set on knowing the supernatural instead. This is a relevant aspect because it concerns the extension of knowledge, asking what kind of things in a world of fantasy are beyond knowledge, whether acquired through natural or supernatural means. It also brings attention to the fact that even in a fantasy universe some things and phenomena require supernatural explanation or are considered supernatural, depending on the perspective in each case: the interventions of the Valar often fall to this category (see McBride 2020, 103; 121). In his essay Tolkien (1983, 110) expresses clear unwillingness to use the word *supernatural* and claims that particularly in the context of faërie it is often misused and misunderstood. His view is that it is not elves or fairies that are *super*natural but humans instead: fairies are the ones who are truly natural in comparison. In modern discussion, the previously introduced idea of more-than-human could also be used to study the difference, but the very word *supernatural* is nonetheless where the treatment of this section begins. Here focus is drawn to the associations evoked by the Latin origins of the prefix, the meaning of which has to do with being above or beyond something – in this case, above the natural. In this case super, above and beyond are treated very literally, regarding both the metaphysical nature of the universe and the mental borders of understanding. In this section the concept of *super*natural extends from one form of knowing and knowledge-seeking into an object of epistemic pursuit, one that remains unachieved.

Supernatural as a word has therefore two possible interpretations regarding knowledge. First, as has been pondered in the previous sections, it can refer to forms of knowing that use means, tools or skills that somehow surpass natural boundaries. Concealed divinity, then again, refers to supernatural as an unachieved

object of epistemic pursuit. Tolkien's fiction is rich with – in lack of a better word – *glimpses* of the world beyond, such as those in Frodo's previously analysed dreams. For a start I will now return to "The Music of the Ainur", the first chapter of *The Silmarillion*. Regarding things *above* and *beyond* in Tolkien's Eä the clearest and most transcendent entity would probably be Eru Ilúvatar, the creator-god. The epistemic and intellectual ravine between Ilúvatar and the Ainur, lesser gods of Tolkien's pantheon, is torn at the very beginning of creation and *The Silmarillion* itself:

> But for a long while they [the Ainur] sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened; for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. Yet ever as they listened they came to deeper understanding, and increased in unison and harmony. (*The Silmarillion*, 3.)

Also in the spiritual world there is a clear metaphysical hierarchy between deities and other mighty beings – the chain of being or *scala naturae*, the idea that has formed in the writings of both Plato and Aristotle and further developed in the medieval Neo-Platonic and Christian Platonic theories. Eru Ilúvatar, the Prime Mover of Tolkien's universe, dwells in the Timeless Halls beyond the borders of the physical world and is ever unaffected by both time and place: he is untouchable and eternal, steady and unchanging. Korpua's reading of Tolkien's chain of being includes insightful analyses of the problems of soul and body, change and permanence with respect to C.S. Lewis's, Lovejoy's and Flieger's theories. (Korpua 2015, 64–76.) Ilúvatar could fairly be said to represent divine intellect and supernatural knowledge on its highest and purest level, but at the same time divinity is something that is yearned for but cannot be reached from outside. Tolkien's Eä is spiritual rather than material in nature, and I argue that in the end it is Ilúvatar's all-encompassing mind that is able to bridge the gap between the two: the physical world comes into being through thought and word, Music and Vision, the immate-

rial rather than material, and the Ainur who design the world in their Music are nothing more or less than "the offspring of his thought". It is because of this divine origin, the chance to see the Vision, and their innate power that allows the Ainur, the first of all creation, to know much (but not all) of the unfolding of the world and its events. Ilúvatar himself, however, remains ever beyond. The knowledge of the Ainur (or, since the stories mainly focus on those who entered Eä, the Valar for the most part) is vast but yet "each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came" – the perspective is restricted, and the divine is concealed for the most part. Ilúvatar keeps himself even from other deities.

As Korpua (2021, 83–84; see also 2015, 67–68) writes, it is rather problematic to perceive Eru Ilúvatar as Prime Mover who remains uninfluenced by movement and change. The relationship between the highest deity and created world comes to the fore, and Korpua (2021, 83) ponders that if Eru is treated as the Prime Mover, "then how did he set the world in motion if he himself is untouched by movement or change?" This question, as Korpua (ibid. 83) mentions, is one that also troubled ancient and medieval thinkers. Epistemically the incomprehensible, unchanging god somehow steers focus back to the division between Idea and its realisation, the unchanging and permanent reality and its imperfect copy that is the physical world. The Idea, both the Music and the Vision, originate in Ilúvatar, and he himself is both physically and spiritually beyond time. Just as the World of Forms cannot be known, Ilúvatar too remains out of reach – the permanent and the unchanging remains beyond comprehension, at least for as long as time passes. It is not the first Great Music that allows understanding, but the one that is played at the end once the world ceases to be; this is when Ilúvatar's design is revealed at last:

> Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar by the choirs of the

> Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased. (*The Silmarillion*, 4.)

The unfolding of the world can be fully comprehended in hindsight, as the passage suggests. Yet its result is anticipated and assumed, just as Ilúvatar himself is postulated as a true entity. Such metaphysical assumptions about reality and the divine often follow hermeneutical notions about understanding, particularly with respect to hindsight. The tension between *a priori* knowledge and verification in hindsight is an interesting epistemic detail particularly when it comes to the divine and the supernatural that for the most characters remain beyond reach: just as the Ainur have an inner idea of darkness before perceiving it for the first time, there is a firm belief about the right state of the themes of Ilúvatar even though they are still far from being realised. Understanding is anticipated and promised, and there are prevailing prejudices about it; full understanding and acquaintance with the divine will, I argue, be formed side by side with the knowledge already acquired in the manner Gadamer, for instance, has claimed understanding and interpretation to work:

> There is always a world already interpreted, already organized in its basic relations, into which experience steps as something new, upsetting what has led our expectations and undergoing reorganization itself in the upheaval. [– –] Only the support of familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien, the lifting up of something out of the alien, and thus the broadening and enrichment of our own experience of the world. (Gadamer 1976,15.)

The weak link in the knowledge-formation in a world that allows supernatural knowledge is the fallibility of inference and interpretation. Even knowing the supernatural, the eventual understanding of the divine scheme and design that is to

come, is deeply rooted in the natural: the process of interpretation, based on the familiar and the common, the natural and the everyday, is the primary condition for coming nearer to the divine and things beyond. These can only be comprehended with the help of that which is already known, as Gadamer writes. It is not surprising that Christian (and, perhaps, religious in a larger sense) initiation is often pondered in this manner, also in fantasy literature that makes clear references to Christianity. Lewis's *Narnia*-series, for instance, often discusses knowledge about God and afterlife, and an interesting exchange of words in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is between Edmund and Aslan:

> "Are – are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.
> "I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there." (*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 361.)

All the adventures in Narnia and the voyages in the first place are treated as the first stage of understanding God. The literality of fantasy surfaces once again: it is by experiencing the real battles between good and evil, by witnessing literal sacrifices and temptations as parts of Narnian adventures that the children are prepared to become acquainted with Christian themes and God in a more abstract and spiritual sense in their own world. The world of stories, magical creatures and adventures is perhaps more graspable for a child, and it is by learning about Aslan in this familiar context (about God that is both frightening and reassuring as the great lion can be) that helps when the transition towards higher stages of understanding begins.

Returning to the passage about the Second Music the Ainur and the Children one day weave together, another interesting and also more complicated matter that arises is that understanding god and creation begins with the Children. Even the Ainur, being a part of Ilúvatar's mind, cannot comprehend his design without

first learning about his Children – and it is only the Music played in unison with them that allows this understanding. In other words, access to the divine is through the mortal and secular, much like I already implied above referring to the natural, hermeneutical process rooted in that which is already familiar. The arch from the first Music to the second can be seen as a quest for understanding and knowledge as a whole: the first Music shapes and designs the world, and its unfolding and the work of the Valar is a never-ending task to fulfil that which was seen in the Vision. The task is at last completed in the second Music where Ilúvatar's intent is laid bare and each being, taking part in the Music, rather hermeneutically understands their part in the entirety of the universe. I therefore argue that understanding the eternal and unchanging requires a transition to this state: it is only after time ceases to be that the creatures of Eä are able to comprehend that which has always been beyond time's influence.

It must be kept in mind that divinity and the supernatural cannot be treated synonymously. In this section the divine, mainly the all-encompassing, creative power of Ilúvatar, has been treated as the most obvious example of supernatural in the sense of being above nature. As obvious as it may seem (at least in this context and within the frame the concept is used here), one of the most striking characteristics of supernaturality is the ability to exist *prior* to all things of nature – that is, the ability to be before creation. Korpua (2021, 61) addresses this ability, pointing out that the timespan of the fictional universe "ranges from pre-existence to physical existence, and on to the end of the physical world. [– –] This era – before the Creation – could therefore be called spiritual pre-existence." Existence before creation is in Tolkien's legendarium intertwined with a concept most puzzling, the Flame Imperishable, that for instance McIntosh (2017) studies meticulously. The flame is referred to in the quoted paragraph as the secret fire that "Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts" once the second Music is played. In many ways the flame represents that which originates from Ilúvatar alone, the brightest goal of pursuit and one that cannot be received unless granted by him. In one sense the flame

refers to being itself, true existence, as is written in "Ainulindalë": "And I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be [– –]." (*The Silmarillion*, 9) It is together with the flame and Ilúvatar's word of command, *Eä*, that the world begins. It can be interpreted that immortal soul comes from the flame, as does free will, and the entire power of creation and being is therefore centred around the secret fire. This is the power that Melkor seeks before the shaping of the world: "He [Melkor] had gone often alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame; for desire grew hot within him to bring into Being things of his own, and it seemed to him that Ilúvatar took no thought of the Void, and he was impatient of its emptiness." (*The Silmarillion*, 4.) Melkor's intent is expressed most clearly: he wishes to unlock the secrets of being and creation and to wield the power acquired with this knowledge. To find the flame is not only to find the divine but to become the divine, too, to exist outside of all boundaries of time and place.

The flame offers much insight into the relationships between the divine and other beings and deepens the metaphysical gulf between Eru and the Ainur, determining the hierarchy even more explicitly. McIntosh (2017, 51–52) writes about the metaphysical significance of Flame Imperishable, and according to him, free will and sub-creation are only some of the effects of the flame. From Melkor's viewpoint, the flame is the desirable but unattainable condition for being able to bring thoughts into being, and therefore the power to create new things out of nothing is exclusive to the creator. The flame, according to McIntosh's interpretation, is the gift of existence itself: "[t]he Imperishable Flame, in sum, is nothing less than the creative force or power of the Creator whereby he gives the gift of being – whether it be the gift of material existence, in the case of the physical world, or the gift of free, spiritual, sub-creative existence bestowed on rational yet finite beings." (ibid. 52.) The flame is intertwined with all forms of existence dependent on the one source, and as such it well represents not only the strictness of the metaphysical hierarchy but also that which is accessible to Eru alone, albeit sought by others.

Knowing the supernatural, reaching towards something that is beyond, can also be approached deontically: there is knowledge that is to be sought and knowledge that is to be avoided. An example of dishonourable endeavours would be the methods of science or arts Númenoreans employ to gain immortality[60]:

> 'It is not said that evil arts were ever practised in Gondor, or that the Nameless One was ever named in honour there; and the old wisdom and beauty brought out of the West remained long in the realm of the sons of Elendil the Fair, and they linger there still. Yet even so it was Gondor that brought about its own decay, falling by degrees into dotage [– –].
> 'Death was ever present, because the Númenoreans still, as they had in their old kingdom, and so lost it, hungered after endless life unchanging. [– –] Childless lords sat in aged halls musing on heraldry; in secret chambers withered men compounded strong elixirs, or in high cold towers asked questions of the stars. (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, II, v, 694.)

The faults of the Númenoreans are in the passage many: not completely unlike Saruman in his dark ring-lore, they seek to unlock secrets that they have no right to study in order to achieve things they should not pursue. This arrogance is taken even further in the case of Black Númenoreans, of whom Korpua (2021, 173) writes that they "enamored evil knowledge and worshipped Sauron as their god". Seeking immortality and, by extension, becoming divine is the most obvious of these faults. This is an example of a much larger issue in Arda, that is the fearful attitude towards death and the inability to see death as Eru's gift for Men because

[60] One of the central questions dealt with in *Morgoth's Ring* is that of immortality and the differences between the fates of Elves and Men – this matter will be further addressed in chapter 4.4. The tragedy of the Númenoreans is their increasing fear of death and their inability to perceive it as a gift of Ilúvatar as intended. The island of Númenor drowned because of the proudness and insubordination of its rulers, primarily because they sought to sail West into the continent of Aman in hope of immortality. This corruption is analysed by Korpua (2015, 169–170), who reads the Downfall of Númenor side by side with Plato's Atlantis myth. The line of Númenoreans preserved in the kingdom of Gondor, but their descend did not end for good: the fear of death caused many to succumb to questionable sciences and postponing death as far as possible, until they became little more than beasts without sense and understanding. (See for instance *The Lord of the Rings*, *TT*, II, v, 694.)

Melkor "has cast his shadow upon it, and confounded it with darkness, and brought forth evil out of good, and fear out of hope." (*The Silmarillion*, 36.) A small but noteworthy detail is in the thirst of the Númenoreans for "endless life *unchanging*". The this-worldly and the changeable imperfection of physical world are not to be scorned, because, as Lovejoy (1957, 47–48) points out in his discussion about the history of Platonic idea, the supreme, divine being indeed needs the created, imperfect world in order to be complete and good. In spite of the hierarchies between Idea and its realisation, the eternal and the changeable world, the latter is not to be disdained – and yet, the Númenoreans do.

An interesting detail emerges in the wisdom and high learnedness of the Númenoreans and their descendants: the higher the knowledge, the more dangerous when misapplied, if generalised. A kinship based on corruptive education and misguided learning can also be found in *The Republic* where it is asked whether "the most gifted minds, when they are ill-educated, become preeminently bad? Do not great crimes and the spirit of pure evil spring out of a fulness of nature ruined by education [– –]?" (*The Republic*, 182). The greater the gifts and potentials, the more damage is done when their guidance goes astray – this applies to the noble Númenoreans, too. Returning once more to Tolkien's use of the word *supernatural*, it is fascinating that what the Númenoreans try to achieve is supernatural existence, but should they succeed, the result would because of the laws of the fictional universe be something quite else – *un*natural. The methods that as such can be considered valid – studying stars and practicing chemistry – are applied in a manner that begins to resemble alchemy. Even if the methods themselves hold, the goal they serve does not: the justified extension of scientific pursuits is ignored and the limits, both moral and scientific, forgotten.

This chapter as a whole has been concerned with two main concepts, *knowledge* and the *supernatural*, and explored how they become intertwined and how they can best be applied with respect to issues of language, magic and the divine. Theoretically, possible world theories and medieval notions of dreams and visions

form the largest part of the context, and questions of reliability and the justifiable extension of knowledge have been of main interest. The examples the analyses have been chiefly concerned with are about the prophetic, knowledge-providing visions and the methods of acquiring information with the help of magical objects, by scrying, for instance. Visions are supernatural both because of their origin and causation and because of their ability to broaden the extension of knowledge, offering information about the future, for instance, and in doing so challenging some epistemological views such as correspondence-theory-based views of truth.

Analysing the relationship between the supernatural constituents of knowledge-formation and reason and inference, I discovered that regarding reliability, Tolkien's supernatural possible world turns upside down the intuitive understanding of errors as originating in false visions and hallucinations. Instead, it suggests that the unreliability of the process has more to do with interpretation and cognitive abilities – the natural link of the chain is more fallible than the supernatural point of origin. While the medieval tones in Tolkien's legendarium have been discussed by previous scholars, the analysis of this chapter introduces new insights into the cooperation of reason, revelation, interpretation and the divine, all of which are important components of both medieval philosophical and theological discussion and of Arda's epistemology. The analyses show that bringing together medieval philosophy and modern conceptions of epistemology benefits from the concept of the supernatural and enables better understanding of the epistemic nature of possible worlds of speculative fiction. Studying the supernatural components of knowledge-formation processes also reveals the hierarchical order of different forms and types of knowledge, particularly with respect to wisdom and ethical aspects of knowing: I have argued that acquiring knowledge does not automatically justify using said knowledge in decision making and practice, which indicates that knowledge about the future, for instance, is often only sought and valued for its own sake.

4. PERCEPTION, IMAGINATION AND THE EPISTEMIC POSITION OF SENSORY WORLD

> 'But it is still dark,' said Gimli. 'Even Legolas on a hill-top could not see them till the Sun is up.'
> 'I fear they have passed beyond my sight from hill or plain, under moon or sun,' said Legolas.
> 'Where sight fails the earth may bring us rumour,' said Aragorn. 'The land must groan under their hated feet.' He stretched himself upon the ground with his ear pressed against the turf. [– –]
> 'The rumour of the earth is dim and confused,' he said. 'Nothing walks upon it for many miles about us. Faint and far are the feet of our enemies. But loud are the hoofs of horses. [– –.]' (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, ii, 436–437.)

A supernatural possible world allows perception to stretch sharper and wider than a world restricted by natural laws of physics, and these possibilities are often taken advantage of in speculative fiction: magical creatures, heroes or some selected humans, even, may possess perceptual abilities that far surpass natural boundaries. In a supernatural world sight can pierce solid matter or reach beyond immeasurable distances; hearing can detect even the faintest of sounds from far away. Yet it is not perception alone that is extraordinary but the abilities of interpretation, too: a verse sung in a foreign language can all of a sudden become intelligible to the hearer even though the language itself is unknown, as happens to Frodo every now and then (see *The Lord of the Rings FR*, I, iii, 81, for instance). In such cases it is nigh impossible to tell where the element of the supernatural precisely occurs: the formation of perceptual knowledge consists of several stages from (the much debated)

external entity to a perceptual belief, and between the two there are causal chains, sensory observations and possible mistakes, impressions, mental images and interpretations. Even though the supernatural is difficult to attribute to any singular, specific moment or occurrence, it is safe to say that a world of fantasy, also that of Tolkien, often entertains the possibility of supernatural perception.

In Tolkien's fiction the superb abilities of perception often come to the fore when Elves are at the centre: the keen eyes of Legolas keep watch and allow the Fellowship to prepare for troubles, and some characters such as Galadriel are able to extend their perceptual powers to others through enchanted objects. Yet mundane, practical knowledge moulded by experience is of great value, too. Aragorn son of Arathorn, whom the hobbits first get to know as Strider in the inn of the Prancing Pony, is highly learned in lore and history: for his entire life he has been educated in elvish wisdom, and his tutors include some of the greatest minds in all Middle-earth, including Elrond, the lord of Rivendell. Yet it is neither lore nor contemplation that saves the hobbits from grave perils time after time, although they are often of use. Aragorn is the heir of kings and a possessor of vast knowledge, but in the untamed wilderness he is first and foremost a wanderer, a hunter, a warrior and a ranger. Years of experience have taught him to read his environment, understand the winds, waters and lands, taught him how to hide and how to find supplies, how to make way in secret and under extreme circumstances. Aragorn's abilities and superb survival skills rely on *experience*, *perception* and *observation* and are as such drawn from the physical world. In the citation above, three members of the broken Fellowship, Gimli, Aragorn and Legolas, put to use all their capacity and cunning in the pursuit of their enemies. Where the eyes of Legolas fail, the skill of Aragorn takes on.

The characters in Tolkien's universe comprehend the surrounding reality, find their ways and formulate their opinions and notions about the world according to that which they perceive, whether by natural use of senses or peering into magical objects, for instance. Perception-based gaining of knowledge is, of course,

only one of the ways to grasp the world, but it is quite dominant in everyday life. An obvious line of analysis to pursue would be to focus on the practical value of knowledge, the concrete ways perception makes the world understandable and guides action – as such, the treatment of perceptual knowledge would become tightly intertwined with *phronesis*, the previously discussed practical wisdom that manifests itself in decision-making and judgement. While such an approach would surely provide insight to the practical value of sensory perception the importance of which should be kept in mind as one of the primary conditions for navigating in the world, the analyses of this chapter will focus on the supernatural peculiarities of sensory world and perceptual knowledge instead.

In a nutshell this chapter examines the nature of perceptual knowledge and its role as a part of the epistemic system of Eä. As such it forms a whole of its own but simultaneously serves as a conclusion for the analyses begun in chapters two and three, being tightly intertwined with both. Perception can hardly be escaped: both being in the world and comprehending the world are infiltrated by perception, either literally or figuratively. Furthermore, perceptual observations are very much steered by the metaphysical structures of the world outlined in the second chapter but also by the complicated relationships between the private worlds of characters as was discussed with the help of Ryan's (1991) theory. The compatibility of private spheres and the textual actual world will be returned to when studying the perceptual nature of supernatural visions. In Tolkien's universe the spiritual level is higher and primary (see for instance Korpua 2021, 69), but even the abstract realm of spirit and thought is not entirely without perception: the primeval Music is sung and heard, the Vision is woven and seen, and many things that are essentially immaterial are described and encountered in a manner that draws from the world of perception. Perception is therefore an essential problem regarding the metaphysical peculiarities of the fictional world. Importantly, it is not the metaphysical characteristics of the world alone that influence perception but the metaphysical status of the observers themselves, too. This becomes evident in situations

in which the ontological position of a character changes either temporarily or permanently, a metaphysical phenomenon that Korpua (2021, 73–76) analyses in the context of the Rings of Power and as a central quality of certain characters, such as Gandalf. The most obvious example of such an occurrence would be placing the One Ring on one's finger, for the Ring draws the bearer into the world of shadows and makes him see the surrounding world differently[61]. Something similar happens to Frodo after he is attacked by Ring-Wraiths and stabbed with their blade: from there on, Frodo is in between two metaphysical levels, quicker to become aware of the presence of the invisible. When he sees Elven-lord Glorfindel, it appears to him that "a white light was shining through the form and raiment of the rider, as if through a thin veil" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, xii, 217) – it is here important that the text specifically states that this is how the rider appears to *Frodo*, not the whole company. Frodo's wound heals only partially, changing him for good so that "[h]is senses were sharper and more aware of things that could not be seen. One sign of change that he soon had noticed was that he could see more in the dark than any of his companions, save perhaps Gandalf." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, iv, 319). It should be kept in mind, however, that the perceptual changes caused by the wound are for the most part hard to distinguish from other factors such as the influence of carrying the Ring, let alone wearing it.

With respect to supernatural knowledge and the problems discussed in the third chapter, equally important questions arise. In a supernatural world neither the perceiving senses nor the world they observe always follow the laws of nature; this peculiarity I will study particularly with respect to causal theories of knowing as they are presented by Goldman (1967). The causation of knowledge-providing perceptual phenomena is one of the most notable instances of the supernatural

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[61] Invisibility and its influence on eyesight have been interestingly analysed by Michael Wodzak and Victoria Holtz-Wodzak (2014, 132) in their article "*Visibílium Ómnium et Invisibílium*: Looking Out, On, and In Tolkien's World". Wodzak and Holtz-Wodzak point out that the Ring changes the sensory observations of its wearer with special interest in the fact that the invisibility granted by the Ring always comes with partial blindness: the physical world fades away as the shadows come to the fore. This detail will be discussed in section 4.2.2.

and, as was remarked with the help of Knuuttila's (1993, 132) study, in medieval theory, for instance in Aquinas' writings, supernatural or divine causation was separated from natural causation, surpassing it and being able to actualise things that always lack natural cause. Indeed, the supernatural is both openly and subtly at work in the context of perception in Tolkien's world: the senses may become mingled, or they can be much sharper and accurate than in the actual world. The world itself, then again, is able to confuse the senses, and the line between material and immaterial often fades away, allowing the characters to see something that is not actually present. The prevalent substance can change all of a sudden, when the material world gives way to visions and mirages – which, albeit immaterial in nature, are nonetheless accessible to their beholders through perception.

Analyses about the cooperation of the material and the immaterial further develop the questions uttered in the third chapter, particularly with respect to dream-visions. The abstract and immaterial side of perceptual experiences is one of the key issues the following sections pursue to resolve, and for this reason Plato's dialogues, causal theories of knowing and a few instrumental epistemological tools such as sense-datum theories will be accompanied by medieval notions on perception and its reliability. The medieval theories also serve as a link between the third and fourth chapters as a whole, for they include aspects concerning supernaturality, divine instruction, perceptual errors and the relationship between the material and the spiritual alike: the discussion touches many of the questions these sections are concerned with. The medieval aspects will be approached with the help of José Filipe Silva and Juhana Toivainen's (2019) study about perceptual errors in medieval epistemology. Their treatment "Perceptual Errors in Late Medieval Philosophy" discusses selected medieval approaches to sensory experiences and their interpretations, and the authors are specifically interested in perceptual anomalies. Their study introduces medieval thinkers from William of Ockham to John Blund, Alhacen, Albertus Magnus and Peter Auriol, for instance, and they follow a distinction between two dominant branches, that of Aristotelianism and that of perspec-

tivist tradition. Silva and Toivainen's study will be returned to in the analyses to follow, but with respect to the overall significance and status of perceptual knowledge they point out that in the medieval perspectivist tradition, for instance, it was thought that the general reliability of perceptual knowledge was not corrupted by occasional errors in the perceptual processes (ibid. 159). This is a central remark, and a similar approach should in my opinion also be adopted here: perception may at times fail for many reasons, both natural and supernatural, but the overall possibility of perceptual knowledge should not be cast aside for good. In a supernatural possible world, it must be kept in mind that perceptual anomalies are not necessarily perceptual *errors*.

Since the approach has in more than one way been and will continue to be much intertwined with Theory of Forms, writing about perceptual knowledge is bound to be difficult: a crucial doctrine in Plato's philosophy (but not quite as straightforwardly in the Neoplatonist tradition) is that perception does not provide knowledge. However, in Tolkien's fiction the role of perception, especially sight, is not only crucial but highly thematised, too: this is most clearly evident in the Eye of Sauron, the symbol of all-perceiving, omnipresent evil. Treating perception as a source of knowledge, albeit often an unreliable one, can be defended by the tendency of altering the relationship between literal and metaphorical in Tolkien's fiction. Flieger (2002, 49) writes that in Tolkien's work things that in the real world – or, using Tolkien's (1983, 139–140) own concepts, the Primary World – would be treated as metaphors, are in his fictional universe taken literally. Later in this chapter I will return to the light-motif and its ability to expand knowledge, perhaps even allow brief access to the Idea. This kind of analysis is only possible if the literal occurrences of light's epistemic power are taken into account – if the sun is treated solely as an image of the Form of the Good as it is intended in the Analogy of the Sun and the literal level of the analogy is omitted entirely, the approach soon becomes unusable. By paying attention to the dialectic of the literal and the meta-

phorical it is possible to keep in mind both sides and analyse also the world of perception in terms of knowledge.

Most of the text excerpts are concerned with visual perception, and the reason for this is the prominent epistemic relevance of light. However, other sensory abilities and anomalies occur, too: the Ring-Wraiths, for instance, being deprived of seeing the visible world normally, use the sense of smell if not in a supernatural manner, at least in a manner uncharacteristic for humans: "[f]rom inside the hood came a noise as if someone sniffing to catch an elusive scent; the head turned from side to side of the road", and Frodo's immediate description: "'I can't say why, but I felt certain he was looking or *smelling* for me [– –]'" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, iii, 77). When sight is taken away, other senses may naturally become sharper – however, in the case of the Wraiths, it is more about being predisposed to sense the presence of the Ring and of living beings. This is explained by Aragorn, who says that "[s]enses, too, there are other than sight or smell. [– –] 'Also,' he added, and his voice sank to a whisper, 'the Ring draws them.'" (ibid. I, xi, 197.) According to Aragorn, the Wraiths see living beings as shadows *in their minds*, which in itself is a notable remark about the wavering borders between perceptual and mental abilities and phenomena.

Perception, seeing especially, is intertwined not only with the epistemic status of characters but with their metaphysical position, too. It is worth pointing out that, particularly with respect to the questions of language discussed in the third chapter, that the acts of looking and perceiving are necessary constituents of the names the Elves have devised for themselves, and therefore also of their identity. Fliger (2002, 73–74) writes that the elven speech is ignited when the Elves come into consciousness on the strands of lake Cuiviénen and look up to the dim sky and its glittering stars: the sight invites speech as a primitive exclamation "ele" which means *behold* and from which Elven names derive. Importantly, Flieger (ibid. 74) continues by stating that "[t]his, their first perception, is also the agent of their separation, dividing the see-ers from the seen and at the same time characterizing

those see-ers by what they perceive." Later she returns to this thought and includes in it epistemically relevant aspects. According to Flieger, the Elves are sundered from one another into smaller groups all of which are at a different distance from (semi) divine light, both metaphorically and literally: regarding the difference between the Elves who beheld the light and those who did not, she writes that "[t]his later division, however, brings the language a little closer to metaphor, since light and darkness can easily translate into enlightenment and obfuscation, and the two words thus reflect a mental or spiritual state in physical terms." (ibid. 82.) Perception, language, identity and epistemic status are therefore linked through shared strands of meaning, metaphor and actual, physical light. This idea resurfaces also in my own analysis, and for instance the differences between the perceptual abilities of characters who belong to different metaphysical levels discussed in section 4.3.2 "In between worlds: knowledge and metaphysical transformation", is kindred to Flieger's thought. However, my primary purpose is to study various aspects of perceptual knowledge, and all the analyses I provide about the light-motif are first and foremost concerned with its philosophical and epistemological relevance, either as perception-enabling condition, as a concept kindred to Plato's notion of *good* or as epistemic enlightenment more generally.

In the following analysis, especially in section 4.3, the literal level of interpretation is mostly concerned with light's ability to open access to knowledge and truth. Given Flieger's remark about treating the metaphorical as literal, I have chosen to apply this approach also to my use of the source material, in this case particularly the Analogy of the Sun presented in the sixth book of *The Republic* and the Chariot Allegory from *Phaedrus*. This is where the distinction between philosophical theory and philosophical literature, fiction, even, becomes most blurred: not only am I reading Tolkien's fiction paying much attention to the literal but also approaching Plato's analogy in this manner, focusing on the illustration itself rather than the thing being illustrated. The literary nature and mythological elements of

the theoretical material are highlighted also in the concluding section "Recalling the world: Men and *anamnesis*".

I will begin with a brief overview of the epistemological issues of perception, including a short, general introduction about empiricism and the relationships between the world, perception and belief. Theoretically, the most important underlying division is between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge, and the preliminary assumption is that perceptual knowledge is first and foremost concerned with the latter, as the history of epistemology heavily stresses. However, as fundamental as the division is, the relationship between a priori and a posteriori becomes more complicated in the analysis: divinatory knowledge in particular makes it difficult to determine the causal chains of belief formation and justification with respect to perceptual evidence. All in all, three main lines can be found in the theoretical core of the following treatment: the Platonic approach that brings together the metaphysical and epistemological questions; the medieval context that links the analyses to dream-visions, imagination, divine and supernatural perceptual anomalies; and finally, the basic questions and concepts of empiricism with the help of which the perceptual phenomena are approached and positioned in the theoretical frame. The analysis, then again, has four main points of interest: I will first concentrate on the fluctuating nature of the perceptible world and the mingling of the senses, after which I will take a closer look at the transitions between the material and the immaterial and their perceptibility. The third section examines the role of light in visual perception and the possibility of knowing the permanent and eternal through the changing and secular, and the chapter's conclusion presents interpretations in which perception is seen as something that ignites processes of relearning and remembering rather than serves as a source of knowledge in itself.

4.1 Reliability of Perceptual Knowledge and the Supernatural

> 'It wasn't funny that way, Mr. Frodo. It was queer. All wrong, if it wasn't a dream. And you had best hear it. It was like this: I saw a log with eyes!' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, ix, 392.)

> '[– –] And did you not see and recognize the ring upon my finger? Did you see my ring?' she asked turning again to Sam.
> 'No, Lady,' he answered. 'To tell you the truth, I wondered what you were talking about. I saw a star through your fingers. [– –]' (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 376.)

Both of these examples present situations in which a character, Sam Gamgee, questions his own visual perception and tries to make sense of it because something makes him doubt his eyes. Explanations and reasoning are indeed called for: In the latter example, Sam's perceptual experience is different from that of two other present characters, Frodo and Galadriel. In the first excerpt, then again, he sees something that his sensible mind knows to be highly unlikely, if not entirely impossible – he sees a log with eyes floating in the river (in Middle-earth, creatures like Ents provide one possible explanation that would validate Sam's perception, but that is not the case here). Even though both examples involve questioning of perceptual evidence, the situations differ from one another at least in two ways. In the case of the log, emphasis is on Sam's later interpretation and pondering, trying to find an explanation for an anomaly: he is drowsy, only half awake, and wonders if the log might have been a dream. Soon after he recounts his observation to Frodo and adds more information that is incongruent with his log-interpretation: "[t]hen it seemed as if the log was slowly catching us up. And that was peculiar, as you might say, seeing as we were all floating on the stream together." (ibid. 392–393.) At this point, Sam has already made his deductions and arrived at the conclusion that it was Gollum he saw, tailing the company. This is an example of a very mun-

dane phenomenon, seeing something that differs from usual, credible perception and needs to be explained in order to fit. The second example, on the other hand, involves a supernatural element that explains why Sam's perceptual private sphere differs from those of Frodo and Galadriel: he is not a Ring-Bearer and therefore cannot see Nenya, Galadriel's Ring of Power, and to his eyes it seems as if a star was shining through her fingers. The first example is about explaining and interpreting that which is observed; the second is about limits of perception: Sam does not doubt his eyes when seeing a bright star instead of a ring until it is revealed that the other two saw something he did not.

The question this chapter in its entirety is mostly concerned with is at its simplest where perception stands in the process of knowledge formation, particularly with respect to the supernatural: by introducing different perceptual peculiarities emerging in the fictional world, I try to resolve whether perception should be considered a reliable tool, a hindrance or a form of deception with respect to knowledge. Throughout the previous sections the world of perception has continuously been treated as secondary and unreliable; this approach is a result of both the Platonic framework and Tolkien's fictional world that repeatedly favours the abstract and spiritual over the apparent and physical. Yet the role of sensory perception cannot be entirely omitted when studying the foundation and formation of knowledge, and also in the later Neoplatonic tradition the attitude is much more allowing (Remes 2008, 137). As was the case in the third chapter, here, too, placing the *supernatural* is a central issue. Perceptual anomalies and complications in the causal processes of forming beliefs based on perception such as those Goldman (1967, 358–359) discusses are phenomena that repeatedly occur in everyday life, having given reason to doubt the reliability of perception. Including the element of the supernatural into the analysis complicates the relationship between the abstract and the material, and also the internal and the external, making it hard to determine what exactly causes the sensory phenomena taken as perceptual evidence. Before

these more complex issues can be examined, it should be asked on what grounds perceptual knowledge can be considered justified and reliable in the first place.

Even in everyday life, the workings of the senses are often unreliable and easily confounded, they are influenced by external conditions and physical faults. As such, they have given different branches of scepticism much to explore, as Markus Lammenranta (2012) discusses in his article "The Role of Disagreement in Pyrrhonian and Cartesian Scepticism". An object may seem different to different people and under different circumstances, and some sceptical views encourage *suspension of judgement*: since there will always be equally likely, opposing notions about given states of affairs, one should withhold from drawing conclusions and making judgements (Lammenranta ibid. 50–51; see also Lammenranta 1993, 16–17). In addition to external conditions of lighting, for instance, perception is influenced by varying states of mind, sickness, tiredness et cetera, very mundane and recognisable factors that hardly lead to denying the practical value of sensory data in everyday life; however, in a supernatural possible world the differences in perceptual experience often have their origin in something much more complicated. Inner and external causes may become confused, and factors such as divine intervention and imagination play an important role in the construction of perceptual experience. Because of the active participation of imagination, the act of perceiving reality is often intertwined with *producing* said reality, and these imaginative processes can be seen as a form of sub-creation taking place within the fictional universe. The different perceptual anomalies will be studied with the help of Silva and Toivainen's (2019) work among other theoretical concepts, *sense datum* theories and perceptual causation in particular.

The normal, everyday perceptual obscurities and errors Lammenranta mentions mostly depend on certain conditions that must be met so that perceptual knowledge would be possible and reliable in the first place.[62] Silva and Toivainen's

[62] Medieval modal theory also showed interest in perception, particularly with respect to the Aristotelian notions about possibilities and potencies. St. Anselm, for instance, suggested that the ability to

study "Perceptual Errors in Late Medieval Philosophy" joins the medieval-themed theoretical corpus of this work, and the writers examine the time's different views about the process through which information travels from the object to the perceiver, discussing the preconditions of reliable perception and its possible faults. Silva and Toivainen (2019, 151–152; 155) write that in order to be able to provide reliable knowledge, perception must occur under normal conditions: according to them, the data-transmitting media should not be affected by anything or blocked, lighting must be good, and the sense-organs must function properly, for instance. If the preconditions are not met, errors occur, and Silva and Toivainen's approach is to focus on the distinction between two different explanations for perceptual errors. The first of these refers to situations in which the media that enables perception and provides information to the observer is not optimal; such cases include the workings of sense-organs, and these problems that affect the process through which information transfers from objects to perceivers are called transmission errors. The second category of perceptual errors concerns the processing of said information, and these are by the writers called errors of judgement. Such errors have their origin in the "failures of the complex cognitive apparatus, which occasionally does not operate properly when combining and interpreting the raw data that is received via the senses." (ibid. 153–154). As already became evident in the third chapter, the questions of interpretation are very central in the assessments of epistemic reliability and the transition from pieces of information into genuine knowledge, and in this sense the errors of judgement Silva and Toivainen write about are indeed noteworthy.

Interestingly, Silva and Toivainen write that in the case of transmission errors, the problems often begin with the medium, not with the information-issuing object itself. The medium may affect perceptual data in many ways, and for instance smells can become confused and altered in a strong wind; lighting or hazi-

see, say, a mountain, consists of four potency components: first, the power of seeing; second, the ability of the mountain to be seen; third, the power that helps sight, that is light; and fourth, the fact that nothing obstructs the view. (Knuuttila 1993, 73.)

ness of the air, on the other hand, may influence the transmission of visual information. Another influential matter is the health and state of the observer. Even if the sensations themselves are identical, say, in the case of music, the harmony of which is an objective, mathematical feature and not a question of subjective taste, a harmonious song can appear either pleasing or harsh depending on the state of mind of the hearer (Silva & Toivainen 2019, 155–156.) The role of the medium in perceptual processes and their reliability is important also with respect to the problem of placing the supernatural: until now, supernaturality has been seen as a property of the object or as an ability of the observer, as a means to receive information, but Silva and Toivainen's remarks encourage to ask whether the supernatural could also reside in the transmitting medium, occurring in between the object and the observer. This serves as another justification for the prominence of visual perception in the analysis: the intermediate element necessary for visual observations to occur, light, offers some of the most important possibilities for understanding the supernatural in Tolkien's fiction.

While uncertainty is common in the actual world, in a supernatural possible world the elements that constitute perceptual observation Silva and Toivainen and also Lammenranta name – the sensory organs, the medium and conditions, the perceptible object itself – can all be manipulated in even more various ways. The supernatural can be intertwined with the later interpretative and inferential phases of processing perceptual information as well as in the act of perceiving itself, or in deliberate manipulation of conditions. All these aspects are linked to the possible causes of perceptual errors that Silva and Toivainen discuss, and the epistemically remarkable aspect in a supernatural possible world is that such anomalies are not necessarily *errors* at all: on the contrary, they can expand understanding and provide access to knowledge otherwise beyond reach. Again, it is not the supernatural element that is unreliable and deceptive, but the errors of judgement are more likely to lead to misinterpretations.

The role of the supernatural in the process of gathering empirical knowledge is particularly prominent when it comes to determining the cause of different sensory phenomena, and in this task drawing a line between internal and external processes is far from easy. This becomes evident in cases in which divine interference or imagination conjures epistemically relevant images that have their origin in internal processes but become accessible to the beholder *as if* coming from the material reality. While the internal and external become mingled, the abstract and the material do as well. A perceptual observation, such as a vision, can be produced by another consciousness *external* to the observer, and seem *material* in spite of being abstract; on the other hand, a person can imagine or recall a memory of something previously observed and experience it again very vividly even though there is no correspondent object in the surrounding reality to be the cause of perception. In order to be able to discuss these cases and also to make the following analysis easier to follow, I will make a few remarks about issues central to discussions about perceptual knowledge, that is *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge, and, finally, the alleged dominance of perception suggested in some theoretical branches.

Alongside the relationships between internal and external, abstract and material, and the cooperation of imagination, sensory perception and inference, one of the basic divisions the analysis needs to address in one way or another is the gulf between a posteriori and a priori knowledge, that is knowledge that follows perception and knowledge that precedes it. Section "Originality of light and false eternity", already pointed out one instance of knowledge that precedes perception, the idea of darkness for the Valar: "[– –] and it seemed to them that in that moment they perceived a new thing, Darkness, which they had not known before except in thought." (*The Silmarillion*, 9) The possibility of knowing something independent from sensory perception is therefore assumed very early in the history of Eä, although it remains to be determined whether this possibility exists for all or the deities alone: the spiritual beings have a preliminary idea of darkness, but it is not certain whether this understanding eventually reveals more about the nature of the

beings themselves and their intellectual abilities or about the epistemic laws of Arda on a larger scale. Since this chapter focuses on perception, it is the reliability and borders of a posteriori knowledge that are of primary interest – although, as will become evident especially in section 4.4 "Recalling the world: Men and *anamnesis*", the relationship between a priori and a posteriori as well as their hierarchy becomes re-evaluated.

In the case of the idea of darkness it is interesting that the a priori knowledge the Valar have is not a necessary truth or something that can be broken down to analytical propositions: darkness has never been perceived but it has been *thought about* and, in some manner, comprehended even though it does not really belong to the categories and spheres most closely related to a priori knowledge, that is logical premises and mathematical truths, for instance[63]. The divine aspect, such as that of Ilúvatar *par excellence* and that of the Valar to a lesser degree, is noteworthy with respect to a priori knowledge: according to Meyers, the concept of a priori applies to how propositions are justified and how they are known, and he writes that "[p]resumably God knows every true proposition *a priori* regardless of its modal or semantic status, that is, he knows it to be true by thought alone without appeal to experience." (Meyers 2006, 99). This is how the Valar know *of* darkness without knowing it by experience. As Meyers notes (ibid. 95), a priori knowledge poses many problems for empiricism and perceptual knowledge, and they will be encountered also in the sections to follow.

As said at the very beginning of this chapter, the treatment from now on can be sensible only if, in spite of the strong basis of Plato's metaphysics and episte-

[63] Another pair of concepts that very often appears side by side with a priori and a posteriori is that of *analytic* and *synthetic* propositions that are much associated with Immanuel Kant's thinking. Analytic propositions are clauses in which the subject term includes the predicate term ("all mothers are female") and are trivially true, whereas synthetic propositions go beyond these claims encoded in the meanings of the words themselves, and their truthfulness cannot be deduced based on the terms alone – other evidence is needed ("all mothers love their children"). (Meyers 2006, 97–98.) According to Meyers (ibid. 99), the concept of analyticity is semantic, meaning that it is based on the notion of meaning, whereas the concept of a priori is epistemological; therefore, the approach in this study and the analyses to follow are more concerned with the epistemological distinction between a priori and a posteriori instead of the semantic division between analytic and synthetic.

mology, perceptual knowledge is granted true epistemic relevance. Sensory perception in Arda works side by side with logical truths, necessities, (divinely inspired) insight and deduction, to name a few forms, and it is one of the most important manners of gathering knowledge. Much of what is known relies on perception, but not everything, albeit the nature of non-perceptual knowledge and explaining it in particular evoke many questions: Meyers (2006, 99) says that when a priori is explained, it is often done by relying "on metaphors usually related to perception". This is very much the case in Arda, as soon will become clear, and serves as a further example of the tendency of fantasy to favour the literal. Indeed, perception seems, not the least because of the heavy emphasis on literality and the literal treatment of metaphors, to be the most dominant aspect of Arda's epistemology.

But how far does the dominance of perception extend? One of the strictest formulations about the primary role of sensory perception can be found in Thomas of Aquinas's peripatetic axiom: "Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses." (see for instance Vecchi, Scalambrino & Kovacs 2020, 51). Since it has by now already been seen that a priori knowledge, too, is a possibility, this strictest formulation must be abandoned: the rational and the intuitive sometimes precede sensory observation, as is the case of darkness for the Valar. However, a vast space is found in between Aquinas's axiom and the opposite end of the spectrum, that is views that deny all epistemic relevance of sensory perception. Where Tolkien's Arda is placed in this space is what I intend to find out. The analyses proposed in the previous sections suggest that both a priori and a posteriori knowledge take part in constituting the epistemic system woven in Arda, but several questions still need to be answered. Determining the object of perceptual knowledge is one central task, and the other is unravelling the relationship between perception, memory and imagination; section 4.2.2 in particular is much concerned with the latter.

4.2 Sensory World in Flux

The perceptible reality sometimes follows rules of its own in fictional worlds, and in worlds of fantasy in particular: the supernatural characteristics of the perceptible world and the perceiving subject alike are one of the factors that make the literary world a supernatural possible world instead of a natural, physically possible world. This section focuses mostly on the mingling of the senses and its influence on gathering perceptual knowledge about the physical reality, but to begin with I will briefly discuss cases in which perception is deliberately confused – this is after all one of the great possibilities of physically impossible supernatural worlds. Confusing the senses is a powerful tool of deception and a means to pass on false information. Sensory world can be manipulated in many ways, and a good example of this is the character of Saruman, a skilled conjurer and master of persuasion. Saruman White, the head of the five wizards sent to Middle-earth, changes his white robes to iridescent ones. This is revealed in a conversation between him and Gandalf:

> 'I [Gandalf] looked then and saw that his robes, which had seemed white, were not so, but were woven of all colours, and if he moved they shimmered and changed hue so that the eye was bewildered.
> "'I liked white better," I said.
> "'White!" he sneered. "It serves as a beginning. White cloth may be dyed. The white page can be overwritten; and the white light can be broken."
> "'In which case it is no longer white," said I. "And he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, ii, 266.)

What Saruman truly does when abandoning his white robes has to do with his loyalties, his changing roles and his knowledge. Hue-changing robes can be interpreted as a symbol of Saruman's shattered loyalty, his treason that extends to several

directions. He is no longer loyal to the White Council and the free peoples of Middle-earth in extension, but his alliance with Sauron is not sincere either. At this point of the story, the War of the Ring coming nearer, Saruman is neither this nor that: he seeks to fulfil his own purposes, to claim the One Ring for his own, but simultaneously he is seeking allies whom he will later betray, and in this sense he is not very different from other characters succumbing to same deeds, such as the much mightier spirit Melkor, "the beginning of evil" (*The Silmarillion*, 410) whose deceptions set in motion many of Arda's griefs and wars.[64] Even after the siege of Isengard and the fall of his power, he withdraws to Shire and starts recruiting spies and takes over the land (*The Lord of the Rings, RK*, VI, viii, 1044–1046). The inner changes, his corruption and dishonesty, have begun much earlier, but by the discussion with Gandalf his physical appearance has finally changed too. Saruman of Many Colours is indefinite, unstable, ever changing and ungraspable. Saruman's character as such is an extremely interesting point of analysis, but I will concentrate on the way he perceives and wields knowledge, especially with respect to bewilderment and disguise. I argue that this perspective, too, is present in the detail of trading a white cloth to an iridescent one.

It is, of course, quite natural that Gandalf at first glance should see the robes as white: the role of expectation cannot entirely be omitted, for Gandalf has no reason to assume the raiment *would not* be white as it always has been. However, since the fluctuating nature of the sensory world is epistemically relevant when it comes to drawing information from it, other aspects should be given thought. It is stated that Saruman's robes at first seemed white but, when looked at more carefully, would be revealed to contain all colours instead – besides, they would shimmer and change hue "so that the eye was bewildered". Bewilderment in this sense in

[64] The ever-ongoing process of producing chains of copies discussed in the second chapter can be found also in characters, predecessors and descendants, either by blood-relation or kindred by significant similarities. As Melkor's servant (*The Silmarillion,* 420), Sauron is less mighty than he, and Saruman strives for power on a smaller scale yet. Another example is Arwen Undómiel, in whom her ancestress Lúthien Tinúviel is said to return on Earth not only because of their great physical likeness but by their shared fate and choices, too (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, i, 233).

much different from what happens when approaching the enchanted borders of Doriath: the Girdle of Melian (*The Silmarillion*, 106) causes a state of confusion that is very much internal to the wanderer, something that takes place in his mind. This notion is also supported by the fact that the spider-webs that add to the power of the land are indeed *unseen* which indicates that their effect is more due to the atmosphere or feeling they create, not sensory observations.

The case of Saruman is of another nature, and one possible way to examine the change in Gandalf's perception is to pay attention to the different nuances of the verb *to see*. In the first sentence Gandalf says "I looked then and saw that [– –]." Regarding visual perception as a source of knowledge there is a distinction between seeing *that* and seeing *as*: seeing that is factual whereas seeing as is more subjective and probably incongruent with the true state of affairs. At first Gandalf saw the robes *as* white, his sight conveyed an image not concordant with the object of perception. Only after this he saw *that* the robes were woven of all colours, and his initial observation is revealed to be an incorrect one. It is not only the verb *to see* here that deserves attention but *to seem*, too. Seeming in this case is obviously a verb that activates the object of perception, enlarges its role while lessening that of the viewer, making him more like a passive beholder than an engaging observer.

The difference between seeing as and seeing that has been explored by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his work *Philosophical Investigations*. The famous illustration Wittgenstein (1958, 193–195) uses is that of "duckrabbit", an image that resembles both a duck and a rabbit based on which aspects the observer first notices. Wittgenstein thoroughly ponders the causes of the change in perception and its interpretation, asking what precisely happens between the different observations. While the problem is not exhaustively solved, the key issue is expressed clearly: Wittgenstein (ibid. 193) writes that "I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect". [– –] But we can also *see* the illustration now as one thing now as another. – So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it." (empha-

sis original). In the case of Saruman's robes, the cause of Gandalf's perception remains the same, but Gandalf himself notices something different when taking another look, no longer led astray by his expectations. Already here interpretation enters as one of the key factors of unravelling perceptual phenomena, and it plays a crucial role in Wittgenstein's discussion. Particularly the final remark of the quotation, seeing something as it is interpreted, is fascinating and is to be kept in mind in the treatment to follow. The sense of bewilderment, realising the contradiction between initial impression and the corrected or changed – interpreted – observation is much tied to the physical world, to the very fabric of Saruman's clothing and further to the eyes of Gandalf, but also to how Gandalf processes that which he sees in his mind. A small detail this is, minor among the much larger schemes handled in the whole conversation of the two characters, including the magnitude of Saruman's treason. Yet it is deeply intertwined with the crucial problem of perceptual knowledge, the possibility of seeing the world as something else than it actually is. Saruman is knowingly confusing the world of perception which is also an indication of his amoral manner of wielding and possessing knowledge.

Another and a very well-known instance of such deception and wielding knowledge is Saruman's treatment of King Théoden of Rohan whose ally Saruman pretends to be. Théoden has been manipulated from afar by Saruman's henchman Gríma, who has poisoned Théoden's thoughts against his allies and crumbled his courage. Once Gandalf manages to wake Théoden from his slumber and brings him outside his halls to the fresh air, the change in him is described as follows: "'Dark have my dreams been of late,' he said, 'but I feel as one new-awakened. I would now that you would have come before, Gandalf. [– –]'" (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, I, vi, 529). Théoden's former state is later described as a foul dream, enchantment or bewitchment that Saruman has brought upon him using Gríma as a mediator: Théoden's dotage is one of the greatest examples of the power of Saruman's speech and rhetoric combined with magic, as discussed in the previous chapter. This linguistic power at least to a degree controls perception, too, and Théoden's

experience of his own health and strength as is revealed in the exchange of words with Gandalf:

> 'It is not so dark here,' said Théoden.
> 'No,' said Gandalf. 'Nor does age lie so heavily on your shoulders as some would have you think. Cast aside your prop!'
> From the king's hand the black staff fell clattering on the stones. He drew himself up, slowly, as a man that is stiff from long bending over some dull toil. (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, I, vi, 529.)

Saruman's power of confusion and bewilderment extends to people's physical sensations about themselves, not only their manner of perceiving the reality: in my analysis the sense of sight is for the most part the dominant aspect, particularly because of the light-motif and its undeniable epistemic significance, but the case of Saruman and Théoden is a good example of the overall ability to manipulate physical sensations as well as thoughts – which is a result of which or if the two effects develop side by side, remains to be solved. It is interesting that the turning-point for Théoden and his breaking from the spell culminates at the moment when Gandalf, in a manner of speaking, reveals his true colours like Saruman did before – the change is frightening but helps to release Théoden from Saruman's yoke: "Thus Gandalf softly sang, and then suddenly he changed. Casting his tattered cloak aside, he stood up and leaned no longer on his staff [– –]." (ibid. 527.) Gandalf here reveals his true identity, having become that which Saruman should have been, although the most important difference regarding perception is that in this case what happens is not down to interpreting or perceiving things differently in the manner Wittgenstein describes, but Gandalf rather chooses to literally cast aside his cloak.

Returning to the questions pondered earlier in this work, bewildering the eye, confusing the perceptual world with things that seem to be something that they truly are not, is a detail not very far from the alleged originality written about in the second chapter. A leap from light to colours is a short one: by choosing

many coloured robes Saruman prefers shattered light to infracted one, the broken to whole[65]. White light as such contains all colours though they cannot be seen; Saruman makes the colours visible and fades out the white. With respect to what has been written about originality (or the closest equivalent anyway) this is can be read as a step further away from knowledge. Saruman's scorn is overt and he is openly proud of his new status. Gandalf is equally candid in his criticism and his final remark is an open statement about his belief-system and his notions on knowledge and wisdom, two concepts that are clearly separate and not always connected. Gandalf disapproves Saruman's change, his willingness to break things – such as light – to find out what they are. The conversation thus provides information not only about the subtle changes and manipulations of the perceptual world but also about different approaches to gathering knowledge and studying the surrounding reality in the process of comprehending it and constructing a worldview.

The introductory examples presented so far evoke questions about where the supernatural occurs in these perceptual experiences. The cases in which the physical world likely remains unchanged, such as is in the case of Théoden, the supernatural is not so much a property of the surrounding reality but something that influences the perceiving senses and Théoden's mind and comes from outside, from Saruman's power. In the case of Gandalf and the colour of Saruman's robes, the situation is more complicated, and the friction between preceding expectations and re-evaluated observations becomes crucial. I incline to think that while interpretation is in one way or another always a relevant aspect when studying percep-

[65] Saruman's deliberate change has been compared to Frodo's transformation by Flieger. According to Flieger, Frodo is slowly forsaking his material existence and becoming filled with clear, white light instead, becoming transparent and incorporeal. Flieger writes that Saruman has indeed broken himself when striving for control and refusing to submit and accept his position. Frodo, on the other hand, accepts and acknowledges his own littleness and is aware of how unfitting he is for the quest of destroying the Ring. This is the major difference between Saruman and Frodo, Flieger remarks when analysing the different splintering of light embodied by the two characters. (Flieger 2002, 157–158.) I will return to Frodo's metaphysical and epistemic transformation later in section 4.3, where also Flieger's reading will be introduced in more detail.

tual phenomena, the processes of noticing an aspect and seeing *as* Wittgenstein writes about are better suited to the analyses of cases such as Gandalf's. The following examples present different aspects of the supernatural with respect to the changing physical world, working of the senses and interpretation alike.

4.2.1 Mingling of the Senses

Plato's metaphysics and epistemology (as well as his philosophy as a whole, in fact) are mainly concerned with the world of Forms and Ideas instead of the perceptible, ever-changing reality. This results in determining perception and sensory-based knowledge as something secondary and anti-epistemic in the first place: knowledge concerns Ideas only, not the sensory world. However, in Tolkien's legendarium sight, seeing, gaze and eyes are very much thematised, especially in the context of gaining knowledge. The moments of suddenly widened understanding are often connected to deeper, keener sight, either magically expanded or experienced in a dream, for instance. The primary role of eyesight is complex when analysing the legendarium in a Platonic context in which all senses are secondary – to receive knowledge and find truth one must turn to reason, thinking and the permanent world of Ideas instead of the world of perception.

The possibilities of perception in Tolkien's universe are one instance of the different ways in which knowledge pushes its natural boundaries, giving some insight to fantasy's treatment of perceiving and comprehending the world. The peculiar nature of perception and the mingling of the senses in particular is most evident in the *Ainulindalë* and the following chapter *Valaquenta*, a summary of the deities of Tolkien's universe. Once the Music of the Ainur ceases and Ilúvatar shows them the Vision woven in their playing, the worlds of hearing and seeing become mingled: the sensory world is not strictly divided, and physical matter is able to transform itself so that it is at times accessible by sound, at times by eyesight. This ability, however, is not extended to all matter, and it has its origin in Ilúvatar's

commands – a change as substantial as this is unique to the process of creation, and the transformation is described as follows:

> But when they were come into the Void, Ilúvatar said to them: 'Behold your Music!' And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where before was only hearing; and they saw a new World made visible before them, and it was globed amid the Void, and it was sustained therein but was not of it. (*The Silmarillion,* 6.)

It is the chosen words and expressions that suggest an equivocal relation between different forms of sensing and perceiving: as a part of the creation myth the events themselves are not out of ordinary considering the genre of fantasy and the mythological nature of the narrative. Korpua (2015, 45, 47–49), for instance, points out that even though Tolkien's myth of creation is very original, it has a resemblance to other myths such as the ones presented in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Bible*'s *Genesis*: in *Timaeus*, too, the world is at first a mere model and only after that a realisation. Something audible and invisible turning into something that has a physical form is not unheard of as such. The expressions, however, emphasise that the change happens not only in the forming world but in perception: by urging the Ainur to behold their music Ilúvatar juxtaposes the two senses, hearing and seeing even as he juxtaposes the Music and the Vision. It is also remarkable that they both have their source in Ilúvatar, making them things that are *given* instead of pre-existing qualities. Ilúvatar shows them a vision "giving to them sight where before was only hearing", as is remarked in the passage and indicating that even if the Ainur are by nature seeing and hearing creatures, their perception is to a degree dependent on Ilúvatar.

Another remarkable juxtaposition is that between sensory, physical being in general and the capitalised Void. The Void as explained in Tolkien's myth of creation refers to the uninhabited regions of the universe, beyond existence, time and space. The Void is also said to be the place where Melkor is banished after his de-

feat (*The Silmarillion*, 310). The visible world is "globed amid the Void, and it was sustained therein but was not of it", it is said, and the Void is described as the antithesis of not only physical, perceptual matter but also of existence as a whole. Because of this tendency of forming juxtapositions, pairs and tensions, it is important to emphasise that in this case the juxtaposition between the World and the Void is not between the physical and the abstract: it is between *something* and *nothing*, existence and non-existence – the spiritual and the abstract level of existence is sustained in the World, but the Void is devoid of mind and matter alike, beyond sensory experience and the grasp of thought. I would argue that the Void becomes graspable only because in creation the World is globed within it, or amid it: as such it cannot be approached or perceived, it has nothing for the senses to observe, and therefore it can become on some level approachable only by sustaining something that differs from it – the existing World.

The transformation from Music to Vision is unique and irreversible, a singular and defining event in the history of world and being. It is also difficult to draw further interpretations from this transition: the perceptual notions concern the divine beings, and generalisations made about them and the knowledge they receive through senses would not necessarily be true in the physical, historical Arda and among other creatures. However, hearing and seeing become mingled also in situations more earthly and ordinary, as happens to the hobbits at the house of Tom Bombadil. Bombadil's wife Goldberry sings for them, and the songs "began merrily in the hills and fell softly down into silence; and in the silences they saw in their minds pools and waters wider than any they had known, and looking into them they saw the sky below them and the stars like jewels in the depths." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, vii, 137.) Interestingly, here silence is included in the equation alongside song, as the images enter with it even if aroused by the song. Another, and epistemically more fruitful example is given in the encounter of elven-lord Finrod Felagund and the newly-awoken men. Here, too, it is not only speech but especially music that in the sensory world becomes visible, which is perhaps not

surprising since music as a whole is an important metaphysical constituent of Eä, as Eden's (2003) article shows. The influence of Felagund's song is great:

> Now men awoke and listened to Felagund as he harped and sang, and each thought that he was in some fair dream, until he saw that his fellows were awake also beside him; [– –]. Wisdom was in the words of the Elven-king, and the hearts grew wiser that hearkened to him; for the things of which he sang, of the making of Arda, and the bliss of Aman beyond the shadows of the Sea, came as clear visions before their eyes, and his Elvish speech was interpreted in each mind according to its measure. (*Silmarillion*, 163.)

The concluding sentence of the passage gives the most interesting and ambiguous formulations. Finrod's song and the events told in them come *as clear visions* before the hearers, having their origin in music but being received as both aural and visual sensations. This remark can be read in two ways: either the words *as clear visions* are taken literally or they are approached as comparison. In the first alternative the physical existence of the music is dual and has a visual side in addition to the aural side. Accepting the second alternative would mean that the expression is figurative and describes the music to come to its hearer in a manner similar to that of visual sensations, and influencing them accordingly. The world of fantasy allows the first interpretation to be taken as a genuine possibility, and given the generous use of visions in Tolkien's world this reading is more fitting. The listeners are specifically said to become wiser and, more importantly, the speech is interpreted "in each mind according to its measure". The limits of the reflecting and reasoning mind surface again, coming quite close to the questions that concluded the previous chapter. In a larger context, it should be remarked that it is not uncommon in Tolkien's legendarium that music should have permanent influence on hearers. In *The Book of Lost Tales I* (99–100), Eriol/Ælfwine hears a sweet music and is deeply affected by it. The player is a creature speculated to be half-fay, half an elf. Vairë tells him that it is not dream-music but the flute of Tinfang Warble who plays and

dances in summer dusk but is so shy that he darts away when noticed and then plays again teasingly from afar. No one can rival Tinfang Warble in the art of music, not even the skilled Solosimpi-elves (later Teleri / Falmari), and Eriol feels there is marvel in his fluting. Vairë says that "'Now, however, for such is the eeriness of that sprite, you will ever love the evenings of summer and the nights of stars, and their magic will cause your heart to ache unquenchably.'" (ibid. 100.)

Rather a similar phenomenon to that of Men and Finrod occurs in Frodo Baggins's previously addressed vision. One of Frodo's dreams (or visions, since particularly in this case its nature is debatable) at Bombadil's house is fair and wonderful: "[– –] Frodo heard a sweet singing running in his mind: a song that seemed to come like a pale light behind a grey rain-curtain, and growing stronger to turn the veil all to glass and silver, until at last it was rolled back, and a far green country opened before him under a swift sunrise." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, viii, 140.) In the analysis of this kind of example it must be taken into account that the blurring of senses occurs within a dream that, as for instance Doležel (1998, 117) has pointed out, often serves as an interspace between the natural and the supernatural, enabling things that would not be possible in the actual world without making the entire world of fiction supernatural. Ryan (1991, 42) discusses the significance of dreams in the formulation of intra-universe relations: using Carroll's famous dream-story *Alice in Wonderland* as an example, Ryan writes that because of its internal recentering and the transitions from the textual actual world into the dream world, the book differs from both standard realistic novels in which dream-worlds are usually in the periphery of the universe of the text, and from the fantasy universes of fairy tales. In Tolkien's world, the accounted dreams rarely have a role so substantial, and for the most part the textual actual world can be distinguished from the dreamt alternatives; however, their influence on the analyses of the perceptual reality and its relationship with the textual actual world and the knowledge gathered about it at different moments of time cannot be denied, as the examples to follow aim to show.

The perceptual characteristics of dreams and visions will be further explored in chapter 4.2.2, but for now it is of particular interest to pay attention to the relationship between hearing and seeing. It is not only that the physical worlds – or, in a dream, the mental worlds, and further, if using Ryan's (1991, 119) terms, private spheres of characters and more specifically F-universes in this case – of sound and sight become intertwined so that something that begins as a sound suddenly turns into a thing of vision. Instead, the sound itself is described using vocabulary that is normally associated with visual things. The song Frodo hears in his dream *seemed to come like a pale light*. Within this short expression the ravine between seeing and hearing is first bridged and then suddenly torn open again. First the song *seemed* to come, as if a thing that can be visually perceived. Yet immediately afterwards it is described as something with resemblance to a pale light but since its nature is explained through comparison, the song must be something *else* than light – the like of that, but another thing nonetheless. In other words, also the vocabulary that is used to describe the perceptual phenomena takes part in the mingling of the senses, describing the world of hearing in terms of seeing and vice versa. One of the most fascinating examples of the mingling and merging of the senses is Frodo's experience in the Hall of Fire[66] in the house of Elrond. The hall itself appears to create a sleep-inducing atmosphere: Gandalf tells Frodo that he is going to hear many songs and tales in the hall if he is able to stay awake (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, i, 236). Seeing, hearing and feeling are all present in the enchantment that comes from the stories and songs of the Elves:

> Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the

[66] Storytelling is a practise often associated with fire, and it is hinted that fire could indeed aid the storyteller in his pursuits. In *The Book of Lost Tales I*, the Elves gather in front of Tale-fire to exchange stories and dive into lore. Vairë explains this tradition to Eriol: "'That,' said Vairë, 'is the Tale-fire blazing in the Room of Logs; there does it burn all through the year, for 'tis a magic fire, and greatly aids the teller in his tale – but thither we now go.'" (ibid. 6.)

> firelit hall became like a golden mist above seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the world. Then the enchantment became more and more dream-like, until he felt that an endless river of swelling gold and silver was flowing over him, too multitudinous for its pattern to be comprehended; it became part of the throbbing air about him, and it drenched and drowned him. Swiftly he sank under its shining weight into a deep realm of sleep.
>
> There he wandered long in a dream of music that turned into running water, and then suddenly into a voice. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, i, 239–240.)

The passage brings together waking mind, dreams, sensations and imagination. Language or speech and its physical aspects are commented, too: using language is a material deed as such, manifesting itself either as writing on pages, carvings on stone or as movement in the air; however, something more happens here, words *almost* seem to take shape and transform from sound to vision. Language becomes a part of the world it speaks of more literally than ever, bringing its referent visually accessible to Frodo – this kind of magic of language was discussed in section 3.3.1 and it serves as another example of the literalising tendency of speculative fiction pondered by Chu (2010, 10–11), for instance. Even though Chu's study focuses primarily on science fiction, the phenomena she analyses have much in common with those occurring in the material this thesis is interested in. Chu writes about the literalised lyric figures and presents examples about the figurative and literal treatments of sensory world: "*Synesthesia* – the poetic description of one kind of sensory experience via words that ordinarily describe another – is routinely literalized in SF as a *paranormal sensorium*, for example, the mutant anemone who hears photons as music in J. G. Ballard's 1962 story "The Voices of Time."" (Chu 2010, 11.) The phenomenon in general is much like Frodo's experience in the Hall of Fire, but extending the use of the suggested concept of *paranormal sensorium* would require deeper and more careful thought if adapted to the study of the cases at hand: Frodo's extraordinary sensory experience originates in the unique atmosphere of the Hall, the stories and voices heard there, but Frodo's own senses do not show any

supernatural – or paranormal – qualities apart from the influence of the One Ring and the Witch-King's blade that once wounded Frodo.

Returning from science fiction to fantasy, similar power of language is also entertained in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*. The mythical Elfland is not spoken of because of fear and lack of knowledge: "Was Elfland a mystery too great to be troubled by human voices? [– –] Or might a word said of the magical land bring it nearer, to make fantastic and elvish the fields we know?" (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 60). The belief is that speaking about magical things may conjure them and make them appear in the everyday world. The verbal magic in Zimmer's (2004, 50–52) study is kin to the materialising circumstances in these two quotations: according to Zimmer, uttering the desired result can make it happen and realise. Talking about Elfland can cause magic to leak into the everyday world, invite it; stories told in The Hall of Fire can take a visible form before the eyes of the listener. Another most literal example and one that highly emphasises the role of art and artistic abilities is found in the Appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* where Aragorn's song seems to conjure its subject matter into the world: "And suddenly even as he sang he saw a maiden walking on a greensward among the white stems of the birches; and he halted amazed, thinking that he had strayed into a dream, or else that he had received the gift of the Elf-minstrels, who can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those that listen." (*The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix A, 1085.) This is not what happens to Aragorn, for he sings about Lúthien and sees Arwen, Lúthien's descendant, instead; however, the ability of Elf-minstrels to cross the boundaries between different senses because of their superior artistic craft is clearly recognised.

Unlike the preceding examples, Frodo's experience in the Hall of Fire makes direct references to the supernatural, naming the current state or experience an enchantment. Whereas the examples discussed above were mostly restricted to the relationship between hearing and seeing, also feeling is included in this passage – Frodo feels as if he is drowning in rivers of gold and silver, as if the magic resided

in the air itself. The combined influence of the atmosphere and the songs is strikingly physical, creating an illusion of a heavy sleep in which Frodo *wanders*: movement and materialisation do not concern the emerging images alone but Frodo, too, who physically seems to pass through the dreams and sensations. The end of the passage reveals the circular nature of Frodo's experience. What began as uttered stories and songs becomes visual and physical, but in the end aural sensations gain dominance again: the dream of music "turned into running water, and then suddenly into a voice". Hidden in the very last sentence is a small but significant reference to water, and water-related vocabulary has been used also earlier in the descriptions of endless rivers of gold and silver; this detail I will return to before moving on to the next section.

The examples introduced thus far have focused more on the general mingling of senses instead of the epistemic relevance of this phenomenon. It was necessary to highlight the frequency of this mingling, especially because it proves that worlds of fantasy in many ways break laws of nature when it comes to approaching the physical reality through sensory perception; furthermore, the phenomena can have their cause not only in the perceiving senses as would be the case of paranormal sensorium, but alternatively in the perceptible objects or the overall atmosphere. The epistemic questions are brought to the fore in *The Silmarillion* where Manwë and Varda, deities associated with air and stars, complete one another's perceptual abilities:

> Their halls are above the everlasting snow, upon Oiolossë, the uttermost tower of Taniquetil, tallest of all the mountains upon Earth. When Manwë there ascends his throne and looks forth, if Varda is beside him, he sees further than all other eyes, through mist, and through darkness, and over the leagues of the sea. And if Manwë is with her, Varda hears more clearly than all other ears the sound of voices that cry from east to west, from the hills and the valleys, and from the dark places that Melkor has made upon Earth. (*The Silmarillion*, 16.)

This remark about the observational abilities of Manwë and Varda leaves much to be interpreted: it is unclear what exactly is the reason of this expanded ability of perception when the two are together and aiding one another. In brief, Manwë's sight grows keener when he is accompanied by Varda, and the same happens to Varda's hearing when Manwë is with her. Whereas Varda's hearing remains obscure, Manwë's clearer sight is easier to interpret: Varda is the creator of stars and it was she who first filled the two Lamps with radiance, providing the world with its first physical form of light (*The Silmarillion*, 16, 27). In Varda's case the literal association of light with knowledge is taken into account. In the passage above Manwë's sight, sharpened by Varda's presence, is able to pierce mists and darkness and span unmeasurable distances. It is explicitly stated that "the light of Ilúvatar lives still in her face" (*The Silmarillion*, 16), suggesting that the light Varda has access to and is able to bring to the world is indeed of a divine nature, genuine and not yet refracted: its origin is in Ilúvatar himself which is a significant detail especially in relation to the Platonic – or Christian-Platonic – theory. The role of light both in its literal and metaphorical, knowledge-related sense is crucial: light literally enables sight which in the shadowy, dark or mist-blurred world is short and untrustworthy but it can also be likened to that which allows knowledge and seeing the world as it truly is – this, in Plato's theory, is the Form of the Good.

The possible explanations for Varda's supreme hearing are less obvious. Manwë's role as the lord of air is one possible detail to explain Varda's growing ability, and while the phenomenon is clearly supernatural and unique to a world of fantasy, the roots of its explanation can be found in the very natural world of physics: sound travels through air, and since Manwë governs the skies, his presence may well aid Varda and help her to hear even the faintest and furthest of sounds. If this thought is followed, the transmitting medium as the cause of perceptual anomalies – or errors – Silva and Toivainen (2019, 153–156) discuss resurfaces: the heightened aural sense would in this case depend on an external, intermediating cause, the air supernaturally governed by Manwë. In addition to the mutual, beneficial

influence of the two deities in comprehending and observing the world through sensory perception, another noteworthy aspect is the process of *ascending* on top of the mountain in order to be able to receive knowledge about the world better. The spatial – and symbolical – relevance of ascending is in my reading a phenomenon similar to that of light: the epistemic aid high locations and bright light provide is very literal in the context of visual perception, but their extended, metaphoric meanings are equally important.

Mingling of sight and hearing, and, in extension, of other senses, is not something restricted to the Valar alone, but their presence often allows others to have supernatural sensory experiences. The following example embodies many of the problems of sensory perception: First, it blurs the boundaries between inner and external experience and causation, producing visions that do not follow a natural causal chain. Second, it complicates the relationship between textual actual world and the private sphere of the characters and in doing so unbalances hierarchies, questioning which metaphysical and epistemic levels are primary. Third, it again emphasises the difference between *seeing* and *seeming*, evoking questions about what is actual. In the passage mortal man, Tuor, one of the most significant characters in the legendarium, is guided by sea-god Ulmo so that he could find the hidden elven-city of Gondolin and warn its king Turgon about the approaching war. Ulmo, as the ruler of waters, is very much associated with music and song, and when he appears to Tuor, sight and hearing are – either in his mind or in his perception – merged:

> And thereupon Ulmo lifted up a mighty horn, and blew upon it a single great note, to which the roaring of the storm was but a wind-flaw upon a lake. And as he heard that note, and was encompassed by it, and filled with it, it seemed to Tuor that the coasts of Middle-earth vanished, and he surveyed all the waters of the world in a great vision: from the veins of the lands to the mouths of the rivers, and from the strands and estuaries out into the deep. The Great Sea he saw through its unquiet regions teeming with strange forms, even to its

> lightless depths, in which amid the everlasting darkness there echoed voices terrible to mortal ears. Its measureless plains he surveyed with the swift sight of the Valar, lying windless under the eye of Anar, or glittering under the horned Moon, or lifted in hills of wrath that broke upon the Shadowy Isles, until remote upon the edge of sight, and beyond the count of leagues, he glimpsed a mountain, rising beyond his mind's reach into a shining cloud, and at its feet a long surf glimmering. And even as he strained to hear the sound of those far waves, and to see clearer that distant light, the note ended, and he stood beneath the thunder of the storm, and lightning many-branched rent asunder the heavens upon him. (*The Fall of Gondolin*, 167–168.)

Attention is easily first drawn to the role of music: Tuor's vision is not without external causation, its roots are in the aural sensation of Ulmo's note, but the causal chain differs from laws of nature nonetheless: an aural stimulus results in visual experiences, which is not normally the case apart from people with synaesthesia. The vision is bordered by the single note, vanishing as it falls silent; the previous example about the Hall of Fire is structured similarly, framed by the music. The vision is included *in* the note in a way perhaps not so different from the primeval Vision of creation: Ilúvatar's Vision already exists in the Music though it does not become perceptible to the eye until his command. Here the sound and the vision coexist, but the vision is clearly dependent on the musical note. Sound again is primary and able to conjure visible things before the eyes of the listener. Music in Tolkien's fiction is a concurrent motif, and it has been examined by scholars such as Bradford Lee Eden whose article "The "Music of the spheres." Relationships between Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and medieval cosmological and religious theory" (2003) analyses the role of music as mythological matter with respect to the medieval concept of *music of the spheres*. Eden, a scholar in medieval musicology, writes that one certain god or demigod with substantial powers of music can be found in several mythologies and gives as an example the Greek Orpheus, a musician whose skills are enough to persuade Hades himself. According to Eden especially Welsh

and Celtic mythologies often present music, playing or hearing it, as a bridge between the land of men and the land of fairies, and similar notions can also be found in Hindu and Japanese mythologies. (Eden 2003, 183–184.) Music is in Tolkien's fiction embedded deep in the metaphysical structures and constitution of the world, and particularly when linked with the divine its significance should not be overlooked: paralleled with Eden's real-world examples it is perhaps not surprising that music should play a part in situations where borders between different spheres or levels of existence are crossed. A question of its own is, to what extent it is precisely *music* that partakes in the epistemically informative process of mingling of the senses instead of sound more generally.

The supernatural sensory elements in Tuor's vision are not unequivocal. First of all, as mentioned, the vision is a result of divine interference, Ulmo's communication. Second, it defies the physical boundaries of the fictional world, allowing Tuor to see much farther than normally would be possible – this is indicated by paralleling Tuor's expanded sight with that of the Valar, although, as I will soon argue, this ability is in the end a mental one rather than perceptual. Arda obviously is a physically impossible world compared to the actual world but it, too, has its restrictions. Sight like Tuor's only occurs under special circumstances and is often accompanied by sensations of moving closer to the perceived object. Elves especially are known for their keen sight (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, ii, 440), but visions such as Tuor's are another matter entirely. What here obscures the situation is the inability to distinguish that which happens in the physical world from that which happens in Tuor's mind, in other words, what truly takes place in the textual actual world and what is restricted to Tuor's private sphere. In this sense, Tuor's level of activity and participation should also be noted, since the material world and the visions that momentarily blur it are also produced and created by the observing characters: in Tuor's case, it could be said that his private F-universe is for a while set amid the physical reality of the textual actual world, not replacing it entirely but adding another layer on it. Producing the perceptible reality in the demarcation of

the mental and the physical, the private and the actual, could be approached as a peculiar form of sub-creation all the creatures of the fictional world engage in, each in their own manner. The juxtaposition is revealed by the word *seem*: "it seemed to Tuor that the coasts of Middle-earth vanished". This soon leads to an interpretation in which all the things Tuor perceives are only happening in his mind, meaning that he sees something beyond the physical reality; this reading would also be concurrent with Ulmo's interference, meaning that the scene is a description of a divine transmission of thoughts from one mind to another through a musical note. As noted in the passage, Tuor "surveyed all the waters of the world in a great vision", implying that the vision indeed not only contains everything Tuor sees but borders it, too – the vision is here given a nature that is almost of a physical kind, a location, even, being something that Tuor is *in*. Grammatically this kind of possibility is allowed: an obvious way to read the sentence would be to assume that Tuor observed things that existed and happened in the vision, but it is also possible to think that Tuor himself was a part of that vision, too.

Ulmo's divine intervention, the most obvious instance of supernatural powers at work in the passage, is a matter addressed by McBride, even though his examples are more concerned with *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. According to McBride (2020, 105) Ulmo "typically appears to Elves or Humans near, or calls to them from, bodies of water". Ulmo takes more direct interest in the matters of Middle-earth than the rest of the Valar, and because the sounds of the sea weave connections to the Valar and ultimately to Ilúvatar himself, echoing the Great Music, sea-longing and being drawn to water indicate a longing for the divine (ibid. 45, 105–106). I would therefore argue that hearing the sounds of water in, say, a dream, forms a connection between the dreamer and the otherworldly, between mortal and the eternal. Frodo's experience in the Hall of Fire in Rivendell highlights this connection even more: some of the stories told in the Hall concern the beginning of Arda, and the stories and music make Frodo feel like he is drowning in rivers of gold and silver. The spiritual level of existence is almost completely out

of reach for the characters apart from the creator-god and the lesser deities to a degree; this sundering is also epistemic. However, instances such as Frodo's previously analysed dreams (or visions) suggest that while the eternal, spiritual and divine is hidden from propositional knowledge, *knowledge by acquaintance* is still a restricted but genuine possibility for some of the characters, at least under certain circumstances: hearing the waves of the sea in a dream, for example, makes the dreamer aware of the presence of the otherworldly, bringing it closer to her by (dreamt) aural sensation. Acquaintance with the unchangeable world, the world before Ilúvatar's word of command, is made, but its significance may not always be understood at the moment: "and many of the Children of Ilúvatar hearken still unsated to the voices of the Sea, and yet know not for what they listen" (*The Silmarillion*, 8).

Taking into account the ability of water to communicate or contain divinity and McBride's remarks about Ulmo, I argue that Tuor's vision offers a brief glimpse to the otherworldly – a glimpse only, if even that, since it remains *upon the edge of sight*, never fully accessible. In cases such as these, the physical, perceptual reality gives way to abstract visions, and becomes secondary: the everyday hierarchy is momentarily shaken, as the invisible and abstract becomes foregrounded and the physical world around fades – the coasts of Middle-earth indeed seem to vanish in Tuor's eyes, enabling looking beyond. The change of focus from physical world to the supernatural vision is further enhanced by subtle word-choices. The verbs *see* and *seem* draw attention to the different roles of the perceiver and the object of perception, and their levels of engagement and activity. It is a plain, self-evident syntactic fact that, when using the aforementioned passage as a point of reference, the verb *to see* presents Tuor himself as a linguistic subject: "[t]he Great Sea he saw through its unquiet regions teeming with strange forms [– –]." The verb *to seem*, then again, activates the surrounding world, the object of perception: "it seemed to Tuor that the coasts of Middle-earth vanished". True, the seeming fading of the shores specifically happens to Tuor and to none other, and the structure *it seemed*

does not name a specific grammatical subject – *it* has no referent here. However, both syntactically and thematically Tuor is now less active, no longer the subject. Yet from this point on, as the shift is made from Tuor's physical perception to the vision that is an experience more mental than actually sensory, it is Tuor's mind that now becomes dominant.

Epistemically it can be argued that once the shores of Middle-earth fade away, the described incidents take place in Tuor's mind rather than in the unreliable physical world. Physical senses become secondary, and further remarks about sight and seeing that first appeared to mingle and become intertwined, can now be read as something less concrete and literal. Physical and mental events are in Tuor's vision paralleled: "[– –] remote upon the edge of sight, and beyond the count of leagues, he glimpsed a mountain, rising beyond his mind's reach [– –]." The vision takes place in Tuor's mind but is nonetheless described in visual terms as a sensory observation. Even though Tuor's observations are also limited by visual abilities (there is an "edge of sight"), in the end it is Tuor's mind that sets borders to this experience: Tuor gains knowledge by inner perception, observing a higher reality, and in this state the abilities of his mind limits the broadness of inner perception while his interpretational skills determine how he retrospectively comprehends that which he sees. Therefore, I claim it is important to pay attention both to the literal and the figurative aspects when interpreting perceptual knowledge in Tolkien's fiction: perception-related vocabulary is used also when talking about things that are not strictly speaking perceptual.

4.2.2 Perceiving the Immaterial

One crucial epistemic problem throughout Tolkien's fiction is that the characters, some more often than others, are said to perceive things that are not really perceptible as such; in other words, they see something that physically is not there to be

seen. As foregrounded and literal as these phenomena are in fantasy fiction, they are also deeply rooted in the tradition of empiricism and the reliability of perceptual knowledge: "[w]e sometimes misread sensations and sometimes have sensations without corresponding objects; that is, things may not be as they appear." (Meyers 2006, 79). Deducing objects from sensations is subject to severe scepticism for similar sensory experiences can also appear without external stimuli, as is the case in dreams and hallucinations (ibid. 118–119). Such occurrences are very central to the overall questions this study seeks to answer, mainly the justifiable extension of knowledge: in fantasy fiction, seeing something physically absent does not automatically have to be treated as a hallucination, illusion or a flaw in perception but can be taken as a genuine possibility and its informative potential can be recognised. In this sense my reading also differs from Ryan's (1991, 119) treatment of F-universes, private worlds of characters that are not concordant with the textual actual world but contrast it, presenting things that do not really occur in the reality of the fictional work. While Ryan's analyses of private spheres have been – and will be – useful in this study, providing a solid starting-point from which to approach dreams, visions and hallucinations, my analyses do not assume that these would necessarily contradict the events and states of affairs in the textual actual world.

In the third chapter I analysed visions and dreams as a source of something that could be called supernatural knowledge. Now I will turn to the often taken-for-granted yet, when given further thought, rather peculiar aspect that visions, dreams and mirages, too, are in fact *perceived*, in most cases seen. The grandest and most prominent example of this – and one that severely problematizes the metaphysical aspects of Arda – is the Vision, the image and Idea of the world prior to its physical existence. The epistemic value of the Vision is unclear, especially read in the Platonic context: for the angelic Valar, the Vision serves as a model for the world they are trying to achieve and shape, and they indeed draw knowledge from the perfect image of something that by definition is to remain imperfect in its materialised form. Yet this contradicts the notion of Ideas as inevitably imperceptible

– just as the Music is heard, the Vision is seen, and the condition of reaching knowledge by thought and reason alone cannot be fully met.

The problems this section for the most part deals with stem from the inconsistent perceptual causal relations, and this obscurity further emphasises the influence metaphysics has on the epistemic characteristics of fiction and vice versa. Goldman (1967, 358–359) treats perception as one instance of causal requirement of knowing: perceptual experience of sensing something, seeing an object, for example, requires a preceding causal process between the presence of the object and one's belief of this presence. Yet the causal process behind the belief may in some cases be problematic, and consequently so is the justification. Goldman illustrates this by further developing his example of a person (*S*) holding a belief that there is a vase in front of him, here quoted again:

> That our ordinary concept of sight (i.e., knowledge acquired by sight) includes a causal requirement is shown by the fact that if the relevant causal process is absent we would withhold the assertion that so-and-so *saw* such-and-such. Suppose that, although a vase is directly in front of *S*, a laser photograph is interposed between it and *S*, thereby blocking it from *S*'s view. The photograph, however, is one of a vase (a different vase), and when it is illuminated by light waves from a laser, it looks to *S* exactly like a real vase. When the photograph is illuminated, *S* forms the belief that there is a vase in front of him. Here we would deny that *S* *sees* that there is a vase in front of him, for his view of the real vase is completely blocked, so that it has no causal role in the formation of his belief. (Goldman 1967, 359.)

Causation in fiction has been addressed by Ryan (2009), also with respect to supernaturality and perception. Using the novel *The White Hotel* as an example, she discusses reverse causation and its emergence as either a physical or psychic process, writing that

> It could be argued that, by making causality a matter of psychic rather than physical process, *The White Hotel* diminishes, or perhaps entirely eliminates the paradox or reverse causation: aren't phenomena of clairvoyance part of the supernatural, a realm that follows a different logic, if we may call it logic at all, than the domain of physical events? [– –] On the other hand, the occurrence of reverse causation in *The White Hotel* can be defended by arguing that the phenomenon of clairvoyance is not a delusion, but objectively occurs in the world of the novel. If normal perception is caused by events taking place in the present, clairvoyance can be said to be caused by events taking place in the future. It is precisely because it implies reverse causation that clairvoyance is regarded as a paranormal phenomenon. (Ryan 2009, 156.)

By reversed causation Ryan refers to cases in which "events that will happen in the future seem to determine our behavior in the present: for instance, if I know that I have only six months to live, I may want to write a will, something I would never do otherwise" (ibid. 154–155). However, according to Ryan, even in this case the causation is not truly backward: the action taken is motivated by the present awareness of having a few months left, not the future death itself. In Ryan's example, *The White Hotel*, a character named Lisa believes that she is a clairvoyant, and her views of the future are not coherent, intelligible images clearly linked to the present: on the contrary, the images are unconnected and do not form a strong causal chain (ibid. 155–156). Regarding the problem of perceptual causation, the most important thought concerns the tension between normal perception and clairvoyance, and the possibility that in a supernatural, fictional world present observations are indeed caused by events that take place in the future. Interestingly, this aspect problematises the causal chains when observed side by side with the role of foreknowledge in decision-making and the difference between *phronesis* and *sophia*: if foreknowledge is not used as "a guide of deeds", does the idea of reversed causation still hold?

Even in a natural world, Goldman's vase-example shows that the very verb *to see* can be unexpectedly problematic, particularly with respect to perceptual

anomalies and severed causal chains. This section introduces different instances of perceptual observations that are not caused by actual, physical entities of the material world. The dichotomies between spiritual and physical, visibility and invisibility, that are also a major point of interest in Korpua's (2021) (Christian) Platonic reading, will be analysed in the context of Lynch's (1988) study on medieval dream visions. The role of imagination in knowledge formation processes will also be revisited as well as the ancient and medieval conceptions of imagination, and this time emphasis is on the cooperation of imagination, perception and reason as well as their overlapping causal processes. The second dominant theoretical branch revolves around the many discussions about the relationships between the perceived physical object and the observer, particularly as they are analysed in *sense-datum* theories. Dreams and visions that are the main point of interest in the first half are the most frequently occurring instance in Tolkien's fiction. Other instances, however, emerge as well, although they often are much harder to categorise. The latter half of the analysis focuses on two particular examples of immaterial perception that do not quite meet the definition of vision. These two main sections are preceded by a brief account of the problems of invisibility and its relationship with perceptual knowledge. Invisibility, I argue, is an instance of the opposites of perceiving the immaterial, and its role in the epistemic structure of a fictional world is mostly intertwined with deontic modalities rather than alethic.

4.2.2.1 Reduced Perception: The Problem of Invisibility

While physically absent things can indeed be the object of visual perception in worlds of fantasy fiction, the opposite can occur as well – and, perhaps, even more commonly. Invisibility would be the most direct and also a very frequent example of such phenomena, and it is employed in Lewis Carroll's Alice-books, the *Harry*

Potter -series, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Tolkien's fiction as well, just to name a few. As blatant as it may sound, invisibility can be treated as the more or less precise opposite of perceiving visions and mirages: something physically present is not available to sensory perception. While this section aims to show the epistemic possibilities of immaterial perception, the epistemic relevance of invisibility is often crucially different: perceiving the immaterial is tightly intertwined with the supernatural aspects of knowledge, being closely related to divination, apparitions and visions. Invisibility, then again, while in itself a supernatural phenomenon having its origin in spells, magical objects or enchantments, allows one to *acquire* knowledge in secrecy but not necessarily in a supernatural manner – invisibility enables eavesdropping, for instance. The problem of correctly attributing the supernatural surfaces again, and in the case of invisibility it is not knowledge as such that should be treated as supernatural: the occurring observations or thought processes are not beyond normal. This, however, does not mean that invisibility is irrelevant or uninteresting regarding epistemic issues. The modal problems in particular can be viewed in a very different light when the expanded epistemic possibilities enabled by invisibility are taken into account. Until now, the modal questions have been much concerned with the M-operators Doležel (1998, 114) examines, that is, the alethic modalities of fictional worlds. Invisibility, then again, has more to do with deontic modalities, the moral aspects and codes expressed in fiction, either followed or denied by the characters. This is a noteworthy aspect because acquiring knowledge is not a process detached from ethical issues, as the previous examples about Saruman and Morgoth have shown.[67]

[67] The ethical problems of knowledge are one major part of the epistemic whole of fictional worlds. Since this study is more focused on the supernatural aspects of knowledge, the moral aspect naturally receives lesser attention. However, it must be noted that the modal operators govern the epistemic structure of fiction, too, and the P-operators can be seen at work in Tolkien's fiction. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Saruman of Many Colours becomes thoroughly learned in dark lore, the Rings especially, and certain kind of occultism appears in the books, too, often in the context of striving for forbidden things, including knowledge; interestingly, *worshipping* in *The Lord of the Rings* often has a negative tone and refers to illegitimate worship. (See for instance *The Lord of the Rings, TT*, IV, v, 694; for discussions about the emerging New Shadow and seeking or awakening old evils see chapter "The New Shadow" in *The Peoples of Middle-earth*).

In Tolkien's works, particularly *The Lord of the Rings*, invisibility plays a complex role, influencing the perceptual abilities of the invisible person herself. Surely, invisibility that follows wearing the One Ring, for instance, allows escaping and hiding oneself from others, but the perceptual operations are much more multifaceted, and a thorough analysis about invisibility and seeing has been provided by Michael Wodzak and Victoria Holtz-Wodzak (2014). Regarding the questions this study is primarily interested in, the most significant remarks Wodzak and Holtz-Wodzak make concern the general nature of invisibility both literally and metaphorically, and the ways it influences the perceptual world. The writers point out that just as any other symbol or metaphor, invisibility can be understood both literally and metaphorically, and they emphasise that this possibility is essential to any metaphor or symbol – if the literal dimension is missing, the expression has no use in the other dimensions either. Furthermore, they argue that metaphors and symbols become more understandable if their literal level is first thoroughly examined, and their aim is to find an answer to the very literal question of what invisibility is; this question they ponder from various aspects in their article, for instance by focusing on the very physical workings of optics and eyes. They provide various examples of phenomena such as light-emitting eyes that do not reflect light from an outer source but produce it themselves, a characteristic associated with Gollum and dragons, for instance; this light, particularly in Gollum's case, is connected to those moments when the Ring is taking over and Sméagol gives in to Gollum. (Wodzak & Holtz-Wodzak 2014, 131; 133–134; 136.) In the beginning of their article, Wodzak and Holtz-Wodzak explain the phenomenon of invisibility with precision, drawing attention to the reliability of perceptual knowledge:

> An invisible being, standing between an observed object and an observer, does not, in any way, change the image of the observed object. Things are seen exactly as they would have been had the invisible object not been intervening. This might happen because light from the observe passes, unhindered, through the invisible being or, perhaps, because some sort of cloaking device causes

> light from the observe to bend around the invisible being in such a way that, by the time it reaches the observer, it is as though there had been nothing but space between the observer and the observed. (ibid. 131.)

Wodzak and Holtz-Wodzak make significant remarks about the incongruence between the visually perceptible reality and the physical reality, and supernatural phenomena such as invisibility severely question the reliability of knowledge gathered through the senses: as they put it, "[t]hings are seen exactly as they would have been had the invisible object not been intervening." Furthermore, this also creates incongruences and incompatibilities between different sensory observations: the invisible object cannot be seen, but it can be heard, felt or smelled, for instance, which means that different sensory organs can give very confusing and incoherent clues about the surrounding reality. Interestingly, the passage implies epistemic issues quite close to those rendered by Goldman (1967, 359) and discussed earlier. Goldman explains the causes of sensory perception and uses the picture of a vase to illustrate a situation where causality does not occur as it would seem at first sight. In cases of invisibility, the situation is rather opposite, but the causality of perception is equally problematic: there is a cause but no consequence, and the observed reality deceptively looks exactly the same with and without the presence of the invisible object. Therefore, the epistemic influence of invisibility begins to broaden: while becoming invisible – by putting on a magical ring, for instance – allows one to gather knowledge in secrecy, it makes the perceptual world and the knowledge drawn from it less reliable for others. Something is concealed from perception, and the physical reality is not congruent with the observations made of it.

Returning to the ethical dilemmas of invisibility, also from a more philosophical viewpoint, rings that make their wearer invisible also occur in the second book of Plato's *The Republic*. The story of Gyges, the finder of the ring, is one of the most obvious points of connection between Plato's and Tolkien's myths, and it

is the starting-point for Eric Katz's (2003) analysis of power, choices and morality in the works of the two writers. According to Katz, the whole story of the One Ring and Frodo's quest are a modern representation or variation of the ethical problem Plato discusses, and one of the core ideas the story of the Ring embodies is that unlimited power and morality cannot coexist (ibid. 5–6; see also Korpua's analysis 2021, 155–160). Returning to Plato's original tale and its moral arguments, a story about two rings is used to illustrate the concept of justice and its virtue and benefit. The seeming incompatibility of reward and results is found at the heart of the discussion: according to Socrates, justice is desirable not for its result alone but for its own sake, too, while many others believe that justice itself is disagreeable and difficult but is pursued for its reward and for the sake of reputation (ibid. 41–42). Glaucon, playing Devil's advocate, praises the superiority of injustice and argues that the life of the unjust is far better and easier than the life of the just. His example tells of magic rings that enable invisibility:

> Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other; no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he could, and in all respects be like a God among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; [– –]." (*The Republic*, 44.)

Should one have the power to be invisible and yet choose to remain perfectly just, he would, according to Glaucon, be considered an idiot by all even though they would praise him in front of others for the sake of keeping up appearances. While the main purpose of Glaucon's example is to show that justice is not desirable as such and that this is understood by all no matter what they may seem to think, invisibility becomes again intertwined with the P-operators of the world. In addi-

tion to innocent self-preservation such as hiding from enemies, one of the primary functions of invisibility is to allow actions otherwise prohibited in the community, and these can be extended to the attempts to acquire knowledge in secrecy. Sometimes the epistemic violations, particularly in the metaphorical sense, are disguised as parts of endeavours that have other purposes entirely: a puzzling example that complicates the treatments of light, darkness and invisibility and their epistemic significance would be that of Melkor who steals the light of the Two Trees, causing destruction known as the Darkening of Valinor. Even though Melkor's method does not include *invisibility* in the strictest optical sense of the word, his success depends on the manipulation of the visible world and the ability to act *un*seen. Melkor, like other deities, is able to disguise himself or *walk unclad* as is said in *The Silmarillion* (76), and being unclad I read in this context as an expression for invisibility. In order to steal the three Silmarils, Melkor passes unseen to the south to seek help from Ungoliant, a spider-formed evil spirit: "A cloak of darkness she wove about them when Melkor and Ungoliant set forth; an Unlight, in which things seemed to be no more, and which eyes could not pierce, for it was void." (ibid. 77). Ungoliant's darkness hides them both and allows Melkor to steal the Silmarils unnoticed; Ungoliant herself poisons the light-emitting trees Telperion and Laurelin and drinks empty their wells of light. Light, as has been discussed and will soon be returned to in more depth, is one of the greatest epistemic symbols in Tolkien's world, literally and metaphorically alike, and Ungoliant's simultaneous hatred and lust for light can be interpreted as an attitude towards knowledge and understanding. Melkor and Ungoliant do not merely use darkness and invisibility to cause grief and trouble and to win precious gemstones: they deprive others of the same knowledge they are unable to grasp.

4.2.2.2 Dreams and Visions: Bridging the Material and the Immaterial

> It is clearly not sensation, for the following reasons. Sensation is either a faculty like sight or an activity like seeing. But we may have an image even when

> neither the one nor the other is present: for example, the images in dreams. Again, sensation is always present, but not so imagination. Besides, the identity of the two in actuality would involve the possibility that all the brutes have imagination. But this apparently is not the case; for example, the ant, the bee and the grub do not possess it. Moreover, sensations are always true, but imaginings prove for the most part false. Further, it is not when we direct our energies closely to the sensible object, that we say that this object appears to us to be a man, but rather when we do not distinctly perceive it [then the term true or false is applied]. And, as we said before, visions present themselves even if we have our eyes closed. (*On the Soul*, 125; translated by R.D. Hicks.)

Aristotle's famous conception about imagination and the differences between sensory perception, imagination and thinking as they are outlined particularly in *On the Soul,* (c. 350 BC) contains the chief elements that are most intriguing in the analyses of this section. The immaterial objects of perception, dreams and visions for instance, do not properly fall into any of these categories nor are they fully removed from them: An informative vision that in one way or another reveals something to the seer or guides her actions is not completely a product of vivid imagination. It is not a conclusion arrived at through rational thinking, either, nor is it, in strict sense, a perceptual observation. The key problem seems to be that of obscure causation: in terms of perception, no external cause can be found for a vision. Due to the revelatory nature of visions and mirages, imagination and rational thinking do not fully explain the phenomena either. It was pointed out in section 4.2.1, "Mingling of the Senses", that in dreams, visions, hallucinations and mirages the perceptible world is also produced by the observer as a part of the imaginative and interpretative mimetic actions of sub-creation, and this thought is in this section brought up again.

The element of vivid, unquestionably visual nature of inner visions is the main point of interest in the first half of the analysis, and the Aristotelian distinctions will remain the underlying starting-point for the examination. Despite the fact

that dreams and visions cannot be reduced entirely into the realm of imagination, the active role of the perceiving subject is crucial in the analysis. Discussing divine intervention McBride (2020, 101) remarks that Pippin, having been kidnapped by orcs, repeatedly sees images of Aragorn in his mind, and McBride acknowledges both possible interpretations: "[w]hile the word *unbidden* allows a material interpretation, that Pippin's unconscious mind produces the image, it allows room for an unseen external influence". Furthermore, the role of imagination as one of the bridging elements between the physical and the spiritual is a point of interest: the problem of abstraction when learning from the physical world was an important question in medieval thinking, as Lynch's (1988) study heavily stresses. Also Silva and Toivainen's (2019) study foregrounds the questions of materiality, spirituality and interpretation in medieval perceptual epistemology: when discussing the fallibility of cognitive processes of interpretation, common sense and recognition of perceptual data, they write that "[o]n the other hand, imagination may occasionally distort our perceptions in such a way that we get the impression that imagined things appear as if they are present. This happens especially in feverish visions, in dreams, and under the influence of strong emotions." (ibid. 164.) Regarding the chief problems of perceptual knowledge, this section provides some possible answers to the question of the true object of perceptual knowledge – the material and the immaterial merge and become intertwined, and sometimes knowledge that seemingly concerns the material world reaches in fact towards something else completely. Consequently, this section also hopes to offer an alternative approach to the F-universes Ryan (1991, 119) discusses, particularly with respect to how they merge with the K-worlds of characters.

Just as dreams are able to bridge the gulf between the natural and the supernatural in works of realistic fiction, as Doležel (1998, 117–118) remarks, they are also able to tie connections between the physical and the immaterial. The medieval dream theory already discussed in the third chapter is an example of this, and Lynch's study introduces very relevant notions about the relationship between

poetics, spirituality and knowledge drawn from the physical world. The lastly mentioned in particular, learning from the physical reality, is an important aspect given the Platonic notion on knowledge that has been employed in this study. It is worth asking what manner of knowledge-gaining could allow one the closest possible access to the world of Forms or its rough equivalent in Tolkien's world. Both inner visions or prophecies and sensory perception are in some way bound to perceptible reality. Here it is again necessary to return to Lynch's study and explore the possible ways to bridge the gulf between physicality and spirituality[68]. Lynch discusses philosophy's task to marry the natural and the divine, the idea that divinity is revealed in matter and can be sought therein. The medieval notion Lynch's study is concerned with is that eventually all knowledge, whether science or wisdom, practical or theoretical, seeks to bring people closer to God. Learning, then again, originates in the physical reality, meaning that the prevailing approach was more Aristotelian than Platonic, even though some Platonic aspects were also present. The age Lynch studies, mainly the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, attempted to harmonise natural philosophy and theology, and as a result, psychological theories about the structure of the brain and soul, ways of reaching knowledge and the human ability of living as a spirit in a physical body were devised. A combining element in the many varying theories is the widely shared notion according to which there are three dominant mental powers: imagination, reason and memory. (Lynch 1988, 26–29.)

The medieval context as such cannot be applied to the study of modern fantasy fiction in the most literal sense: the Christian framework alongside other cultural and historical matters of the actual world are not to be taken as obvious constituents of the fictional world. What Lynch's study importantly foregrounds is that

[68] This chapter is mostly concerned with the problems of perceiving the immaterial and omitting the material in sensory perception, and it should be noted that I do not confuse immateriality with spirituality that is central in Lynch's study. Including Lynch's theory in this section broadens the multifaceted aspects of the material and the immaterial, and from an epistemological point of view one of these is the problem of receiving knowledge about the abstract and the divine through the world of physical matter; these questions, the cooperation and coexistence of reason, revelation, imagination and perception, are central in medieval perceptual theory, as will soon become evident.

while knowledge is derived from the physical world and learning begins with sensory observations (a view also favoured by many Neoplatonists, as Remes 2008, 135, 137, points out), reason must transcend the physical boundaries of the body meaning that reason both relies on physical world, the images produced by memory and imagination, and rises above them all in order to achieve abstraction. This notion, Lynch remarks, is very problematic and also the spot where the model begins to break. The relationship between imagination and intellect, human reason and the facts of the world it must transcend, is central to the epistemology Lynch outlines, and, since poetry and philosophy were at the time separated by a line that was blurred at best, medieval poetry and poetic theory also presented a synthesis of poetic imagery and higher truth. (Lynch 1988, 29–34.) The problems of joining the spiritual with the physical extend to the ways in which different mental processes work towards abstractions, trying to reach knowledge and truth:

> Imagination provided the first crucial step in the soul's journey toward truth. Unlike reason, however, it was also the origin of the most destructive error. In the marriage of human knowledge and divine truth, reason or intellect did the work, imagination caused the problems. The intellect participated in the essence of divinity; imagination was part of the variable world of sense. Consequently, reason misjudged only when imagination was in error, and imagination was often dangerously inaccurate. (Lynch 1988, 32.)

This is where the mainly Aristotelian background shows signs of a more Platonic approach: imagination is concerned with the unstable, changing world of perception, and the errors of reason are originally those of imagination. Lynch's formulation accurately states the crucial problem that concerns dreams and visions in Tolkien's fiction, too. Visions and dreams, as I intend to show, are both mental and physical in nature, and they constantly blur the boundaries of the surrounding reality – that which originates in perception cannot always be separated from that which originates in the mental processes. This unclear distinction I will try to dis-

entangle by returning Coleridge's (2014) discussion about the differences between primary and secondary imagination. Before moving on to dream analyses, this time approached from perceptual perspective, a few further remarks need to be made about the nature and history of imagination, one of the most important concepts of the following treatment.

The ancient and medieval conceptions of imagination have been meticulously studied by Palmén in her dissertation *Richard of St. Victor's Theory of Imagination* (2014). Palmén seeks to provide a thorough, systematic account of the concept of imagination and its relationship with other cognitive abilities, such as reason – as such, the questions of interest come close to the discussion Lynch's study contributes to. Richard of St. Victor, whose views Palmén studies, perceived that imagination availed the soul in its preparation for contemplation, that is encountering divine, invisible things. Human reason indeed needed imagination: imagination moulds and conveys the sensible, perceptible data derived from the world for reason to be studied. (Ibid. 3–4, 88–89.) Regarding the chief aim of my study, giving a satisfactory account of the supernatural epistemic processes enabled by the modal and metaphysical characteristics in a world of fantasy, the role of imagination and particularly its cooperation with reason – a symbiosis that at first sight seems more than contradictory – is evidently crucial. Palmén's treatise offers aspects to the problem of knowing the supernatural, not merely the supernatural elements of knowledge formation. She gives an account of Richard of St. Victor's views concerning the role of imagination in the ascent towards God, and she writes that

> [i]n Richard's writings, the central idea is to rise to the understanding of the supreme heights of the invisible divine realities. [– –] Richard also has to deal with many fundamental problems of sensation and abstraction. How can the soul investigate anything outside itself? How can the material quantities be known by the immaterial soul? (ibid. 9.)

These questions – the relationship between the material and the immaterial, the process of abstraction and reason's dependency on imagination – are central to medieval thinking, and they are much foregrounded in Palmén's study as well as Lynch's. The period Palmén's historical overview is primarily interested in, that is from antiquity to the 12th century, considered imagination as a faculty of the soul, and Palmén's use of the word refers to "the imaginative activities of the soul and the power of imagination in general" (Palmén 2014, 13). This imaginative activity and the role it plays in the interpretation and creation of (im)material perceptual phenomena I will also ponder with the help of Mosley's (2020) and Coleridge's (2014) treatments.

Regarding the historical views of imagination Palmén studies, the characterisations of St. Augustine offer important insights into the parallel workings of imagination and perception, and they are also relevant when observed side by side with Coleridge's treatment. Particularly Augustine's division into two different kinds of imaginative processes, the repetitive and the productive, are noteworthy: Augustine's idea is that both processes are based on memory, but while reproductive imagination takes real, perceptible objects as its starting point and repeats their images in the memory, productive imagination does not need genuine sensible objects to reproduce. Instead, productive imagination uses the soul's ability of adding, removing and altering previously sensed objects and thus brings forth new images that have no direct equivalent in the external reality. The conceptual difference Augustine makes is that an image that can directly be found in memory is called *phantasia* whereas an image created from various memories without a single external object is categorised as *phantasma.* Sensation and memory are necessary starting points for both, albeit to a different degree: some perceptual experience is required for imagination to work. (Palmén 2014, 26.) Palmén moves on to summarising the later medieval notions of imagination's epistemic tasks, introducing Hugh of St. Victor's theory concerning the different capacities of the soul with respect to

its corporeal and spiritual stages and the process of proceeding from the corporeal to the incorporeal:

> This process begins with the senses and the imagination, which belong to the corporeal part of the soul. Above imagination lies the lowest point of the incorporeal part of the soul, which is called an imaginary affection (*affectio imaginaria*). There the rational soul is affected by contact with corporeal likeness. Superior to imaginary affection is reason, which acts on imagination (*ratio in imaginationem agens*), whereas the pure reason (*ratio pura*) works without any imagination. Thus imagination can assist in rational consideration, since reason acquires knowledge of external reality through imagination. Reason can make use of the images in order to form scientific knowledge (*scientia*). When reason is illuminated by the divinity, reason knows purely, and knowledge is sapiential (*sapientia*). Although imagination is below understanding, both imagination and understanding inform (*informare*) reason. (Palmén 2014, 43–44.)

While the gradual transition from the corporeal to the incorporeal resonates with the principle of continuity Lovejoy's previously cited work *The Great Chain of Being* discusses in depth, the role of imagination as the contributor of reason and wisdom is also most compelling. Hugh's claim is that "[m]ediating between the body and the spirit is a hierarchy of abilities which enables the human to ascend to higher stages of knowledge" (Palmén 2014, 42), and as such the gradual nature of the process assumes different stages not only in the brain and soul but also in the knowledge and wisdom that are being pursued: the hierarchy is found in the human being, her abilities and means but also in the object of her aspiration. Based on the views Palmén discusses and compares, it appears that imagination can rightfully be treated as one of the vital links between the physical and the spiritual, the material and the immaterial, and it will be approached accordingly in the dream analyses to follow.

Palmén's treatment of the cooperation of imagination, reason and perception helps to comprehend the half-perceptual, half-immaterial knowledge-

formation that so characterises Tolkien's fiction. While the phenomena are often complicated and obscure, the cooperation of the material and the immaterial has fairly reasonable beginnings, after all: as Palmén's study shows, imagination *needs* perception in order to be able to conjure the images that only take place within the mind. Sensation and memory must precede imagination, otherwise it has no experience to draw on. The following example also has its roots in sensory perception, and it shows characteristics of Augustine's phantasia. My analysis of the example aims to give an acceptable account of the vision's origin in the senses and imagination, and I seek theoretical support from Augustine's concepts and Coleridge's theory of imagination. The following passage describes a vision that is not a dream in a physical sense: the viewer, Sam Gamgee, is clearly not asleep. The passage is from *The Two Towers*, and in it Frodo, Sam and the treacherous Gollum are about to enter the dark tunnels of a giant spider, Shelob. Sam is feeling desperate and wishes he could be aided by Tom Bombadil, a man who helped the hobbits at the beginning of their journey. All of a sudden, the darkness is pierced by a bright light, and Sam experiences a very helpful vision:

> It seemed to him that he saw a light: a light in his mind, almost unbearably bright at first, as a sun-ray to the eyes of one long hidden in a windowless pit. Then the light became colour: green, gold, silver, white. Far off, as in a little picture drawn by elven fingers, he saw the Lady Galadriel standing on the grass in Lórien and gifts were in her hands: 'And you, Ring-bearer,' he heard her say, remote but clear, 'for you I have prepared this.' (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, IV, ix, 737.)

In order to properly understand the roles of imagination, perception and memory in Sam's vision, its background must be explained. Sam's vision is a recollection of an earlier event, and the description of the image conjured before Sam's eyes follows very closely the description given about the event itself in chapter "Farewell to Lórien" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, viii, 387): the image can be seen as an echo

of Sam's former experience, his visual observations of the woodland country as it was at the moment of his departure. Taking into account this background, sensory perception and memory are without a doubt crucial to Sam's vision, and a clear causal relation can be found: what he sees is – using Augustine's terms – a reproduction, a repetition of a former experience. However, the description of Sam's vision bears signs of both perceptual experience and inner sight, something imagined. "It seemed to him that he saw a light: a light in his mind", it is said, implying that the vision takes places in Sam's private sphere, his F-universe instead of the objective perceptual reality of the textual actual world. Interestingly, Sam's image is in the very literal meaning of the word, an *image*: it is characterised as "a picture drawn by elven fingers". Furthermore, the vision includes sound, too: the words of Galadriel are heard "remote but clear". Two of the five senses are present in the vision that by its very nature has to be immaterial, being something conjured by Sam's mind and imagination rather than caused by external stimuli. This imaginative recollection becomes more understandable with the help of Augustine's formulation about the workings of memory:

> All these things, each one of which came into memory in its own particular way, are stored up separately and under the general categories of understanding. For example, light and all colors and forms of bodies came in through the eyes; sounds of all kinds by the ears; all smells by the passages of the nostrils; [– –]. The vast cave of memory, with its numerous and mysterious recesses, receives all these things and stores them up, to be recalled and brought forth when required. Each experience enters by its own door, and is stored up in the memory. And yet the things themselves do not enter it, but only the images of the things perceived are there for thought to remember. (*Confessions*, 131; translated by Albert C. Outler.)

Augustine's rendition presents at least two elements that make Sam's vision – and the different visions in Tolkien's fiction in general – a fruitful object for epistemic

analysis. First of all, Augustine lists the different senses and the experiences that enter the observer "by its own door"; of these both sound and vision are stored in Sam's memory. Secondly, and probably most importantly, it is emphasised that it is not the things themselves that enter memory and thought, but the *images* alone. Augustine (*Confessions*, 131) continues by asking how said images are formed, pointing out that they can be summoned back at will. In this sense Sam's vision differs from the phenomenon Augustine here writes about: the vision comes unbidden and suddenly, not because of deliberate concentration, and the situation is closer to Pippin's case McBride (2020, 101) writes about. Yet it is rooted in Sam's personal memory in a manner that quite corresponds to Augustine's formulation. The aural and visual experiences were impressed on his mind and occurred to him again, unbidden but immediately recognisable.

The supernatural elements in this phenomenon are in my reading two: First, the intensely experiential and sensible nature of the vision indicates that even though the occurrence is restricted to Sam's private sphere, it lands somewhere in between material and immaterial, not being wholly either; in this way it also strikes a crack in the border between Sam's F-universe and the textual actual world, not being completely cut away from the perceptual, physical reality that is common to all. Secondly, the vision appears without deliberate recollection, and the possibility of the intervention of another consciousness must be taken into account. The previously studied approach that emphasises the revelatory nature of visions and acknowledges the role of – in lack of a better word – divine presence and instructions, is a suitable explanation here. Epistemically Sam's vision does not provide him novel ideas or give knowledge about something otherwise inaccessible, like the visions of the *palantíri* or the Mirror of Galadriel would. However, it is not epistemically insignificant because it certainly brings him understanding in hindsight: the whole significance of Galadriel's gift for Frodo is not revealed until now, and the vision helps Sam's understanding to complete. Given Galadriel's supernatural cognitive abilities of telepathy it is very well possible that the vision, while clearly hav-

ing its primary causation in earlier perception, is result of her guiding intervention, in spite of the fact that she is not in Tolkien's legendarium considered a divine being.

How, then, could Sam's vision best be categorised? Imagination, for Augustine, is an ability to form *phantasia* and *phantasma*, and the difference between the two has been summarised by Park (2020, 3) who writes that while *phantasia* is an image that reproduces sensory visio, *phantasma* is "an invented image that is derivative from *phantasia*"; in other words, *phantasma* does not have basis on direct sense-perception but is rather a distortion of memory, a rearranging of memory images based on *phantasia* – this falsifying element is also Augustine's reason for considering *phantasma* pernicious. Sam's vision is closer to *phantasia* than *phantasma* because of the open causal relation between earlier perceptual experience and later recollection; there is no active process of rearranging or creating something new based on perceptual ingredients. Another way to approach the combined actions of imagination and perception is to return to Coleridge's famous thoughts. While emphasis in the following is on perception, it should be noted that for Coleridge, imagination is not concerned with perception alone but reason, too. In Coleridge's thinking, the role of imagination is to provide access to the highest term, reason, as Peter Cheyne (2019, 495) writes: "[w]hile imagination is the most divine of the human attributes for Coleridge, reason is not exactly a human attribute, but something higher, towards which imagination aims." In *Biographia Literaria*, first published in 1817, Coleridge writes that

> The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation.

> It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create [– –]. (Coleridge 2014, 205–206.)

The most noteworthy aspect Coleridge's formulation brings to the analysis is that it emphasises the role of imagination in the formation of perceptual experiences to begin with, the very possibility that they exist. As Wolf (2012, 21) summarises, primary imagination allows one to coordinate and interpret the sensory data so that it becomes perception, so in this sense imagination is crucial for Sam's sensory experience *in the first place*, being a necessary constituent of conceptualising the world, not merely in the subconscious act of recollection. It is not surprising that Tolkien's concept of sub-creation and his treatment of imagination have been studied side by side with Coleridge's ideas; Mosley's article "Toward a Theology of the Imagination with S.T. Coleridge, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien" is an example of such an approach. Mosley (2020, 6–7) discusses Tolkien's "On Fairy-stories" and his poem "Mythopoeia", focusing on the ethical questions of sub-creation and Tolkien's idea about true sight as a necessary outcome of imagination. Mosley remarks that for all three writers, imagination leads to better understanding of reality. This is an idea that as a whole can be extended to the epistemic system within the fictional world: imagination, albeit being in many ways perilous and potentially deceptive, expands understanding and knowledge in the form of visions, dreams and mirages either by opening views into the future or by making past sensory experiences accessible again by summoning them from memory as is the case in Sam's vision. In Tolkien's view, imagination is closely connected to truth. Korpua (2021, 95) discusses the similarities between Tolkien's notion of imagination and Coleridge's literary aesthetics, writing that "[f]or Tolkien's poetics and imaginative writing, both truth and belief are important." The sub-creative capacities of human imagination and fantasy are able to conjure secondary belief and in doing so achieve something very genuine.

Finally, while the most obvious reading would name Sam's own memory as the cause of his later vision, other interpretations leave more room for the supernatural to work. The medieval dream theory context encourages a reading in which the vision has its origin somewhere else, in this case, in Galadriel. As Amendt-Raduege's (2006, 46) previously mentioned article shows, dream-visions in Tolkien's fiction often follow a certain pattern that includes "the intense visual quality of the vision, the ideal or symbolic landscape, the authority figure at the center, and even the five aspects of dreaming that informed medieval psychology." These are very much present in Sam's vision, and as Amendt-Raduege argues, the entire realm of Lothlórien bears great similarity to the famous dream-poem *Perle* from the fourteenth century: the setting and celestial colours are much alike, and the travellers receive answers from a divine-seeming female figure.[69] According to her analysis, Sam's vision, when studied with respect to Macrobius's division, would be categorised as a *visio*. (ibid. 49–50, 52.) The element of the divine should therefore be acknowledged in Sam's vision, the possibility that the vision is in fact *sent* to him by an authority, Galadriel.

To summarise, I return to the questions of imagination the analysis began with. The peripatetic axiom holds true in Sam's case: *nihil est in intellectu quod non sit prius in sensu*, as the principle is most famously expressed. Sam's vision does not come out of nowhere, and the chain remains intact: first there is sensory perception, followed by a sense-image imprinted in the mind, and at a later time the object of perception is remembered as an inner image. Knowledge, too, can be gained from these phantasms, when intellect and the rational mind are rightly put to work and not lead astray by imagination, as was stressed in Lynch's study – phantasms, when properly examined, are epistemically relevant. Within this frame of concepts, the problem of explaining the perceptual origin of visions seems to be avoided in such cases where the visions clearly draw from the seer's own experience. The

[69] The intertextuality with *Perle* is indeed notable, and Tolkien's personal and literary connections to the poem have been addressed in earlier scholarship; for these see for instance Shippey (2007, 61–62) and Ekman's (2009) article "Echoes of *Pearl* in Arda's Landscape".

problems are far greater when attention is focused on visions that have their origin quite elsewhere. I will in the latter half of this section explore the possibilities of *sense data* theories instead and ponder their suitability to this context.

4.2.2.3 Physical Absence and Sensory Perception

Alongside dreams and visions other instances of seeing something that is physically absent occur. These, despite sharing some characteristics with visions or mirages, form a category of their own. There are cases in which something suddenly appears before the eyes of the spectator in a manner that does not exchange the actually perceptible physical world for something else but adds something to it, sometimes producing incongruences between the textual actual world and private spheres of characters. Often these occurrences are flashes, still images rather that visions showing an event and movement. In the foreword of *The Peoples of Middle-earth* Christopher Tolkien goes through the manuscripts and drafts based on which the Appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* were written. Among these is a brief passage about the birth of Aragorn and his fate, and information about the origins of his name:

> and his father gave him the name Aragorn, a name used in the House of the Chieftains. But Ivorwen [Aragorn's grandmother] at his naming stood by, and said 'Kingly Valour' (for so that name is interpreted): 'that he shall have, but I see on his breast a green stone, and from that his true name shall come and his chief renown: for he shall be a healer and a renewer.'
> Above this is written: 'and they did not know what she meant, for there was no green stone to be seen by other eyes'. (*Peoples of Middle-earth*, xii.)

Not only does Ivorwen see something that is hidden from others: she is also able to interpret its meaning and shares her thoughts predicting that Aragorn will be not only an honoured king but a healer first of all. Again, the problem of seeing is evi-

dent, especially in the last sentence. There are several possible ways to interpret the remark that "there was no green stone to be seen by other eyes". First, focus can be set on the fact that there indeed was *no green stone*, that the physical reality contradicts Ivorwen's sensory perception. In this case the very use of the verb *to see* can be questioned if the stone is rather hallucinated, imagined or visualised. This would be the most obvious possibility and therefore has to be acknowledged: even if her vision is not treated as a downright hallucination, it can nonetheless be a *perceptual error*, an error that has its origin either in perception-enabling media such as sense-organs (transmission errors) or the later cognitive processing of the information (errors of judgement) (of the error categories see Silva and Toivainen 2019, 153–154). Both error types are possible interpretations[70] but not ones that would lead to epistemically interesting observations: as is the case with previously analysed visions, dreams and mirages, also this kind of instances of seeing are events that can justifiably be taken as genuine possibilities in the legendarium and the belief-system forming in it. Treating unusual forms of seeing as hallucinations would be to reduce their epistemic value and significantly lessen the possibilities of interpretation.

What makes the quotation particularly interesting is Ivorwen's declaration "I see on his breast a green stone"; her remark concerns her own perceptual experience, not an external state of affairs. In fact, she does not claim that there indeed *is* a green stone, only that she sees one. Discussing the connection between internal senses and rational judgement and the way for instance dreams disturb this relationship, Silva and Toivainen (ibid. 165) point out that

[70] If the observation is treated as an error, the more interesting interpretation would be one based on errors of judgement: it is possible that there is *some* sensory stimulus that Ivorwen erroneously recognises as a green stone. As is the case with dream-visions or magical objects such as seeing-stones, the weak link in the epistemic process is not usually with the thing considered supernatural but with the limits of human cognitive abilities of interpretation and judgement. As Silva and Toivainen (2019, 164) write, "[t]he psychological processes that account for binding together the different sense modalities, incidental perception, and perception of common sensibles are liable to go wrong because they are judgments made by fallible cognitive powers."

> [o]ther physiological states may also have the same effect when one is awake, but when the state of the perceiver is not overly bad, there is a mechanism that counterbalances the mistake. Reflective knowledge of one's own state allows one to make a correct rational judgment regardless of how the external world appears – just like knowledge in the case of seeing double due to pressure on the eyeball makes possible the judgment that there are not two things in reality, although it surely seems like there are.

Ivorwen's remark, brief as it is – *I see on his breast* – indicates a rational and reflective attitude towards the perceptual experience that clearly is restricted to her private sphere: she realises that her perception is not correspondent with the external reality, but she nonetheless acknowledges its possible epistemic value. Therefore, I do not consider her perception as an error even though it does not necessarily have an external cause. I argue that one of the most significant aspects of supernatural knowledge is that contrary to common sense, everyday conception of perceptual knowledge, it allows knowledge to be acquired precisely from the incongruence between the content of perception and reality, not their perfect correspondence.

The most obvious question Ivorwen's case evokes concerns the relationship between the content of her perception and the outer reality for these two seem to be incompatible; as such, the example echoes some of the deepest questions of empiricism in general. One of the problems of empiricism, for instance Locke's veil of perception, is that the external physical world is unknown for the perceiver is only aware of the ideas in her mind – ideas or sensations form a veil between the world and the one who perceives it. Some views (often contrasted with naïve realism) propose approaches according to which it is the qualities of a mental object or perceptual experience itself that become acknowledged in perception. Perception therefore does not concern the physical being as it is in reality but rather something that Locke and Berkeley (although their views greatly differed from one another), for instance, named an idea and that in modern discussion is often referred to as *sense-datum*, even though the two cannot be treated synonymously. Instead of re-

ceiving knowledge of physical reality, the mind perceives the ideas or sense-data caused by physical objects. (Meyers 2006, 31–32, 118–119; Moran 2019, 203, 206; see also Lammenranta 1993, 34–35). These mental objects are subjective and entirely reliant on consciousness and as such they are never hallucinatory or illusionary – they can never seem like anything other than what they are unlike physical objects that may seem different from a different angle, in a different light or seen through glass or water, for instance. (Meyers 2006, 79, 119–121.)

The modern-day sense-datum is closely related to (but not identical with) George Berkeley's definition of idea (see for instance BonJour 2010, 120), which must not be confused with Platonic Ideas that have been and remain a central concept to this study. For many empiricists, such as Berkeley, knowledge is only acquired through perception, and the things people perceive are ideas, mental objects that the mind perceives. Perception never concerns actual, physical objects that are outside consciousness and experience, and there is no need to assume their existence in the first place. Berkeley's empiricism is rather extreme, and one of his main claims denies the existence of material reality completely: according to him, it is impossible for us to know whether things truly exist, only that our mind perceives them. (Lammenranta 1993, 34–35; BonJour 2010, 123–124.) This view results in one of the best-known quotations in the history of empiricism, *esse est percipi* – to be is to be perceived. A crucial question such an approach needs to address in one way or another is whether these ideas are objective or not, whether the ideas are shared and common for all. It is this problem that lies at the heart of the case of Ivorwen and the green stone as well.

Berkeley's subjective idealism that denies the material substance as a whole and further denies both materialism and dualism (instead of denying strict materialism alone) is clearly not compatible with the metaphysical approach Tolkien's Eä encourages: Eä is of both matter and spirit, although the latter is dominant. However, Berkeley's idea or the more contemporary sense-datum is a concept with which Ivorwen's strange observation can be analytically approached. The very core

of the problem is between perception and the material object and the inability to tell what happens in between: in other words, the difficulty is to explain how anything about the material object can justifiably be deduced based on the observer's sensory experience. Interpreting the quotation "and they did not know what she meant, for there was no green stone to be seen by other eyes" in a way that treats the green stone as sense-datum or a mental object instead of a physical jewel that mystically appears to Ivorwen alone allows the supernatural characteristics of the incident and its epistemic relevance to coexist and it is, in my opinion, the most fruitful and coherent way to explain Ivorwen's observation and her future inferences, as I now try to prove.

The advantage of sense-datum is that it assumes no link between the (possibly non-existent) physical world and perception. In a world of fantasy, particularly one that has already been shown to postulate magical entities, enable invisibility and transitions of a physical object into something else, it would be quite justifiable to treat the stone as a material artefact that is present for Ivorwen and invisible to everyone else. Visions and waking-dreams analysed in chapter three and section 4.2.2.2 clearly show that in Tolkien's Eä it is possible to acquire information through sensory perception that is intrinsic to the mind and therefore concealed from others. The case of Ivorwen and the green jewel, however, differs from these visions. The main difference is that instead of a vision, Ivorwen's perceptual experience is restricted to one, single object which is not quite congruent with the visions analysed before: instead of opening a view into a reality somehow parallel or detached from the present moment, the stone merely *adds* to reality without making it alternate in one way or another. In this sense, the stone could be treated as the imaginative creation of Ivorwen's mind, a product of the reality-producing interpretation and proof of her significant insight. Sense-data or ideas are mental images that always have the properties that perception shows them to have. The epistemic relevance of this notion is that sense-data are therefore always correct, and perceptual errors are impossible: private mental objects can never look like

anything else than what they are. All kinds of perceptual incongruences occur when trying to bring together sensory experience and objects of the material world, but this problem does not arise with mental images. Ivorwen's observation is infallible regardless of the fact that it is inaccessible to everyone else.

Another, and perhaps a more interesting, detail is the formulation, the syntax of the sentence, especially the end of it: "for there was no green stone to be seen by other eyes." The remark is odd, an impression created by somewhat strange word order and diction: the formulation presents a negation that could have been expressed in a way much simpler without damaging Tolkien's literary style. The sentence ("there was no green stone") first makes a remark about the current state of affairs, the stone that was not there, but also immediately negates the perception of this stone; the latter half of the sentence ("to be seen by other eyes") questions the statement made in the preceding half by implying that the stone *could* in fact have been there, just not seen by others. The expression is very oblique and the word "eyes" at the end evokes questions – the sentence could have ended simply with "others" without emphasising the sense of sight. Yet this emphasis is further evidence of the vastness of seeing as a central motif in Tolkien's fiction. The remark also leads to the question of where this miraculous apparition takes place exactly, or, in other words, where the supernatural can be placed. So far it is unclear whether there indeed is a green stone, a magical artefact of a kind, that only presents itself to some but not all, or if it is Ivorwen herself who possesses a gift of clairvoyance and is able to see things others cannot; if this interpretation is adopted, Ivorwen would possess a priori knowledge about something that will not become perceptible to others for a long time – the green stone is a real physical artefact later gifted to Aragorn by Galadriel, but one that has not yet been encountered by others in perception or in thought.

Considering the larger tendencies in the legendarium it would be more concordant with the overall textual material to read the sentence as an indication of the gift of foreseeing or otherwise exceptional abilities of perception and interpreta-

tion. This ability, as I have pointed out in chapter 3, is not always a permanent stage: a vision or prophecy may be a one-time experience in which case it would be questionable to call it a gift or ability. This is not Ivorwen's situation; she is explicitly said to have the gift of foresight (see *The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix A, 1085). Still the word *foresight* does not quite explain what happens. Precognition only concerns Ivorwen's statement about Aragorn's future, and this is more like an interpretation or an inference of the stone's significance. There is, however, no indication of Ivorwen actually *seeing* Aragorn's future as a real prophetic vision: what she sees is the stone, and this sensory observation is tied to the present which makes it difficult to justifiably call it foresight. Ivorwen understands the meaning of the stone, and her uttered words are the prediction. Two separate incidents can thus be found, the present seeing and as a result a prophecy drawn from this perception. There is a difference between foreseeing the future and foretelling or predicting it. Ivorwen, despite seeing something others cannot, does not fore*see* the future; she foretells it, though.

What, then, is the role of visual perception in Ivorwen's precognition? She sees something that is not physically there to be seen but exists nonetheless. Elessar, the elf-stone, is a jewel Aragorn will later carry as he is wed to Arwen, and the origin of the stone needs to be explained so that its meaning would become understandable. The history of the stone – or stones, since the jewel of Aragorn, like many other objects in the fictional world, apparently had predecessors – is ambiguous, but the story that concerns the case of Aragorn and Ivorwen's prediction is the matter of interest here. In chapter "Farewell to Lórien" of *The Lord of the Rings*, Galadriel gives gifts to the departing Fellowship, Frodo's star-glass among them. Her gift to Aragorn is a green jewel set in an eagle-formed brooch, a jewel that her daughter Celebrían and granddaughter Arwen had also possessed in their time; now it passes to Aragorn, to whom Galadriel says "'[– –] In this hour take the name that was foretold for you, Elessar, the Elfstone of the House of Elendil!'" (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, viii, 385). Later in the story, when another aforemen-

tioned prophecy – "[t]he hands of the king are the hands of a healer" (ibid. *RK*, V, viii, 885) – is verified, Aragorn openly declares his name and status, saying that "'Verily, for in the high tongue of old I am *Elessar*, the Elfstone, and *Envinyatar*, the Renewer'" (ibid. 885). The green stone is from the beginning tied to Aragorn's fate and his role as a ruler that once again brings together the two peoples, Elves and Men. The stone's relevance extends to the character of Aragorn both as a man and as future king who reunites the two peoples and the split kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor.

Foretelling may be Ivorwen's own ability but seeing the stone appears to be something else. A possible interpretation would be to claim that the stone is able to present itself to someone in which case supernaturality would be a property of the stone and would not therefore necessarily have anything to do with perception. The key question is where the magical or supernatural can be attributed to. If the stone can appear before certain eyes, it is the stone that is magical, not the observer nor the observation. Ivorwen's perception is linked to the future for she sees something Aragorn does not yet have but will in the future: the stone is real, not a mere mental image. Physically it is not present at the time of the passage but it does not make the stone, nor Ivorwen's observation, unreal. The stone is present but not in matter and not at the specific moment – this temporal aspect already foreshadows the eternalist view of time that will be one matter of interest in the next example.

Another – and quite substantially better-known – example of perceiving the immaterial is from a chapter named "The Passage of the Marshes" from *The Lord of the Rings*. Frodo and Sam, having taken Sméagol as their guide to Mordor, pass over treacherous marshes on their journey towards the Black Gate. As darkness falls, fell lights start to flicker above the still waters, and the horrors of the marshes are revealed:

> 'There are dead things, dead faces, in the water,' he [Sam] said with horror. 'Dead faces!'
>
> Gollum laughed. 'The Dead Marshes, yes, yes: that is their name,' he cackled.

> 'You should not look in when the candles are lit.'
>
> 'Who are they? What are they?' asked Sam shuddering, turning to Frodo, who was now behind him.
>
> 'I don't know,' said Frodo in a dreamlike voice. 'But I have seen them too. In the pools when the candles were lit. They lie in all the pools, pale faces, deep deep under the dark water. I saw them: grim faces and evil, and noble faces and sad. Many faces proud and fair, and weeds in their silver hair. But all foul, all rotting, all dead. A fell light is in them.'
>
> [– –]
>
> 'But that is an age and more ago,' said Sam. 'The Dead can't be really there! Is it some devilry hatched in the Dark Land?'
>
> 'Who knows? Sméagol doesn't know,' answered Gollum. 'You cannot reach them, you cannot touch them. We tried once, yes, precious. I tried once; but you cannot reach them. Only shapes to see, perhaps, not to touch. No precious! All dead.' (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, IV, ii, 643.)

The dead faces in the water differ remarkably from the stone beheld by Ivorwen. First of all, the dead can presumably be seen by anyone who wanders through the Marshes at the right time when the lights are on; therefore, they are a part of the textual actual world instead of the private sphere of one character. The visual experience is shared by all three companions which makes it harder to dismiss it as a mere hallucination. None of the three knows exactly what the dead figures are, but I find Gollum's description most revealing: "[o]nly shapes to see, perhaps, not to touch." This remark alongside the fact that Gollum indeed tried to reach the bodies implies that the shapes are just that and nothing more – they are not true physical entities, and they are not accessible to sensory perception (such as touch) apart from sight. The physical absence of the dead is verified and tested by Gollum's own experience, making the bodies only echoes of their former material form.

One striking contrast to the case of the green stone is that the fantasy world itself offers possible explanations to solve the secrets of the Dead Marshes. The Marshes grew over a great battlefield (the summary of which has been omitted

from the quotation above due to its length), and Sam speculates that the images of the dead are preserved because of some malicious work of dark powers. This presumption brings into attention the explanatory role of the supernatural: while the green stone remains rather obscure and evokes several questions about the relationship between the perceptible reality and the observer, the Dead Marshes are presented as cursed by dark powers. Sam's speculation does not call for further analysis from his companions, and I argue that the offered explanation is acceptable. The dark magic or curse is in itself sufficient and able to confuse the perceptual observations of those who venture the Marshes. What remains to be asked is where the perceptible phenomenon (or the magic that causes it) truly occurs. I see here two equal possibilities: either the pools are enchanted so that the dead can be seen in them when the flames are lit, or the Marshes' influence on the wanderers is such that they all share a vision of something that has no external cause whatsoever.

The history of the Marshes must be taken into account in order to properly understand the curious perceptual experiences of the wanderers. The Marshes lay near the plain of Dagorlad where a great battle was fought in the Second Age. Many of the fallen were buried there, and as the Marshes expanded in the years to follow, they swallowed the graves. The historical aspect is significant for there indeed *have* been dead bodies in the ground, despite the fact that by the time Frodo and his companions arrive in the Marshes, they have been long gone. Perceptually the situation is fascinating: unlike the green stone that never was on baby Aragorn's breast but that he will carry as an adult, the dead bodies actually were there once. Frodo and the others are looking at something that is no longer present.

Perceptual observations derived from something that has already ceased to exist at the time of perception have been studied by Moran (2019) whose theory draws from the branch of naïve realism. Moran, using stargazing as an example, illustrates the contradiction between observation and physical absence as follows:

> Suppose you look up at the sky on a clear night. There are many visible stars, but you decide to focus on just one. Suppose further that, as it happens, what is distinctive about the star you choose to focus on is that, unlike the other stars *it no longer exists*, having exploded and then 'died' hundreds of years ago. [––]
> I submit that regarding this case, it is natural, at least initially, to think that both of the following claims are true, namely,
> (1) You see the star.
> And yet,
> (2) The star no longer exists. (Moran 2019, 202–203.)

Moran continues his treatment by exploring how the two contradicting claims can both be true at once. The key problem seems to be how something that has ceased to be a part of reality can have the capacity of being seen. According to Moran, both of the claims above seem intuitively correct and yet logically incompatible. Moran attempts to solve this problem by finding an alternative to the traditional sense-datum theories. The sense-datum view, as remarked, enables rejecting the existence principle, and even though the visual experience is caused by an object, its intrinsic nature can still be characterised independently of said object. In Moran's stargazing example, the sense datum exists at the present even though the object does not. However, Moran aims to reveal what kind of answers naïve realists might have for the problem. (Moran 2019, 203–204.)

Moran (2019, 205) argues that in order to be able to solve the problem, naïve realists must adopt an eternalist view of time as opposed to presentism – in short, eternalism recognises the equal existence of both past and present objects whereas presentism, as its name implies, holds that only present objects exist. A distinct characteristic of Tolkien's fiction is that different supernatural phenomena, such as dreams, visions and prophesies, bring different moments of time together, causing them to merge and become tightly intertwined, inseparable, even. Therefore, the eternalist view seems to be quite fitting: different temporal levels, past and future

objects, can in the world of fantasy coexist in a very literal sense and indeed become perceptible to the characters. While the sense-datum theories applied to the problem of the green stone are able to explain the dead faces in the Marshes, I argue that the naïve realistic approach would not go amiss either. Fantasy fiction and shared suspension of disbelief recognise phantasms, apparitions and visions to be taken as genuine possibilities – and this is why such phenomena need to be addressed epistemically, not dismissed as mere errors.

The core problem of perceptual knowledge stems from the relationship between the physical world and the observer as this section has discussed, but also from the general reliability of perception, interpretation and the easily deceivable senses. This chapter has been mostly concerned with anomalies of perception, seeing things that lack physical existence or, on the other hand, hiding things from the senses. Epistemically, the most relevant observation is that all of the phenomena above are such that in the actual world they would be considered compromising to perceptual knowledge, making it unreliable and resulting in false beliefs about the surrounding reality. In a fantasy world what occurs is the opposite: the visions and other phenomena are not necessarily perceptual errors Silva and Toivainen (2019) discuss, nor are they any less real but rather more informative than many sensible objects in the physical world: while some perceptual experiences are clearly instructive and revelatory in nature, also more subtle sensory phenomena can convey knowledge of some sort – the faces in the Dead Marshes, for instance, are a constant historical reminder of the battles fought long ago.

4.3 Leaving the Cave

> This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed – whether rightly or wrongly God

> knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort [– –]. (*The Republic*, 208.)

Already in the analysis of section "Originality of light and false eternity", it became clear that in the many studies written about Tolkien's fantasy universe the role of light and its nigh endless interpretational possibilities can hardly be exaggerated. The problems of knowledge and the role light has in the formation of knowledge and its ability to reveal the truth have been at times briefly commented, but a more thorough examination remains to be written. Nagy (2004, 93) notes that Plato's philosophical knowledge and Tolkien's theological myth are "depicted in strikingly similar terms", and that light plays a great role in both. Nagy argues that for Tolkien, light is the ultimate theological metaphor, categorising cultures and beings in the fictional world based on their distance from the divine light. Commenting on Flieger's notion about light's ability to make things visible, clarify and enable judgement, Nagy argues that

> [b]ut this is true in more than one sense: in a concrete sense, light offers opportunity for physical perception by vision; but in another sense, the light of Ilúvatar also stands for *meaning*, to which cultures of Middle-earth have access in varying degrees, according to their capacities and integration into the hierarchy of authority and knowledge. (Nagy 2004, 93.)

While authority and knowledge are mentioned as factors that influence the character's ability to strive for light – or meaning – the focus remains primarily theological, as is perfectly congruent with the questions Nagy's article engages in. Korpua's (2021, 78–81) analysis, then again, in which the theological currents are also of interest, brings to the fore the role of light as an organising power: light structures the universe not only temporally by defining its course and eras, such as the Years of the Lamps, of the Trees and of the Sun and Moon, but also by ordering differ-

ent peoples and creatures based on their closeness to primeval, divine light and the lands and otherworldly beings associated with it. Theological viewpoints and approaches are indeed quite prominent when Tolkien's legendarium is discussed with respect to meaning, search and fate, and light, too, is heavily associated with different kinds of religious traditions, connected with the divine and the good. Particularly in the context of Christian theology, Tolkien's light-motif could also benefit from Neoplatonist perspectives which regrettably have to be left out from this treatment. Light is very deeply connected with the traditions of belief systems but also with the traditions of knowledge – figuratively speaking, also in everyday language, to receive knowledge and to understand is often referred to as the object being illuminated or shed light on, or as the learner becoming enlightened in some matter. This capacity of light is the main interest in the following analysis, and I hope to show that even though the role of light in perceptual knowledge at first glance is rather obvious, it provides plenty of insight into Tolkien's epistemic system.

The first half begins with ponderings about light and perception and moves on from rather common-sense instances towards more figurative and supernatural epistemic problems. The Platonic framework and the Theory of Forms that received lesser attention in the third chapter are now brought to the fore again. The first half concludes with the (admittedly paradoxical) possibility of gaining knowledge about the world of Ideas through perception. This approach as such is, of course, somewhat incompatible with the core notions of knowledge, perception and the concept of Ideas in Plato's philosophy, but I am nonetheless suggesting a reading that takes into account the possibility of Ideas revealing themselves to sensory perception in the world of fantasy. In order to properly examine this possibility, I will also take a look at the broader history of the discussion about Ideas, particularly the often-scorned physical world of creation. It is in this section where the overall analysis of the metaphysical hierarchy of Arda presented in the second chapter finally becomes properly intertwined with the epistemic analysis: perceptual

knowledge has until now been mostly concerned with the physical world, but now the higher level of existence, the abstract, eternal and timeless reality, the universe in its ideal state, is also brought into the treatment, emphasising the supernatural aspects of knowing. In short, this section asks whether perception can under certain circumstances allow brief glimpses to the otherworldly, which would mean that in the epistemic system woven in Tolkien's universe it is possible that perception can lead to something more than mere true opinions – knowledge.

While the first half studies cases where the otherworldly reveals itself in the world of perception, the second half of the treatment focuses on situations in which the characters find themselves *in between* two levels of existence, a metaphysical change in their being that greatly alters their perceptual abilities. The difference between the two sections therefore is that the first section focuses on the epistemic status of the physical reality whereas the latter half is more interested in the status of the characters living in this world. The analysis that owes much to Korpua's (2021, 71–73 and 2015, 53) remarks examines two different dichotomies, the Platonic Ideas and their shadows and the distinction between the Seen and the Unseen, or the visible and the invisible in Arda's metaphysics. The two dichotomies are kindred and yet not entirely compatible without significant difficulty; at least they cannot be treated as direct counterparts or equivalents. This problem of counterparts is one of the dangers this study needs to be aware of and avoid in order to be able to present justifiable interpretations: while I study the similarities between Plato's philosophy and Tolkien's fictional world, I naturally do not claim that the concept of Ideas, for instance, could be found in Tolkien's universe exactly as presented in the classic theory.

4.3.1 On the Threshold of Seeing: Light and Ideas in the World of Perception

Before any interpretations about reaching towards the eternal Ideas through sensory perception can be made, the epistemic status of the physical world must be giv-

en some serious thought. The physical world is in every respect secondary in Tolkien's universe, and yet it must be granted some significance, if it is to be justifiably analysed as a part of epistemic endeavours, truth-seeking, even. I will here return to Lovejoy's work concerning the history of ideas: one of the questions Lovejoy focuses on is why the physical world made it into existence in the first place, if it should be completely disregarded. In order to answer this question Lovejoy discusses Plato in depth. The dialogue *Timaeus* is an important starting-point for Lovejoy's examination, and he distinguishes two principal conceptions that have since become central to Occidental philosophy. The conceptions present answers to two questions. The first asks "*Why* is there any World of Becoming, in addition to the eternal World of Ideas, or, indeed, to the one supreme Idea?" (Lovejoy 1957, 46). The second asks "What principle determines the number of kinds of being that make up the sensible and temporal world?" (ibid. 46.) The existence of the imperfect world of becoming is explained by focusing on the Artificer of the universe who is thoroughly good and therefore wishes everything to be as good as possible, and as close to himself as possible – envy is impossible to god. The supramundane being must also be self-sufficient, and the crucial thing is that the eternal, self-sufficient being must produce things other than itself for otherwise the positive element of perfection would be missing: the supreme being would not be as complete as it could be, which contradicts its very definition. Therefore, in Plato's thinking, the self-sufficient being in fact needs the existence of imperfect, temporal, physical beings in order to be perfect and complete.[71] The Absolute does not exist alone after all, and the Self-Sufficing Perfection is replaced by Self-Transcending Fecundity. (Lovejoy 1957, 47–48.) The second question, how many kinds of imperfect beings should there be in the world, Lovejoy (ibid. 50) answers

[71] While theological questions are not the central matter of this study, Eru Ilúvatar's use of creative power and his self-transcendence share much with Lovejoy's rendition. As Whittingham (1998, 216) writes, "[i]n giving the Ainur power to create, Ilúvatar has not reduced his own creative force; he has simply extended it, including their efforts within his own."

briefly: "all possible kinds". All things, Lovejoy specifies, refer to the sensible counterparts of every single Idea.

In short, Lovejoy (1957, 51) discusses Plato's arguments presented in *Timaeus* and summarises them, highlighting the thought that perfection needs imperfection without which it would not be complete – the universe must not lack anything, not even mortal and physical things because the world needs diversity and all kinds of beings. The existence of the physical world thus receives its justification from the goodness of the Artificer and the concepts of perfection and the Absolute, as well as the principle of plenitude. The problem this study encounters when examining fictional worlds from a Platonic perspective does not arise from the dualistic metaphysics and the existence of the secondary reality as such but from its epistemic role. The two levels of reality coexist, not always harmoniously or clearly separated from one another, but it is the intelligibility and accessibility of the higher realm that evokes the most serious questions: what I primarily try to find out is whether Ideas – or their rough equivalents in Tolkien's world – can make themselves present through the perceptible world. I will soon go through instances in which this *seems* to happen, in which the otherworldly, perfect and eternal *seems* to be revealed to the spectator. Whether this truly is a sensory experience is hard to tell: distinguishing seeing as a form of visual perception from seeing "with the eye of the mind" is at the core of the problem, particularly in situations in which the characters experience nigh transcendent revelations. Plato's treatment of the epistemic status of the physical world largely comes from his division into different levels of knowing, the physical world offering the most feeble and unreliable knowledge. In the sixth book of *The Republic* Plato presents his Analogy of the Divided Line[72]

[72] In Plato's Divided Line a division is first made between two segments, the visible and the intelligible. These two sections are then further divided into two parts, creating a line consisting of four parts. The first segment is the lowest and it consists of images, likenesses of visual objects such as shadows or reflections. The second segment includes physical beings, animals, plants and crafted things; these two form the visual segment, the first half. The second half consists of certain ideas, including mathematical and geometrical forms, and the last and highest segment consists of ideas alone – these form the intelligible segment. Knowledge only concerns the latter half of the line, while the first half only has opinions, beliefs and imagination to offer. (*The Republic*, 202–204.)

where he discusses the relationship between perception and reason, copies and originals, and hypotheses and first principles. The treatment concludes with the division of the soul:

> and now, corresponding to these four divisions, let there be four faculties in the soul – reason answering to the highest, understanding to the second, faith (or conviction) to the third, and perception of shadows to the last – and let there be a scale of them, and let us suppose that the several faculties have clearness in the same degree that their object have truth. (*The Republic*, 204.)

The higher ideas, of which the Form of the Good is the ultimate and the highest, can only be reached by soaring above hypotheses, using them only as a stepping stone, and the perceptual world plays no part in this pursuit. The epistemic differences between the sections of the Divided Line are summarised as follows: "[w]ould you not admit that both the sections of this division have different degrees of truth, and that the copy is to the original as the sphere of opinion is to the sphere of knowledge?" (*The Republic*, 202). If this sentiment is as such adopted to the study of Tolkien's fictional world, the physical reality, not to mention the many forms of sub-creation within the legendarium, would soon lose all reliability. That being said, it seems impossible for sensory perception to be able to offer anything other than mere beliefs, imaginings and conjectures. Yet it is worth the effort to find out whether a Platonically influenced world of fantasy could after all stretch the perceptual realm and its epistemic abilities a little bit further: the readings to follow study Tolkien's world side by side with Plato's epistemology, but I will deal with the aforementioned obstacles by focusing on the literal meanings in Plato's figurative renditions, in other words, by approaching the texts of the two writers in a similar manner. This method is first applied to the study of the literal and the figurative meanings of *enlightening* and *ascending*, and I argue that these seemingly very physical and spatial phenomena can also be read as a process the soul goes through in a far more abstract sense. The way in which Tolkien balances between

literal and figurative levels, bringing language and word choices with their associations and rich etymology to their full potential, is characterised by Flieger's (2002, 107) as follows:

> Consonant with the actual fragmentation of light in Tolkien's world is the fragmentation of meaning and the further division of meaning into literal, metaphoric, and symbolic levels. It is a measure of Tolkien's creativity and the integrity of his concept that he achieves this at no cost to the reality of his world or erosion of the believability of its history. [– –] They [the Silmarils] function at once as literal artifacts, as potent metaphors for desire and, at the highest level, as symbols charged with a variety of referents. The Silmarils are real, metaphoric, and symbolic without ever being other than themselves.

This formulation provides solid arguments for studying Tolkien's literature from a perspective that pays particular attention to the interplay of the literal and the metaphoric or symbolic. Furthermore, this approach is notably suitable for analyses that focus on light, since the very essence of the Silmarils derives from it. My approach is to examine certain recurrent motifs present in Tolkien and Plato's writing, that is, light, dark, illumination and ascending, with the hypothesis that the metaphorical and literal levels coexist seamlessly, and the concrete events and states of affair the words describe also create another, epistemically meaningful layer to the fictional universe being built.

While the Analogy of the Divided Line has to be kept in mind when trying to solve the epistemic problems, the starting point for the analysis and the link between the literal and the figurative is the Allegory of the Cave – the cave represents the entire physical, perceptual world, and I use the allegory to analyse situations in which Tolkien's characters are suddenly able to see something beyond. Alongside the Cave also the Analogy of the Sun will be discussed, and focus will be on the literal as well as on the metaphorical. Writing about leaving the cave may as such evoke presuppositions about an analysis that is tied to the obvious, the sur-

face instead of the underlying structures and themes. This possible presupposition I want to prove wrong and suggest a reading in which the literal level of the text is indeed fascinating and able to provide insight to other meanings embedded in it. Leaving the cave in Platonic context is a concrete event that is used to illustrate epistemic enlightenment, getting in touch with the forms though not reaching or understanding them completely (*The Republic*, 208). In Tolkien's world, too, there are similar incidents, momentary occurrences where the world all of a sudden unfolds in a novel, formerly unknown way. One of these examples and perhaps the most literal one is that of Gollum, a matter that will resurface in the concluding section of this chapter: after dwelling for centuries in tunnels under the mountains he is finally – though reluctantly – reunited with light, first on a verbal and ideal level in the form of Bilbo's riddle about sun on daisies and afterwards by truly leaving the cave. The epistemic significance of this reunion and the literal act of leaving the cave I have examined elsewhere (Kärkelä 2019), but other incidents, some more literal than others, will be a point of interest in this section.

While the supernatural and philosophical aspects of light are the primary matter of interest here, it is useful to take a look at the mundane and the ordinary, too. The varying ways in which light, sunlight in particular, is written about and described, deserve closer attention. The following examples include word choices in which especially movement is foregrounded: the sun does not merely rise or go down; its movement is much more elaborate and livelier. With respect to the epistemic accessibility of the physical world and the characters' ability to comprehend their surroundings, it is the relationship between the sight-enabling light and the world it illuminates that evokes questions. This becomes evident in two passages in which the journey of the companions is described, and the change the world goes through as the darkness of night gives way to daylight is explained in great detail as well as the vagueness that follows sundown:

> Turning back they saw across the River the far hills kindled. Day leaped into the sky. The red rim of the sun rose over the shoulders of the dark land. Before them in the West the world lay still, formless and grey; but even as they looked, the shadows of night melted, the colours of the waking earth returned: green flowed over the wide meads of Rohan; the white mists shimmered in the water-vales; and far off to the left, thirty leagues or more, blue and purple stood the White Mountains, rising into peaks of jet, tipped with glimmering snows, flushed with the rose of morning. (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, ii, 432.)

> The sun sank and the shadows of evening fell like a curtain. They were alone in a grey formless world without mark or measure. Only far away north-west there was a deeper darkness against the dying light: the Mountains of Mist and the forest at their feet. (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, ii, 439.)

In the first quoted passage daybreak restores that which momentarily has been lost: "the colours of the waking earth *returned*: green *flowed over* the wide meads of Rohan" (italics mine). Language used in the description is of course figurative and poetic, even, but a more literal interpretation is worth consideration, too: meticulous examination of linguistic choices is reasonable also because of the ways in which fantasy literature works with language, uses and challenges its systems, expectations and structures, an aspect which is also recognised in genre-focused studies on fantasy (see for instance Attebery 1992, 6–7). A slight doubt is implied in the passage, a doubt that since no perception can confirm what the world looks like in the absence of light, it could be that the world indeed is different during the dark hours of night. The greenery and the shapes of the vales, mountains and meads are drawn back and the verbs used, especially the words *return* and *flow* indicate that the colours are not a permanent, physical quality of the land but something more flexible and unpredictable. This is after all the central problem of perception and further that of empiricism.

It is particularly noteworthy that sunrise and increasing daylight do more than just illuminate the landscape and enable eyesight: to a degree they also seem to

give the perceptible world some of its characteristics. The absence of daylight is not merely lack of proper sight, it is something that wipes away the world as it is known, and many of the structures and attributes applied to the world in order to make sense of it avail no longer. As Nagy (2004, 94) points out, Plato's Form of the Good, symbolised by the sun, truly lends existence to things; this Nagy parallels with Tolkien's creation myth in which the Flame Imperishable[73] makes the world real, arguing that light represents both being and knowledge. This relationship between being and knowing, both of which are treated by using the metaphor of light, as Nagy's remark shows, remains unresolved. In these two passages the sun is an active entity, granting the world its properties that in its absence are covered by night. The key problem the passages lead towards is much intertwined with the metaphysical status of *qualities*, and the questions that arise are these: If sunlight, more or less literally, restores the colours and shapes of the world and makes them perceptible again, how do we know whether this is an epistemic or a metaphysical process? In other words, is the restoration by illumination something that actually happens to the physical reality or is it merely something that enables drawing perceptual knowledge from this world and its properties? It is plainly stated in *The Silmarillion* (9, 15), that the Flame Imperishable is set at the heart of the world and it indeed brings its existence into reality – in this sense, I fully agree with Korpua's (2021, 67) comparison of the flame with Plato's Soul of the World. This event is presented as singular and irretrievable, as a moment that distinguishes being from not-being. However, if the metaphysical role of light is taken to the extreme, a possible interpretation is that the same, or nearly the same, keeps happening throughout the history of Arda, making the so called "lending of existence" a continual process instead of a singular event. In spite of this possibility, I am inclined to adopt a more moderate interpretation and argue that the epistemological reading

[73] Korpua (2015, 50) parallels the Flame Imperishable with Plato's Soul of the World, remarking that they are both placed at the centre or heart of the world. McIntosh (2017, 53), on the other hand, draws attention to the difficulty of determining whether the flame is not only *with* Ilúvatar but also *within* him, and to what degree it is distinct from the creator-god, to what degree identical with him.

of light as the enabler of gathering knowledge – literally and figuratively – is more fruitful. Answering such wide metaphysical questions properly would be a topic for a study of its own entirely, but the very fact that the questions surface indicates that Tolkien's world deserves to be studied from philosophical viewpoints, both metaphysical and epistemological.

In order to better understand the profound role of light both as a constituent of the fictional world and its epistemic whole, I turn to Robert Grosseteste's cosmological treatises, in particular an examination named *De Luce*. Robert Grosseteste, while entering this study relatively late, is an important scholar to be named when discussing light and its metaphysics. Grosseteste (c. 1168–1253), an English scientist, scholastic philosopher and theologian known as the Bishop of Lincoln, received recognition for his thoughts and formulations about scientific method. Grosseteste's relevance stretches over several fields, philosophy, theology and scientific branches alike, and he "made an outstanding contribution to the thought and the culture of his time" (McEvoy 2000, xi). Grosseteste's famous commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics significantly helped to clarify the proper nature of scientific reasoning in Aristotle's natural philosophy, and he also developed theories of his own about the role of mathematics in the pursuits of comprehending natural phenomena – some of the phenomena Grosseteste showed great interest in include rainbows, climates, vision, movement, sight and light, the last one being of primary interest here. (ibid. xi–xii.)

For Grosseteste, light is the first form, *corporeity*, and by necessity it results in a quantified body through the process of matter extending into three dimensions. Since light is self-multiplicative and diffuses spherically, it can, according to Grosseteste, be identified as the first form. Light is the first form, and the first and simplest body is the firmament that is perfect because it consists only of the first form and the first matter. (Grosseteste 1942, 10, 13.) Light cuts through all the spheres, the density of which varies: the furthest spheres, the firmament being the completely actualised, perfect and outermost, are rarer whereas the spheres grow

denser towards the centre. The sub-lunar spheres which include the four elements are the densest and also subject to change. At first, light (*lux*) extends spherically as far as possible from its point of origin, eventually creating the firmament. From there on the process turns backwards for light cannot stretch any further. Once the first body is fully actualised, it begins to diffuse its own light towards the centre: the inwardly directed light brings with itself the spirituality of the matter of the first sphere and is now called *lumen*. Lumen, the light emitted by the outermost sphere, gathers with it the mass that exists below the first body and compresses it until it grows denser and is perfected, thus creating the second sphere. In this manner the formation of inner, denser spheres began, and the process continues inwards, creating new spheres each less perfect than the ones above and more subject to change. (ibid. 13–14). The work of light is therefore layered: "[j]ust as the light (*lumen*) begotten from the first body completed the actualization of the second sphere and left a denser mass below the second sphere, so the light (*lumen*) begotten from the second sphere completed the actualization of the third sphere, and through its gathering left below this third sphere a mass of even greater density." (ibid. 14.)

The action of light is the basis for Grosseteste's account of the structure and generation of the physical world. The entire cosmology is based on light, a starting-point that in the context of Tolkien's fiction is easy to accept: taking into account Flieger's (2002) overall approach to *The Silmarillion* as a treatment and history of light, metaphysics that entirely draw from light do seem kindred to Tolkien's cosmology. Although the cosmogony of Arda proceeds in a very different way, the multiplying, diffusing, fracturing and emitting actions of light highly determine the metaphysics of the universe – and, simultaneously, play a critical role in the story itself, marking many of the most significant events. The metaphysical nature of light is revealed in its own action and its part in the narrated history. Drawing from this notion, the difference Grosseteste sees between *lux* and *lumen* is of particular interest. *Lumen*, the light emitted by the spheres, is less subtle and less capable of

perfection than the first form, *lux,* that creates the firmament. The potency of *lumen* becomes lesser as it moves inwards, producing denser and less perfect spheres. Celestial matter can be perfected, but the sphere of the moon is no longer capable of this: the sphere's *lumen* emission cannot perfect the spheres below, resulting in the formation of the four elements. (Grosseteste 1942, 13–15.) The lessening capability of light is very much present throughout Tolkien's work, a matter Flieger chiefly pays attention to in her study. Furthermore, the spherical action of light somewhat resembles Nagy's (2004, 93) previously quoted idea about the different peoples' strive towards light and meaning in Tolkien's world, each being able to reach them according to their measure.

The realisation of metaphysics by illumination leads into thinking that light plays a double role in the fictional universe. Metaphysically, it gives being; epistemically, it makes something known and accessible to senses, more or less literally. These two purposes, separate as they may seem at first sight, must be observed more carefully; the triangle that emerges between light (or the source of light), the thing illuminated and the beholder problematizes the epistemic and metaphysical interpretations. Also, the two interpretations of metaphysics come to the fore: according to Murray Miles (1999, 12), metaphysics "designates both (1) the most universal science, or 'ontology' (as it came later to be called) and (2) the highest science, 'theology' (as Aristotle himself called it)." This connection for its part explains the often rather exegetic readings Tolkien's fiction seems to invite and encourage: Tolkien's cosmology constantly shows metaphysics in action, focuses on the unfolding of the world and presents its structures and hierarchies as matters of great interest; this continuity and its influence on the concept of change in Arda will be returned to at the very end of this work. The theological interpretation of metaphysics and its strong presence in Tolkien's fiction, I argue, is partly responsible for this tendency.

The relationship between sunlight and everyday perception evidently evokes questions, but the supernatural elements and vision-like unfolding of the world are

even more complicated. The contrast between darkness and light grows deeper and wider as the evils of the world gain more and more power. Despite the spreading darkness that so often is linked to the growing evil forces and their deeds, such as the Darkening of Valinor because of Melkor and Ungoliant and the shadows invading Middle-earth due to Sauron's tightening grasp, there are a few islands of light that remain hidden from the enemies. One of these, and perhaps the most remarkable one, is the elven-realm Lothlórien that is governed by Celeborn and Galadriel. Galadriel's power is in many ways associated with light, especially that of Valinor: she had perceived the light of the two Trees and managed to maintain some of it or its likeness in her own realm. Lothlórien's position as a part of the ontological hierarchy of re-emerging elements is fascinating, a matter I discussed in the second chapter, and even though the light of Lórien cannot be treated as primeval or eternal, it is nonetheless unique in mortal Arda.

The time spent in Lothlórien is in many ways a turning-point for the Fellowship, and its interpretational relevance particularly with respect to medieval dream theory and its many resemblances with the works of the *Pearl*-poet, Dante and, regarding later intertextual connections, Spenser, have been acknowledged in various studies, including those by Amendt-Raduege (2006), Ekman (2013 and 2009) and Downey (2011). It is not only the time spent in the land that evokes interest but the manner of entering it, too, as becomes evident in Ekman's study. The third chapter of Ekman's (2013, 101–102) opus, titled "Borders and Boundaries", presents a thorough account of the realm, studying it as a polder and an anachronism that is "a piece of Faerie surrounded by mundanity, the High Elves' last remaining kingdom and, as such, an anachronism preserving a piece of the Elder Days". Ekman (ibid. 102) outlines an interesting division into five stages of entering the realm: the Fellowship does not jump straight into the heart of Lothlórien but first passes through the mallorn forest, crosses the river Nimrodel, meets the guards, crosses the river Silverlode, and finally enters Cerin Amroth, blindfolded. Of these stages the final one, climbing the hill Cerin Amroth, is my main interest and one of

the most revealing scenes of the novel's epistemology as a whole, although regarding the highly thematised motif of seeing and looking and their epistemic relevance, entering the heart of the realm blindfolded is also an interesting detail.

The fourth stage Ekman (2013, 104) discusses, crossing the river, is also remarkable: according to Ekman, "[i]t is not until the Company has crossed the river Silverlode that its members have moved out of the normal world, and they move only gradually away from its influence." This formulation clarifies one central aspect, the fact that it is not only noteworthy where the Company is going and what kind of a place they are about to enter, but also where they are moving *away from*. Given the omnipresent atmosphere of timelessness and the many resemblances with Plato, this movement can be read as a general act of turning away from this-worldliness, forsaking the known, mundane reality – this is the key observation of the analysis to follow, and the complicated and partly incongruous relationship between the different levels of reality and the epistemic crossings of the borders between them become well exemplified in the passages about Lothlórien and Cerin Amroth.

The land of Lórien is the scene of events only for a couple of brief chapters in *The Lord of the Rings* but its descriptions include several passages in which the significance of light is foregrounded. The most notable of these, especially regarding perceptual knowledge, is the one where Frodo Baggins approaches the hill of Cerin Amroth and halts for a while to look around:

> It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 359.)

It has been established by now that Tolkien's world of fantasy does not use Platonic tones, themes and impressions sparingly, but even given this dominant overall tendency the passage above is striking. The Theory of Forms and the blinding revelation of the truer being echo in this passage perhaps more than anywhere else in this work, excluding some even more straightforwardly philosophical discussions that will be the main point of interest in the final section of this chapter, "Men and *anamnesis*". The text excerpt above is brief and yet holds basis for many possible lines of analysis. First of all, attention is drawn to the transition Frodo experiences, entering to a reality both novel and ancient. Right from the beginning the distinction between the world known to him and the new world before him becomes apparent: there is an element of recognition and familiarity, that which he perceives is not alien to him. This contrast between the familiar and the foreign is expressed when describing the colours of Lórien which are the same as ever and yet "fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful".

Frodo's experience is not dissimilar to the wonder of the released prisoners who finally get a glimpse of the sunlit, bright world outside in Plato's simile. In Lórien, too, light is the obvious source of marvel: it is stated about the land that "[a] light was upon it for which his language had no name" making the latter descriptions ambiguous: the land of Lórien is indeed peculiar but whether its distinct nature is a property of the land itself or an impression of the spectator caused by the light in which the land is seen is unclear.[74] I esteem the latter option the more likely one, and the more believable; especially the description of forms and colours suggests this – everything that Frodo sees has a shape and colour recognizable to him and yet seen in a new light somehow novel and more precise. Given Lórien's,

[74] Regarding natural elements, water alongside light is also deeply associated with Lothlórien and Galadriel's power. Water, as Korpua (2021, 55–56) remarks, is both frightening and purifying, and the water-element is intertwined with Galadriel's Ring of Power and the knowledge-enabling Mirror. The glass-phial she gifts Frodo, then again, includes both elements, a light of one Silmaril and water from Lórien's pools (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, viii, 387).

especially Galadriel's, close connection to the Undying Lands it is reasonable to argue that in Lórien perception can come a little bit closer to the real and genuine, and that of the world of Ideas a glimpse can be reached. The forms and colours Frodo sees are thus closer to their proper and original nature instead of being mere particular, imperfect instances of their higher Idea. Here the problem of *seeing* comes to the fore, unless Frodo's vision is interpreted as an inner process of enlightenment, seeing with the mind's eye rather than the physical eye. "The many, as we say, are seen but not known, and the ideas are known but not seen" (*The Republic*, 198), as is plainly stated in Plato's work. Yet the ideas are, in one way or another, *in Frodo's presence*, accessible to him if only for a little while.

Because the descriptions of light (and colours, which are naturally connected to light by physics) are both frequent and vivid, interpretations in a Platonic context easily become one-sided. Therefore, other possibilities need to be acknowledged: in a fantasy universe like Tolkien's the influence of magic is present, and it should be kept in mind that the power of Lothlórien, as Frodo soon learns, "comes from the elven Ring of Power held by Galadriel" (Ekman 2013, 105). The three elven-rings are associated with preservation and protection, and those who wielded them "could ward off the decays of time and postpone the weariness of the world" (*The Silmarillion*, 345), which quite explains the seeming changelessness, curious passing of time and the feeling of ever-ongoing present the Company experiences as well as the lack of sickness and deformity of the land. I do not argue that light is the *only* element that creates this atmosphere and fades out the border between the Idea and physical reality; in this process, the ring Nenya undeniably plays a key part. However, the indirect presence of the light of the Two Trees produces even stronger connections to the divine, the original and otherworldly: the Rings of Power were forged in Eregion (*The Silmarillion*, 344–345) and as such they are of Middle-earth, whereas the light, even refracted, has its origin in the Trees. As Ekman (2009, 69) points out, Lothlórien is sometimes called The Golden Wood, but "it is in fact just as much a place of silver". Ekman's remark primarily concerns the

connections between Tolkien's landscapes and *Pearl*, but the motif of golden and silver trees also extends to the light-emitting trees in Valinor, for which reason I consider the light of Lórien of so high importance.

The assumption that Frodo indeed looks into the truer world is supported by the remark made about the temporal position of the world Frodo is observing. All the shapes Frodo sees are "at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever". This notion indicates that Lórien, illuminated by an otherworldly light, is in a state of permanence and timelessness which cannot be found anywhere else in the mortal world. Ekman (2009, 68) argues that in Lothlórien time does not merely move differently than it does in mortal world, slower or faster, but indeed follows different rules entirely. The workings of time are also tied to the magic Galadriel wields: according to Ekman (2013, 105), the protecting power seeks to maintain not only the physical environment itself but also its peculiar temporal situation. What Frodo sees is a seemingly unchangeable reality that simultaneously contains both the present and the past, is ever fresh and remade and yet steadfast. The contrast between Lórien and the outside world previously known to Frodo becomes explicit when he finally climbs up the hill and looks over Middle-earth:

> Frodo looked and saw, still at some distance, a hill of many mighty trees, or a city of green towers: which it was he could not tell. Out of it, it seemed to him that the power and light came that held all the land in sway. He longed suddenly to fly like a bird to rest in the green city. Then he looked eastward and saw all the land of Lórien running down to the pale gleam of Anduin, the Great River. He lifted his eyes across the river and all the light went out, and he was back again *in the world that he knew*. Beyond the river the land appeared flat and empty, formless and vague, until far away it rose again like a wall, dark and drear. The sun that lay on Lothlórien had no power to enlighten the shadow of that distant height. (*The Lord of the Rings*, *FR*, II, vi, 360; italics mine.)

This section began with a quote from the seventh book of *The Republic* (208) in which it is said to Glaucon that "you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world". The literal significance and the physical, spatial descriptions of reaching towards knowledge come to the fore again: in the passage Frodo, already mesmerised by the peculiar, half strange, half familiar atmosphere of Lórien, climbs the hill and gazes the world opening before him. Going upwards and climbing are not to be overlooked here, nor is the fact that Frodo feels a sudden desire "to fly like a bird to rest in the green city". I argue that Frodo's climb, too, can be read as an ascent towards knowledge and understanding. Spatial movement holds epistemic significance in two different ways: On the one hand, it enables gathering perceptual knowledge of the surrounding world in a very normal manner by allowing the spectator to see further, his sight no longer obstructed by things too close and too high. On the other hand, the ascent can be seen as the ascent of the soul, and, equally importantly, as Frodo's growing desire to rise higher, to reach beyond. Frodo's character is particularly interesting when it comes to the desire to leave behind the mortal and the physical, the world of shadows. I argue that this tendency can be seen in Frodo's character in many different ways: his recurring dreams of the sea, for instance, indicate his eagerness to leave Middle-earth behind (see for instance *The Lord of the Rings, FR*, I, v, 112). Frodo's experience of the world is often filtered by visions and dreams, and at times the physical world becomes secondary to him; this question and the factors influencing Frodo's epistemic position I will soon return to. All in all, the will to ascend is very literally present in Frodo's desire to soar like a bird and reach the green city, Caras Galadhon, whence the light comes from.

Alongside the nigh divine radiance of Caras Galadhon another light-emitting entity is present. It is not until the last sentence of the passage that sun is specifically named as the source of light: previously light has been spoken of generally as an intrinsic quality of the land instead of an outer entity. I argue that it is possible to distinguish two more or less separate forms of light in Lothlórien. There is the sun,

the same that illuminates the rest of the world but is less bright and clear than it is in Lórien. Then again, there is another source of light, or rather a kind of radiance which is present in Lórien alone. This light comes from Caras Galadhon, the heart of Galadriel's realm from which comes not only light but power too. It is not uncommon that fantasy literature depicts magical or enchanted places in a manner that foregrounds light and often, more precisely, light that does not seem to have clear origin. Enchanted places may emit a light of their own: it does not come from the sun, the moon or the stars, nor does it reflect some other light-source beyond. Light is intrinsic to the atmosphere of the land, as if radiating from its pores. A good example of such luminosity and radiance is the mythical Elfland from *The King of Elfland's Daughter*. As the protagonist Alveric crosses the border between his home country and the mythical Elfland, he is amazed by the realm's unique luminance:

> When Alveric came to the enchanted wood the light in which Elfland glowed had neither grow nor dwindled, and he saw that it came from no radiance that shines on the fields we know, unless the wandering lights of wonderful moments that sometimes astonish our fields, and are gone the instant they come, are strayed over the border of Elfland by some disorder of magic. Neither sun nor moon made the light of that enchanted day. (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 11.)

I would like to emphasise the absence of the source of light: it is separate from the world known to Alveric, but a more specific explanation remains unaccounted for. What is stated plainly is that the "light of that enchanted day" is *not* made by sun or moon – the impression that forms in the passage is that the light is omnipresent, emitted by the land, water and air of the magical realm but not by any of those specifically.

Similar descriptions and remarks about light are made every now and then, and Alveric is said to walk through "the luminous air of that land" (ibid. 10).

Grosseteste's understanding of the spherical nature of light-substance is fitting to explain the radiance Alveric meets: light, according to Grosseteste (1949, 10), diffuses spherically from its point of origin unless stopped by some opaque object. In the description of Elfland the point of origin is not given, but the light is notably stable – it neither grows nor dwindles, it is fixed and unchanging. This is the most notable difference between the light in Alveric's own realm and the magical place he has now entered. It could be argued that in Elfland the light is perfected, unable to stretch any further. This interpretation receives support also from the fact that time does not truly pass in Elfland as it does in outer world but stays still for the most part – only when the border between the two worlds is crossed, time briefly shakes the ever-ongoing present of Elfland; this is what happens when Alveric enters the realm, for instance. Another notable matter is the border between Alveric's home country and Elfland. The border is called the *frontier of twilight*, and it manipulates the vision of those who try to see through: [i]t stretched across the fields in front of him, blue and dense like water; and things seen through it seemed misshapen and shining." (ibid. 9). *The King of Elfland's Daughter* allows the possibility of supernatural knowledge, especially when it comes to perception. The world of the novel presents perception differently in Alveric's country and in Elfland, and the frontier of twilight veils and tricks the beholder. The world itself may confuse perception, and on the other hand different characters may possess supernatural perceptual abilities. An example of this is the king of Elfland, who has formidable magical abilities: "he looked through the deeps of the wood and the silver walls of his palace, for he looked by enchantment, and there he saw the four knights of his guard [– –]." (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 26–27). The king's sight is able to stretch across remarkable distances and cut through solid matter, allowing him to receive first-hand knowledge about things far away. Light is very thematised in the novel and its influence on the perceptual reality for the characters is often commented. However, its epistemic role is in my understanding not quite as prominent as it is in Tolkien's fiction, nor does it create a similar juxtaposition between genu-

ine and secondary, true and unreliable: the light of Elfland is magical and creates an atmosphere of amazement and wonder, but it does not enable epistemic enlightenment or access to truth. The passages about Lothlórien and Alveric's entrance to Elfland are to a degree similar, but Alveric's transition from mundane reality to the world of magic remains focused on the literal and physical experience, not so much on the spiritual change that is of primary importance for Frodo.

The epistemic significance of light is evident and multi-faceted in Tolkien's Arda, and I do not claim that similar epistemic themes could as such be found in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*. However, *The King of Elfland's Daughter* is a notably fruitful work with respect to time and change, and it invites readings and interpretations of philosophical nature. Different kinds of perceptual manipulations become foregrounded in the novel as noted above, but other aspects arise, too. About change and the passing of time the following is said:

> I have said that no time passed at all in Elfland. Yet the happening of events is in itself a manifestation of time, and no event can occur unless time pass. Now it is thus with time in Elfland: in the eternal beauty that dreams in that honied air nothing stirs or fades or dies, nothing seeks its happiness in movement or change or a new thing, but has its ecstasy in the perpetual contemplation of all the beauty that has ever been, and which always glows over those enchanted lawns as intense as when first created by incantation or song. (*The King of Elfland's Daughter*, 26.)

In Tolkien's fictional universe, metaphysics unfolds side by side with the stories and events: the cosmology happens as the narrative proceeds, the metaphysics, in other words, comes true. Crucial question Arda's metaphysics suggests concerns the genuineness of the secondary physical world and, by extension, its epistemic reliability and relevance – the current chapter in its entirety discusses this very problem from varying perspectives. The problem primarily comes back to the fact that the physical world is subject to change, passing and withering instead of being

eternal and permanent. This may indeed be a significant epistemic issue, but I argue that without it there would be no stories to tell about Arda. What is said about time in Elfland is applicable to Tolkien's universe as well: "the happening of events is in itself a manifestation of time, and no event can occur unless time pass." Without time, without change and events, there would not be much to be said about the fictional universe. Ilúvatar's realm, the Timeless Halls, is the ideal, permanent world from which life and being originate, but apart from creation it is without events and stories. The created world, the imperfect world, must be for it alone enables the active unfolding of metaphysics – a matter that already surfaced alongside Lovejoy's defence for the existence of the created world. It could even be argued that in many cases, and in many religious contexts, the divine is by its very definition and concept associated with timelessness and permanence.

When discussing the representations of gods in poetry, Socrates remarks that anything that is well made and good is not likely to suffer change or to become altered from outside. Therefore God, who is perfect in every sense, cannot suffer external influence and thus be forced to change. The real question is whether God may change and transform himself willingly: since God is already perfect, he could only change for the worse which would make no sense. Socrates's conclusion is that God does not desire to change and chooses to remain in his own form forever; poets are wrong to claim that gods disguise themselves to deceive people and fulfil their ends. (*The Republic*, 67.) There are deceptive deities in Tolkien's pantheon: both Melkor and Sauron misguide Elves and Men and often do this by taking different physical forms (*The Silmarillion*, 66–67, 344). This, however, only seems to be a trait of the fallen deities, those who have turned away from creator-god Ilúvatar. Ilúvatar and his Timeless Halls are the ultimate representation of changelessness and permanence and as such their story-generating power is limited: the Timeless Halls cannot become a scene for action because they are by their very nature and their role in the metaphysical system seen as uneventful and still – time and events are tightly intertwined, sharing a two-way, mutual influence, and neither is

present in Ilúvatar's otherworldly realm. Paralleled with thinkers of late antiquity and early scholastic times, it is interesting what Korpua writes about Ilúvatar's divine perspective and his position in the timeless realm, cut away from the Void and the changeable world alike. Discussing Lewis and Boethius and their approach to Christian God's eternity, Korpua (2021, 68–69) points out that quite like Tolkien himself as the real-world maker of the fictional universe, Ilúvatar, too, as the inner-world creator knows the entirety of the world and its future, but neither *fore*sees it: they are both free of time and its course within the fictional world. Regarding supernatural knowledge and divination in particular, this leads to the conclusion that for creator-god knowing the future does not mean foreknowledge – just *knowledge*.

As discussed in the second chapter, Lothlórien's divine light and sense of eternity are a mere facsimile of the Undying Lands beyond the sea, and even the Undying Lands themselves are not free from time and change despite the atmosphere of immortality. However, strange powers are at work in Lórien, not least because of the magic rings. To return to the passage in which Frodo looks around from Cerin Amroth, it is important to keep in mind that the spectator and point of focalisation, Frodo, is also a Ring-Bearer. Therefore, his perception is not necessarily correspondent to that of the rest of the Fellowship: it is reasonable to claim that since Galadriel is the keeper of one of the Elven-Rings and that her power and her ability to preserve Lórien in its unfading state is bound to it, it is possible that Frodo is able to detect said power and light more subtly than his companions. This becomes apparent when Frodo, Sam and Galadriel later meet and it turns out that only Frodo is able to see the ring on her finger (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vii, 376). From the overall distinction between the sun and Lórien's peculiar radiance a new question arises: it is not clear which allows more accurate perception and keener sight, giving the world shapes and colours closer to their original, authentic form. Once Frodo's glance reaches the river and beyond, the power of Lórien comes to its border and ceases, leaving the rest of the world under shadow. It is remarkable that it is not only Lórien's glow that darkens but indeed all light goes

out, presumably including the sun. This fading immediately returns Frodo to "the world that he knew" where perception is flawed and blurred.

The description of landscapes is particularly interesting: the lands beyond Lórien's borders are said to be flat, empty, *formless* and *vague*. The choice of words is not meaningless: I would like to return to the second chapter and the making of the dwarves by Aulë in section "Ideas and their realisations". It is there said that Aulë was unable to make the dwarves in resemblance of Elves and Men because the *forms* of the Children of Ilúvatar were unclear to him. My claim was that *form* here verily refers to the Idea of the Children, not their physical appearance, and here I repeat my argument again, although from a different point of view: the world is indeed *formless*, severed from the higher reality. Especially the vagueness and formlessness emphasise the inevitably imperfect nature of perception. The Analogy of the Sun illustrates the assumption that just as the sun illuminates the world and enables perception and sight, so does the Form of Good allow the mind that is turned to the world of Ideas for knowledge to comprehend the true nature of reality and reach higher truth:

> And the soul is like the eye: when resting upon that on which truth and being shine, the soul perceives and understands, and is radiant with intelligence; but when turned towards the twilight of becoming and perishing, then she has opinion only, and goes blinking about, and is first of one opinion and then on other, and seems to have no intelligence? (*The Republic*, 201.)

The radiance in Lórien does not only allow eyesight but takes it further, revealing the true, unmarred and sharp reality. In the outer world, however, this radiance is powerless, and the world remains without clear form, seen only as something obscure and indefinite, without proper content or shape. The light of Lórien is not just unable to banish the shadows over Middle-earth, it is also unable to give the world a properly perceptible form and deprives the viewer's vision of precision. The viewer, here, is again in key position: both quoted passages include several

expressions such as *seemed*, *appeared* and *as if* which highlight the spectator and his subjectivity.

This further problematizes the idea about Lothlórien as a place where, especially because of its unique radiance, it is possible to get a glimpse of the reality free from the restrictions of flawed perception. Lothlórien enables deeper and keener perception and probably even understanding but there is also a sense of unreliability about it: Lothlórien is to a great degree associated with dreams, waking dreams, visions and images and while these can provide access to deeper knowledge they may also potentially lead astray. The dreamlike atmosphere has been analysed by Amendt-Raduege (2006, 46–50), who points out that even the dominant colours of the land, gold, silver, blue and white, are associated with a heaven-like realm. She also emphasises the two-sided nature of visions and seeing as something simultaneously helpful and dangerous. Since the dream-motif and its epistemic significance have been discussed earlier in this work I will not return to them here; however, it avails to keep in mind that seeing both as a visual phenomenon and in the meaning of dream-visions can be deceptive.

Both the Analogy of the Sun and the Allegory of the Cave are examples of the way ontology and epistemology are intertwined in Plato's philosophy. Turning the analysis now to the latter analogy, Frodo's experience in Lórien can be interpreted as an act of stepping out of the cave, so to speak: when setting eyes on Lórien he does recognize the shapes and colours, the shadows on the walls in the cave, and yet there is a sense of novelty in them. Once he gets a glimpse of truth and the world the way it really is, he can no longer shed this realisation – instead, the moment of epiphany follows him even after returning to the world of vagueness and formlessness: "When he had gone and passed again into the outer world, still Frodo the wanderer from the Shire would walk there, upon the grass among *elanor* and *niphredil* in fair Lothlórien." (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 360.) However, there is a remarkable difference between Frodo's moment of sudden expansion of understanding and exiting the cave in Plato's simile: according to Plato, the pris-

oner leaving the cave for the first time would not be able to see anything or recognise anything right away for the Sun is too bright and the forms alien in his eyes. The world would seem unreal and vague to someone whose only reality has been the world of shadows. This is not what Frodo sees: instead, he perceives the world as such right away and everything seems clearer than it was before.

The second chapter handled creation and unfolding of the world as a process between the Idea and its realisation – a question that Korpua (2015, 46–47), too, has discussed from a different viewpoint since his primary interest is in the cosmogony of Arda and Tolkien's mythopoetic code. Returning to this thought, I would like to draw attention to the experience of entering the newly-made world and the remarkable difference there is between the Idea and the physical world following it. The world known to most of the characters in, say, *The Lord of the Rings*, is the same one the Valar enter after its creation but the perspective is entirely different: in the previous example about Lothlórien Frodo briefly sees a different world, not unlike the one he lives in but more poignant and clearer, something closer to what is seen in the Vision by the Ainur. In the case of the Ainur, while there is a difference between the two observed worlds, the Idea and its realisation, there is naturally also a difference between the two acts of perceiving, too: the image of the perceptible world does not form independently from the expectations deriving from the Vision, and the interpretation of the physical reality is filtered through these expectations. Quite possibly, an unconscious comparison between the two perceived realities occurs. That being said, what happens to the Valar can be seen as a reversed version of "stepping out of the cave" – before entering the physical, historical world what is known to them is the Vision only, the complete and perfect Idea without realisation, the unfolding of the world that is yet to happen. The world, then again, is revealed to be incomplete, lacking most of what was seen in its foreshowing, something lesser and imperfect, and it is inevitably interpreted with respect to the Vision and the expectations set by it. The world must now be achieved, and the work towards the realisation begins. For the Valar the

descent happens also physically: they take a physical form and go down to the world, becoming a part of it and forsaking the eternal, otherworldly state willingly. The incongruences between the foreseen Idea and the reality-in-making are a constant cause of confusion, as is the coming of the Elves: "[f]rom without the World, though all things may be forethought in music or foreshown in vision from afar, to those who enter verily into Eä each in its time shall be met at unawares as something new and unforetold." (*The Silmarillion*, 46).

In Lothlórien the cave is left momentarily, but a more permanent change happens in C.S. Lewis's fantasy novel *The Last Battle* that concludes his seven-volume *The Chronicles of Narnia* -series. This example I want to include here in order to provide a bit broader perspective to the ways in which Plato's metaphysics and epistemology can help in the analysis of fantasy worldbuilding: the Christian undertones are more prominent in Lewis's fiction than in Tolkien's, and the same applies to the (Neo)platonic themes. After the final battle is fought, the characters leave the shadow-world behind for good, transcending to another reality that is truer and livelier than the Narnia they had known before: "When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia [– –]." (*The Last Battle*, 830.) The Platonic echoes are even more obvious than they are in Tolkien's work, almost blatant, even. While the shadow-Narnia is in the end destroyed and the walls of the cave crumble for good, in *The Lord of the Rings* the situation is nearly the opposite: the primeval light draws further away, belonging to the irretrievable past, and the figurative cave, I argue, becomes more and more dominant. *The Lord of the Rings* describes a time during which one era comes to an end and the realms of the Elves fade away. It is unclear whether by the end of the Third Age it would still be possible to see such glimpses of the world closer to (but not equivalent of, belonging to the changing, physical world) Ilúvatar's scheme as Frodo sees standing on Cerin Amroth, looking over the lands illuminated by Lothlórien's radiance or if the familiar, known world is the only

accessible one from there on – in other words, the question is whether the reality as it is perceived in the cave becomes the only one as the light and forms beyond flawed perception finally flow out of reach. This question characterises the key themes in Tolkien's fiction in a broader sense, the diminishing and fading of the original and the irretrievability of the past; epistemically, the most intriguing question is whether the vanished reality can still be *known* or thought about even though it is no longer present. Eventually, the question concerns the extension of the knowledge-metaphor: on the literal level, the revealing light is almost out, but its figurative extension as the symbol for epistemic access and illumination remains unknown.

The literal and figurative dusk, the approaching evening and the end of the era of the Elves and the light their realms were so strongly associated with, evoke questions about the relationship between knowledge as enlightenment, knowledge as understanding, and, finally, wisdom. This analysis focuses on Tolkien's legendarium and its epistemic characteristics and operations but I would like to point out that the light-motif, especially its ability to unmask and reveal the world as it truly is, is actually a widely explored and universal idea. What I find especially interesting is the tendency to associate light, especially day- or sunlight with a truth more universal and symbolic than the knowledge accessible by visual perception. An example of this can be seen in "Chastitie", the third book of Edmund Spenser's (1590) *Faerie Queene* where Prince Arthur curses the long night. He despises not only the woeful thoughts, fears and dreadful images the night evokes but also its concealing, treacherous nature that, opposed to daylight, is capable of obscuring the truth instead of revealing it:

> For day discouers all dishonest wayes,
> And sheweth each thing, as it is indeed:
> The prayses of high God he faire displayes,
> And his large bountie rightly doth areed.
> Dayes dearest children be the blessed seed,

> Which darknesse shall subdew, and heauen win;
> Truth is his daughter; he her first did breed,
> Most sacred virgin, without spot of sin.
> Our life is day, but death with darknesse doth begin. (*Faerie Queene*, 383.)

The most obvious context, that of direct sensory observations and the inability to see properly in the dark, cannot be neglected in the analysis. However, daylight and the sun seem to have aspects, also in Arthur's conception, that extend beyond the physical and visual world, the literal level of interpretation. As in Lothlórien, daylight is here, too, able to reveal something that surpasses mere sight. This is indicated especially in the two first lines "[f]or day discouers all dishonest ways, / and sheweth each thing, as it is indeed". The later lines widen the many associations of light so that the almost personified day is finally linked to moral virtue and vitality but it is the epistemic dimension I find particularly interesting. While day literally provides the sort of enlightenment that allows the observer to perceive the surrounding world, the quoted passage suggests that it is also able to pierce and cast disguises, be they actual physical forms or lies or dishonesty as mentioned in the first line. The second line, then again, holds a notion that nears essentialism: the idea that light reveals the true nature of things, shows them in their right, bare form, is one that the light of Lothlórien is said to do in the previous analysis, and also returns to one of the very first questions I asked in this section, that is the problem between *revealing* the true quality of things and *granting* this quality. The sensory world is deceptive and unsure but genuine daylight is, at least symbolically, able to provide access to something more authentic and sincere.

Thus far the primary interest has been on examples in which light is seen as something that enables knowledge; however, even though light does allow one to gain perceptual knowledge, it does not necessarily have anything to do with wisdom. It could be argued that whereas light may provide knowledge, night and dusk are more connected to wisdom and philosophical contemplation. Even though supernatural forms of knowing that chapter three is concerned with are an intrinsic

part of Arda's belief system and generally something that can be taken as a genuine possibility in speculative fiction, it seems that some level of knowledge, understanding and wisdom especially, can only be reached in hindsight. This idea is concordant with the overall view on time in Tolkien's universe, and both the literal and the interpreted content can be applied. The Elves do not only possess remarkable skills and knowledge, but the quality of wisdom is repeatedly attributed to them, as is the association with night, stars and moon, lights dimmer than daylight (see for instance *The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 360): their time is coming to an end, and in *The Lord of the Rings* Men already are becoming increasingly dominant, leaving elven-realms diminishing and weakening. Fullest understanding is with those who are about to leave the world, and the time of the Elves is at last completed. Interpreting dusk as the end of an era, fading of the Elves, it is possible to provide basis for an analysis that further emphasises the previously introduced dichotomy between *phronesis* and *sophia*.

Despite the holiness, safety, knowledge and bliss associated with light, darkness is not to be considered evil as such. It is quite heavily stressed in *Morgoth's Ring* (382), for instance, that the fear of night and darkness has its origin in the evil of Morgoth and marring of Arda. Night as such is not frightening or malevolent, and as day's counterpart it has an equally important role in the life of the Children of Ilúvatar:

> For by night the Children of Arda should know Day, and perceive and love Light; and yet Night should also in its kind be good and blessed, being a time of repose, and of inward thought; and a vision also of things high and fair that are beyond Arda, but are veiled by the splendour of Anar [i.e. sun]. (*Morgoth's Ring*, 382.)

It is the ending of the quotation that provides the most interesting contrast to the course the overall analysis has followed thus far. The sun, which is known to show and reveal, aid and guide both literally and figuratively, is indeed able to conceal,

too. Once the sun sets, enter other visions it has held at bay during the day, and wisdom of another kind. This wisdom, I presume, concerns the world beyond, that which earthly sun cannot illuminate. In this notion is already hinted one crucial epistemic problem the final section seeks to solve, that of knowledge about – and from – beyond. The concluding section "Recalling the world: *anamnesis* and persistence" dives deeper into these questions.

In section 3.3.2 I argued that it is the nature of divination as something closer to *sophia* than to *phronesis* that explains why the Elves are (incongruously) reluctant to advice others despite the fact that some of them are to a degree able to know things beforehand. I incline towards a reading in which – in a much-simplified form – light avails in matters *phronesis* is concerned with whereas dusk and shades enable *sophia*. Once the practical side of knowledge is worn out and no longer needs to be pursued in order to be able to act and make decisions in the world, room is made for fuller comprehension, understanding the world in hindsight. I argue that this is what the Elves experience as they are about to leave Middle-earth: their era is fading in the shades and thus becoming not only a part of an irretrievable past but also finally understandable through wisdom. World, of course, is still unfolding and another era begins. One era of historical conditions, however, has ceased to be, allowing philosophy to enter.

4.3.2 In Between Worlds: Knowledge and Metaphysical Transformation

As has already been remarked in the second chapter, Metaphysical hierarchy of Arda, there are cases in which the boundaries between the two levels of existence, the abstract and otherworldly and the physical and perceptible, become blurred and momentarily vanish. Frodo's sudden glimpses in the land of Lothlórien represent one side of this merging: in the excerpts analysed earlier, the perceptual world for a brief moment reveals itself in a different way, taking a form closer to the unchanging and ideal, allowing the viewer to see the world in its truer state, illuminated by

an otherworldly light. These occurrences, I argue, are a property of the world rather than an ability of the viewer, and they are dependent on light – not just any light, as remarked, but light somehow closer to the otherworldly, as is the case in Lothlórien that still treasures remnants of the light of Valinor. There are, however, also situations in which it is the viewer himself who is suddenly able to see the surrounding world differently: instead of divine light piercing through and enlightening the Cave for a moment, the viewer is the one who parts the curtains and enters a liminal realm in between the physical and the spiritual, the everyday world and the ideal. This phenomenon has its origin in one of the main dichotomies of Tolkien's Arda, the division between the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual.

Korpua has thoroughly analysed the different levels of existence as constituents of the cosmology of Arda, and I wish to develop his ideas further by asking how the placing of characters on this line influences their ability and way of perceiving the reality and their epistemic access to different levels, also others than their own. Regarding liminal states, Korpua writes that Valinor, the paradise-like undying city of gods, can be seen as an interspace between the eternal and the changeable worlds. Korpua's analysis of light, shadows and darkness focuses much on the dichotomies between good and evil, the dreadful land of Mordor being called the land "where shadows lie" or "the Black Land", for instance, or characterising the deadly Balrog-creature as a great shadow. (Korpua 2015, 53–54, 62–63.) Perceptually the more interesting matter concerns the liminal state between visible and invisible, also referred to as the shadow world. This, as Korpua writes, concerns the Ring-Bearers and the Nazgûl, for instance:

> The Nazgûl could "see" only those who also inhabit the shadow world. The One Ring, made by Sauron, makes its mortal user invisible to other mortal eyes. It "moves" its wielder into the shadow world, where the physical plane becomes blurred, and invisible things visible. [– –] However, the Nazgûl are not the only beings in Middle-earth who are able to see the invisible. The di-

> chotomy between physical and spiritual does not affect the immortal creatures. (Korpua 2015, 57.)

The Nazgûl are an interesting example of creatures that inhabit a kind of a liminal world between different planes of existence. As Korpua (2021, 72) characterises, the Nazgûl "do not have physical shapes at all, but they can sense the physical world and affect it", and according to him, they are not only in between the physical and immaterial worlds but also in between other substantial dichotomies: the worlds of the visible and the invisible, and those of the living and the dead. As Frodo's case shows, they can also extend their liminality on some level to those they injure, dragging them to the shadow-world. While the influence of the Nazgûl-blade on Frodo's mundane perceptual abilities is clear (albeit often difficult to distinguish from the influence of the Ring), I argue that Frodo's changing metaphysical status and his slow transition into the shadow-world also complicate his epistemic capacity both practically and on a deeper level. As the following example seeks to show, Frodo's unique epistemic status is a combination of the influences of the Ring, the Nazgûl-wound, the (supernatural) qualities of the surrounding reality and his own, inner changes: as a result, Frodo ends up in the intersection of more than one of the crucial dichotomies Korpua discusses.

I will now give a text excerpt that combines two key elements from both sections of this chapter, the motif of *ascending* as an epistemic endeavour, and the liminal status caused by the Ring that is of interest in this section. The passage describes a scene in which Frodo, escaping from Boromir who is now completely under the Ring's power, puts the Ring on his finger and climbs the peak of Amon Hen[75] and sits on the ruins of the Seat of Seeing, an ancient throne, and looks around:

[75] The word *hen*, interestingly enough, denotes "eye" or "sight" (*The Lord of the Rings*, Index, 1175).

> At first he could see little. He seemed to be in a world of mist in which there were only shadows: the Ring was upon him. Then here and there the mist gave way and he saw many visions: small and clear as if they were under his eyes upon a table, and yet remote. There was no sound, only bright, living images. The world seemed to have shrunk and fallen silent. He was sitting upon the Seat of Seeing, on Amon Hen, the Hill of the Eye of the Men of Númenor. (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, x, 410.)

In many cases, including this one, the sudden ability to see beyond the everyday world of perception falls to Frodo. Since Frodo is a Ring-Bearer and the power of Sauron is constantly upon him, his senses have already begun to grow more sensitive to the shadows, images and visions of the world that normally remains invisible. Therefore, it is hard to find an exact cause for the keener sight: Frodo is severely wounded by a Ringwraith, and his injury causes him to slowly descend to the world of shadows himself (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, i, 228). Also, he is carrying the Ring which also has an impact on his senses and thoughts – in this scene he is indeed wearing the Ring, which means that he is seeing the world differently. The mist and shadows that first disturb his sight are in the passage associated with the Ring, but after a while the world becomes clearer. The descriptions of what Frodo sees are puzzling: it is as if he is gazing things from the wrong end of binoculars, seeing things clear but remote, the world itself is said to have shrunk. Whether this perceptual strangeness has its origin in the Ring or in the Seat of Seeing is hard to determine[76]. Either way, the place is not irrelevant: the world is, again, seen in an exceptional way as a result of ascending to a high place.

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[76] It should be kept in mind that the workings of the Ring and the tricks it plays on perception become more complicated when *The Hobbit* is taken into account, and the Ring's influence no longer seems entirely consistent: when Bilbo uses the Ring, his perceptual experience does not appear to change, or if it does, this is not told. Focus is on the fact that those who wear the Ring can only be seen as a shadow in bright light, but the wearer's perceptual experience is not described (*The Hobbit*, 92–93). Whether this contrasts and challenges, even, the tendency of *The Lord of the Rings* or merely omits it as an unnecessary detail, is hard to tell.

The situation on Amon Hen is complicated by the indirect presence and influence of Gandalf. Frodo finds himself in a crossfire between battling consciousnesses that are telling him to do different things: there is the malicious will of Sauron that is trying to make Frodo reveal himself and the whereabouts of the Ring; on the other side there is the voice of Gandalf that is firmly urging Frodo to take off the Ring and save himself. As Shippey (2003, 161–162) points out, the struggle can also be Frodo's inner combat between will and unconscious wickedness, but a reading that acknowledges outer influence has more to offer. In the end, neither Sauron nor Gandalf takes over – it is explicitly stated that Frodo makes the final call, "free to choose, and with one remaining instant in which to do so" (*The Lord of the Rings*, *FR*, II, x, 411). All in all, in addition to the perceptual uniqueness of the combined influences of the Ring, the seat of Amon Hen and Frodo's own senses that have become more sensitive to the shadows and the unseen after his injury on Amon Sûl, there is another epistemically relevant process going on in the scene: the communication and rivalry of opposing consciousnesses. The motif of altitude is present also in Gandalf's case, which is revealed as he explains his role in Frodo's struggle to Legolas: "Very nearly it [the Ring] was revealed to the Enemy, but it escaped. I had some part in that: for I sat in high place, and I strove with the Dark Tower [– –]" (*The Lord of the Rings*, *TT*, I, v, 508). As Frodo, Gandalf, too, "sat in a high place", and Sauron himself partook in the rivalry from the Tower, meaning that all three characters came together in thought each from their respective high spots.[77]

Both the differences and the similarities in Frodo's two ascents, the first one in Lothlórien and the second on Amon Hen, are fascinating. In both scenes his visual experience changes, and the world differs from the view gathered through everyday perception; in both scenes, the location is a matter of interest – the seen

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[77] An interesting detail paralleled with the motif of ascending and altitude symbolically or literally connected to the distant rivalries of wills and minds is that the *palantíri* were often stored "in guarded rooms, high in strong towers" (*Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*, 386). Saruman uses his stone in the tower of Orthanc, and Sauron in Barad-dûr.

world is always seen from one specific, subjective point. In the latter situation the important factor is that his existential status has changed because of the Ring and the shadow world he has entered as a result. Again, Frodo ascends, wishing to see things from above, but this act that can be seen as the soul's strive towards knowledge is twisted because of the perverting power of the Ring. If the motif of light is in Plato's philosophy – and literature – used in a manner that is fascinating both literally and figuratively, so is the motif of hight or ascending, especially the ascent of the soul towards higher knowledge. Looking upwards and seeking answers from above is discussed in the seventh book of *The Republic* as Socrates and Glaucon share their thoughts about astronomy:

> [– –] For every one, as I think, must see that astronomy compels the soul to look upwards and leads us from this world to another.
>
> [– –]
>
> You, I replied, have in your mind a truly sublime conception of our knowledge of the things above. And I dare say that if a person were to throw his head back and study the fretted ceiling, you would still think that his mind was the percipient, and not his eyes. And you are very likely right, and I may be a simpleton: but, in my opinion, that knowledge only which is of being and of the unseen can make the soul look upwards, and whether a man gapes at the heavens or blinks on the ground, seeking to learn some particular of sense, I would deny that he can learn, for nothing of that sort is matter of science; his soul is looking downwards, not upwards, whether his way to knowledge is by water or by land, whether he floats, or only lies on his back. (*The Republic*, 221.)

The arguments Socrates gives are, of course, another instance of the imperfection of the sensory world and the futility of seeking knowledge through sensory perception. Socrates (ibid. 221–222) continues by pointing out that while the "spangled heavens" can be seen as a pattern and a view to higher knowledge, they should not be confused with things truly eternal and free from deviation. Therefore, it is absurd to make too great an effort to meticulously examine the precise truth of, say,

astronomical matters. Again, the ascent of the soul is at best slightly helped by the exquisiteness and (seeming) perfection of the skies or geometry, but they can never be the real equivalent of the truth. In this work, I have paralleled Plato and Tolkien's works by restoring the literal to Plato's allegories and doing the opposite to Tolkien, examining how the motifs of light and moving upwards or downwards illustrate epistemic notions: contrasting these two text excerpts, one of a literal ascending, one of a philosophical, figurative illustration the purpose of which is to make a point, is another example of this approach. In Frodo's case, if the literalising aspect is adopted, physical ascending can be read as a counterpart of intellectual and philosophical ascending that allows broader perspective and understanding both visually and spiritually or intellectually. All in all, I argue that in Tolkien's legendarium, in spite of its strong Platonic undertones, knowledge is with respect to this theoretical frame pursued through the incongruence of means and destination: the otherworldly and true is sought not only with the help of reason and intellect but perceptual abilities, too.

Even when Frodo is not using the Ring, his (perceptual) experience of the world differs from that of others: he has been wounded by a Nazgûl, and cannot be fully free from the shadows again. The third medium level, the shadow world Korpua discusses, is the state of existence Frodo enters. This change in Frodo is permanent and influences him until the end. This is analysed by Flieger (2002, 157–161) who argues that Frodo's humanity is fragmented beyond repair:

> To become invisible [– –] is to negate the effects of light, to deal in disappearances rather than appearances. It [sic] the negative – not the opposite, which would be darkness – of "to shine". To be invisible is to be neither light nor dark. In terms of light, it is not to be at all. Thus, Frodo is losing his physical self. [– –] Light no longer completely reveals the external Frodo, and within him light and dark are at war. But when the battle is over and the dark has won and destroyed itself and left the field, his lack of material appearance, his transparency, may go beyond mere fading to transcend materiality altogether.

> He is being emptied so that he may be filled with clear light. (Flieger 2002, 157.)

Frodo, it would appear, will at some point be completely separated from material existence and move on to another level of being. As a result, he would become invisible to those still bound to the physical reality, and on the other hand, the way he perceives said reality would also change irreversibly. The way reality is perceived – and interpreted, since the interpretations are also influenced by the formerly acquired knowledge about the world as it is normally seen – depends on the level of existence, both that of the perceived object and that of the observer: if the two are on different levels, one in the world of shadows and one in the everyday reality, the observations are filtered through the separating border. Frodo's change brings new, deeper aspects to the questions of invisibility studied earlier in this section, highlighting the inevitable metaphysical costs of transitions between visibility and invisibility. However, epistemically speaking the most interesting remark is Flieger's concluding observation according to which Frodo forsakes his material existence, is emptied, so that he could be *filled with clear light*. This refers to Frodo's growing transparency due to which there seems to be a dim light about him. Observed side by side with Frodo's overall transition towards the abstract and the otherworldly, becoming filled with light can be interpreted as literal epistemic enlightenment, where light does not merely illuminate objects of the perceptible reality, making them accessible, but indeed pours into the knowing subject in a transformative process. Saruman, as discussed earlier in this work and as Flieger (2002, 158) ponders in her comparison, breaks himself *and* the white light trying to gain control and, in my reading, absolute knowledge, while Frodo breaks down so that he could be filled with light and thus receive understanding, making room for enlightenment by physical undoing.

4.4 Recalling the World: Men and *Anamnesis*

Epistemic relevance of perception will now shift from a notion concerned with content and correspondence to one that emphasises the act of perceiving itself. Another notable change is that whereas the previous sections of this chapter have been much concerned with *a posteriori* justification and the relationship between perception, belief and reality, this concluding part returns to *a priori* knowledge and the concept of innatism, in particular. Innatism is most heavily associated with Plato and Descartes, although Epicurean theology also presents views concerning knowledge of the gods (Sedley 2011, 30–31). In short, the main thesis of innatism is that the human mind is born with certain knowledge and that not all information is derived from the physical world unlike the strictest forms of empiricism claim. Innatism has also been discussed side by side with empiricism, and synthesis has been sought between the two. James Hill's (2010) article "The Synthesis of Empiricism and Innatism in Berkeley's Doctrine of Notions", for instance, treads the middle way and argues that Berkeley, who does not fully accept Locke's conceptual empiricism, formulates in his doctrine of notions theories that have much in common with Descartes's innatism presented in the later works.

While the general importance and the historical development of the concept of innatism need to be acknowledged, I focus mainly on the Platonic formulations. The reason for this has much to do with the underlying aspiration of this study to engage in the discussion of philosophical literature and literary philosophy, but also with one of the clearest and most fascinating relations between Plato and Tolkien: as the text excerpts to follow will show, there are philosophical and literary similarities even more distinct than the ones studied this far. In Plato's theory, innatism is mainly discussed through the metaphysical and epistemological concept of *anamnesis*. The idea of *anamnesis* is mostly formulated in dialogues *Phaedo* and *Meno*, and the general notion is rooted in the metaphysical nature of the soul as an eternal being that is reincarnated over and over again. Every new birth of the physical body

wipes away the knowledge and ideas that are innate to the immortal soul – to be born, to become carnal, is to forget. Therefore, learning in the physical world is actually recalling things that have already been known and familiar, not receiving new knowledge. Knowledge is found within, a result of rediscovery which is often arrived at with the help of someone asking the right questions. (*Meno*, 35–37; *Phaedo*, 508–509.)

This section in short aims to determine where perception stands with respect to innatism and relearning. Nagy, who has thoroughly examined the Platonic influences in Tolkien's work, discusses *anamnesis* very briefly. Nagy's article "Saving the Myths. The Re-creation of Mythology in Plato and Tolkien" (2004) ponders the relationships of the two writers with mythology and its uses. The topic of using and restoring myths as a whole has been much argued over in the context of Tolkien's legendarium but also with respect to fantasy literature as a whole. Flieger (2002, 37), approaching myths from the viewpoint of Barfield's theory, writes that myths in this context must be understood as "that which describes humankind's perception of its relationship to the natural and supernatural worlds", emphasising that in Barfield's view myth, language and perception of the world are inseparable. Attebery, too, discusses the rewriting of myths and their relationship with truth, studying the Christian themes in the writings of Tolkien, Lewis and MacDonald, focusing on the latter two. According to him (Attebery 2014, 94), for both Lewis and MacDonald "fantasy functioned as an entry into the highest realms of the spirit", and he discusses the different re-workings of (primarily) Christian myths in fantasy and fairy-tale. That being said, the rewriting, restoring and overall treatment of myths is an aspect that can hardly be neglected in the study of fantasy, and of this Nagy's article is an excellent example – regarding the questions of *truth*, the role of myths as the companions and interlocutors of philosophy is a matter this study also wishes to provide insights to.

Plato, who has hastily been named an enemy of myths, not only used myths but indeed engaged in mythopoeia, or myth-making, himself. Both Plato and Tol-

kien, according to Nagy, applied myths to their writing as a discourse and through rewriting attempted to "save the myths". Nagy's purpose is to study the similarities of frameworks between Plato and Tolkien, paying attention to motifs and imagery. One of the key aspects is that of tradition, the background that is for both writers mainly historical: for Plato, the tradition of Greek literature and philosophy, for Tolkien, the linguistic and narrative traditions of his academic interests. (Nagy 2004, 82–83.) Truth, as Nagy writes and as has been much discussed in this study, is in the world of Forms. Some knowledge of this world lingers in all: the immortal soul has clearly seen them, but the memory is erased. Nagy's view on *anamnesis* in Tolkien's fiction concerns mainly the reconstruction of myths and past:

> At the end of the process starting from *empiria* of the world, on the one hand, we thus have Platonic truth, removed from the world in an abstract level but still apparent in it through participation; and Tolkien's past, on the other hand, irrevocably gone but appearing in traces and determining the extant stories through participation in the tradition. (Nagy 2004, 88.)

This reconstruction happens within Tolkien's fiction, and Nagy's example is that of king Théoden who has long known of Ents through narrative tradition without understanding there was truth in the old stories; Nagy also parallels Tolkien and Plato by stating that for Tolkien the content of the myth is past, and that the reconstructive process leads to knowledge in a manner similar to the Platonic philosopher ascending towards the Forms (ibid. 89). While these aspects are fascinating and able to provide valuable views on the myth-making and mythological traditions in Tolkien's work, as such they are much more connected to the questions studied in chapter 2.5; there Nagy's views have been better employed alongside Brljak's (2010) theories about Tolkien as metafictionist. My interest in the following analysis is rather on the breaches of being described in Tolkien's fiction, breaches that cause transitions between the two worlds and ignite processes of recollection and understanding. The *anamnesis* Nagy discusses is thus very different from the per-

spective I have adopted in order to understand the cooperation of memory and perception in the epistemic system of Arda. My angle similarly differs from the brief remark made by Flieger (2002, 25) regarding Tolkien's view on Recovery and its kinship with the thoughts presented in *Timaeus*: she writes that "Tolkien's concept of Recovery is not unlike the Platonic concept of recollection, the idea [– –] that knowledge is recollection of things already learned [– –]," and this recollection is linked to being able to see and experience the fantastic again after a view has become too familiar and dull. This notion is perhaps closer to the questions I seek to resolve than Nagy's approach, but the focus is nonetheless elsewhere.

4.4.1 *Anamnesis* and Transitions Between Worlds

Considering not only the Platonic echoes in Tolkien's writing but also philosophical contemplation in a broader sense, one of the most striking examples is the debate between elven-lord Finrod Felagund and a human wise-woman Andreth. The text, written in the form of a dialogue, was edited, published and commented by Christopher Tolkien in *Morgoth's Ring*, part four. The dialogue focuses on questions of mortality, afterlife, concepts of hope and trust, knowledge and belief and, most notably in the context of this chapter, perceiving the world as an echo or an image of something once known but nearly entirely forgotten. This is where the epistemic notions constructed from Plato's dialogues and also the mythological aspects find their most direct counterparts, and the theory of *anamnesis* is well suited to describe the epistemic state of Men in Arda compared to that of Elves. The metaphysical commentaries many of which are very philosophical are another justification for approaching Tolkien's fiction from a perspective that draws from Platonic theories – and justification is needed since the approach has been criticised, too. Ralph C. Wood (2003), for instance, writes in his article "Conflict and Convergence on Fundamental Matters in C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien" that whereas Lewis' fantasy adopts Platonist aspects insofar as they support Christian doctrine, Tolkien was not

Platonist at all. According to Wood, Tolkien espoused a view that was more Aristotelian regarding metaphysical principles. His claim is that in Tolkien's fiction the prominent reality and transcendence are found in the world and is not to be looked for from outside. (Wood 2003, 325.)[78] While Wood's view is understandable especially from the perspective of *The Lord of the Rings*, I argue that Finrod and Andreth's less known but undeniably remarkable debate enhances the Platonic aspects while fading out the Aristotelian ones.

Finrod and Andreth's debate deserves to be treated as a whole of its own, and it is the main point of interest in this section apart from a few clarifying remarks made about *The Silmarillion*. The manuscripts of the dialogue date back to 1950's, at least the supposedly latest version on which Christopher Tolkien's edited publication is based on. Arda's metaphysics, especially the existential differences between Elves and Men, are discussed in astonishing depth and with much greater precision and contemplation than in *The Silmarillion* in which the core ideas are presented (see particularly chapters "Ainulindalë" and "Valaquenta"). Other, earlier drafts and the development of these chapters and the themes they address, have been published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* (see for instance pages 57–58). The conversation between Finrod and Andreth is also an excellent example of the value of philosophical discussion within the fictional universe in which it is not considered idle rambling. As Whittingham (2008, 103) writes, "[t]he resulting discussion between these knowledgeable characters, therefore, is particularly enlightening in regards to the views of the Elves and Men and the metaphysics that underlie their

[78] Another example of a parallel reading of Tolkien and Aristotle is Gene Fendt's article "Aristotle and Tolkien: An Essay in Comparative Poetics". Fendt's treatment focuses on the two writers' approaches to literature and art, and regarding the attitude towards the supernatural Fendt makes an important remark about the natural versus sacramental aspects. He writes that for Tolkien, the work of art is already sacramental because of the sub-creative acts, being always intertwined with the ways of relating to that which is beyond creation. For Aristotle, on the other hand, mimesis is a natural process. Humans only share something with the divine, and the divine is not creative: in Aristotle's thinking, "there is no supernature fulfilling nature". (Fendt 2019, 66–67.) Even though this section does not specifically focus on the artistic and literary connections to eternity and the world outside creation, the relation and access to the truths beyond in itself is at the core of the treatment – and this view, I argue, is more fruitful to be approached from a Platonic perspective.

stories, though both characters reach beyond what they know – or think – to be true, and they speculate about what might be." Philosophical views are not restricted to the discussion that *concerns* the work – and world – of literature: they are also debated *in* the world.

With respect to the deeply philosophical nature of the debate, the dialogue could well have been introduced in the second chapter alongside the whole Idea–versus–realisation-analysis. Yet it is now placed here, providing a conclusion to the treatment of perceptual knowledge. The primary reason for this is the element of *anamnesis*, which is linked to perception since recognition of eternal ideas is often kindled by familiar figures faced in the physical world. In Tolkien's world the Elves, being Ilúvatar's firstborn children and granted great wisdom, are often seen as wise (yet hesitant) counsellors, lore-masters and epistemic authorities. In Finrod and Andreth's debate this position is, however, questioned: it is revealed that Men perhaps unaware possess knowledge that is strange and ungraspable to the Elves. This knowledge, as I argue, is inseparably connected to the metaphysical structure of Arda and the very gulf that keeps Elves and Men apart.

I analyse two passages, one from Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, the other from Finrod and Andreth's conversation. This choice of texts as well as the following commentary is one of the instances where the overall contextual and theoretical problems discussed in the Introduction resurface and intervene in the analysis. Methodically, applying Plato's theories into the study of literary texts is not merely to pick philosophical concepts and observe their suitability in the context of literary fiction. Especially in the case of Finrod and Andreth's discussion, it is rather to set side by side two eloquent dialogues, one from the world of fiction, one from the philosophical source material. In this section I hope not only to argue for the importance of *anamnesis* as an epistemic constituent of Tolkien's world but to show how it makes visible the nature of Tolkien's work as philosophical literature and Plato's dialogues as literary philosophy, using Mikkonen's (2011, 14–15) terms. The

philosophical, theoretical text becomes an object of analysis as well, and the hierarchy between the two texts is once again broken.

Phaedo and *Meno* both provide a more thorough overview of *anamnesis* but at this point I have chosen to cite *Phaedrus*. *Phaedrus* examines the concept of love, but it is the treatment of reincarnation or, as named in the Greek context, *metempsychosis*, that is of interest here. Socrates and his interlocutor Phaedrus discuss true beauty and how one is reminded of it by perceptions in the physical world. This perception leads into recollection of the higher beauty once known to the soul and leads into madness known as love. The discussion is thus primarily about madness, love and *metempsychosis*, but the central idea of *anamnesis* remains: the Ideas, including the Idea of beauty, are known to the soul, and brought back to it through earthly observations. (*Phaedrus*, 33.) Similar themes arise in chapter "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth", too. The exchange of words leading to the most fundamental remarks about *anamnesis* concerns the role of Men as "visitors". This metaphysical state is referred to in *The Silmarillion* (36), too, where Men are called Strangers or Guests – capitalised. The names are reference to the fact that unlike Elves Men die indeed and leave the world for good whereas Elves, being bound to the circles of Arda, may return to life or linger in the Halls of Mandos, the gathering place of awaiting souls, if they have been slain. This difference Finrod and Andreth are trying to comprehend:

> 'If you mean that Men are the guests,' said Andreth.
> 'You have said the word,' said Finrod: 'that name we have given to you.'
> 'Lordly as ever,' said Andreth. 'But even if we be but guests in a land where all is your own, my lords, as you say, tell me what other land or things do we know?'
> 'Nay, tell me!' said Finrod. 'For if you do not know, how could we? But do you know that the Eldar say of Men that they look at no thing for itself; that if they study it, it is to discover something else; that if they love it, it is only (so it seems) because it reminds them of some other dearer thing? Yet with what is

> this comparison? Where are these other things?
> 'We are both, Elves and Men, in Arda and of Arda; and such knowledge as Men have is derived from Arda (or so it would appear). Whence then comes this memory that ye have with you, even before ye begin to learn?' (*Morgoth's Ring*, 315–316.)

> For, as I have already said, the soul of every human being is bound to have seen things as they really are, or else it would not have entered this kind of living creature.
> 'But not every soul is readily prompted by things here on earth to recall those things that are real. This is not easy for souls which caught only a brief glimpse of things there, nor for those which after falling to earth have suffered the misfortune of being perverted and made immoral by the company they keep and have forgotten the sacred things they saw then. When the remaining few, whose memories are good enough, see a likeness here which reminds them of things there, they are amazed and beside themselves, but they do not understand what is happening to them because of a certain unclarity in their perceptions. But although the likenesses here on earth (of things which are precious to souls, such as justice and self-control) lack all lustre, and only a few people come to them and barely see, through dim sense organs, what it is that any likeness is a likeness of, yet earlier it was possible for them to see beauty in all its brilliance. (*Phaedrus*, 33; translated by Robin Waterfield.)

To begin with the latter quotation, the principle of innatism is brought to the fore in the very first sentence: every soul is *bound to have* beheld true being, that is the eternal, unchanging Ideas. It is also presented as an essential condition of being human in the first place – it is an unconditional part of human existence to have been in touch with the higher reality even though entering into the carnal life erases all memory of that world. What I would like to emphasise here is that the reunion with Ideas and higher truth is only acquired through difficulties and, as is uttered above, the likeness of the other world perceived in the everyday physical reality evokes feelings of admiration and amazement even though their origin is not al-

ways understood. This remark is most relevant when it comes to the role of perception in *anamnesis*, and it is also present in the ponderings of Finrod; I will soon present a passage that highlights the wonder of recognition even further, but first it is necessary to focus on the relationship between innate knowledge and perception more generally.

In Finrod and Andreth's debate the deepest core of perceptual knowledge with its many yet unsolved problems is finally reached. Looking at a thing for Men is truly to look at something else, something that is absent; not absent as in Moran's (2019) treatment of perceiving stars, but as in a necessary metaphysical condition – the Idea and its realisation cannot coexist. Finrod's observation puts perceptual knowledge, especially its reliability, in a very difficult position. In this study it has already been shown that perception in Tolkien's fantasy universe is often unsure, confounded, tricked and incorrect. It is relied upon when necessary and recognised as one fundamental way of grasping the world around and being able to function and live in this world in the first place – despite the impossibility of absolutely trustworthy perception it must be acknowledged as a source of knowledge. Finrod's remark, however, problematizes the role of perception further, suggesting that it is not necessarily a *source* of knowledge as such but rather something that *kindles* pre-existing patterns of knowing. In the case of Men, it is reasonable to claim that in this particular (and, in fact, rather fundamental) epistemic process empiricism and innatism work together. Innatism is, both in the source material and in Tolkien's fiction, dominant and primary, but perception is nonetheless required if one is to be reunited with truth.

Approaching knowledge as a synthesis of perception and recollection evokes questions about the causal relations of the two. It has by now been established that, while perception is a significant source of knowledge in other contexts, in the case of *anamnesis* its role is different. Perception *does* form one link in the causal chain that leads into the formation of beliefs, but the process seems to act backwards. This is best explained by briefly returning to Goldman's (1967) causal theory of

knowing. Goldman's treatment of causal justification addresses memory as an epistemic causal process of a kind. Goldman (1967, 360), while admitting that a thorough study of the relationships between older and newer beliefs only some of which can be seen as remembering would rather be "a job mainly for a scientist", notes that a causal connection between consequent beliefs is necessary to memory. The process of relearning is also addressed:

> To remember a fact is not simply to believe it at t_0 and also to believe it at t_1. Nor does someone's knowing a fact at t_0 and his knowing it at t_1 entail that he remembers it at t_1. He may have perceived the fact at t_0, forgotten it, and then relearned it at t_1 by someone's telling it to him. [– –] Knowledge can be acquired by a combination of perception and memory. At t_0, the fact *p* causes *S* to believe *p*, by perception. *S*'s believing *p* at t_0 results, via memory, in *S*'s believing *p* at t_1. (Goldman 1967, 360.)

Interestingly, Goldman's example of the intertwined workings of memory and perception are reversed in the process of *anamnesis*. In Goldman's formulation it is perception that first causes one to believe something that is later remembered. However, if the Platonic notion is followed, perception is always secondary, and the basis for true knowledge is elsewhere. This is also the case of Tolkien's Men: when they look at something lovingly, they do so "because it reminds them of some other dearer thing", as was quoted above. It is therefore perception that triggers memory and reinforces an old belief that has been erased in birth. Learning occurs in a higher reality where Men had access to Ideas; this is where *S* originally believes *p*. *p* is then forgotten when *S* becomes a physical being and descends to Arda. In the imperfect world, *S* perceives something that kindles old memories, which causes her to believe *p*. This causal process seems rather simple, but it has its problems: as the previously cited *Phaedrus* passage notes, it is the nature of a human being to have been in touch with and beheld the true being. This, of course, refers to the World of Forms, but it is the use of the verb *to see*, or the conjugated form

τεθέαται (*tetheatai*) in the original, that obscures the analysis. The true being and true world are accessible by mind and soul alone, and yet they are visually observed. The Chariot Allegory to which the quotation belongs to is, again, figurative which explains the choice of word. However, I do not find it irrelevant that even in the context of abstract ideas, concepts, forms and truths the discussions and explanations more often than not draw from the world of perception, using its vocabulary and imagery. Seeing in this context is not to be understood literally but it deserves to be acknowledged nonetheless.

To return to one of the most important pairs of concepts of the third chapter, the types of wisdom named *phronesis* and *sophia*, I would argue that while the mundane, perceptual knowledge that draws from sensory observation and experience has high practical value and is in this sense primarily connected to *phronesis*, the process of recollection grants perception value also with respect to *sophia*. Again, it must be remarked that knowledge and wisdom are certainly not seen as interchangeable concepts even though they are often discussed together. While knowledge is the core interest of this study, the different notions of wisdom also need to be taken into account. Perceptual knowledge, especially in its practical, action-enabling form, aids in matters that can be interpreted as constituents of *phronesis*: judgement, decision-making, moral virtue and understanding, social and political life, finding the right ends as well as the means to achieve them. Learning how to live well and function in the world and in a particular community happens by being a part of said world, and such experiential learning has got everything to do with the content of observation and perception, which makes the relationship between the reality and the observer a matter of interest. (A matter unresolved, that is, for the problem of external reality and its role in perceptual knowledge is a question too grand to be thoroughly discussed here.)

However, as section 4.3 already briefly outlined in the analysis of Ivorwen and the green stone, it is not always the content of perceptual experience that matters but the very act of perceiving itself, whether congruent with the physical reality

or not: the perceptual act includes complicated processes of interpretation that may tell much about things that in fact have very little to do with the content of sensory perception, let alone the (supposed) physical entity that causes said perception. Much like in the example of Ivorwen, in the present case, too, perception does not provide significant knowledge of the physical world but ignites epistemic processes of another kind that could perhaps be called *insight* or, although with more caution, *epiphany* or *revelation* that are then interpreted according to the skill of the observer. As the quotation from *Phaedrus* shows, this sudden amazement of recognition is not always understood but remains a mystery to the beholder. Very similar is the case of Men, as the words of Andreth prove:

> 'You speak strange words, Finrod,' said Andreth, 'which I have not heard before. Yet my heart is stirred as if by some truth that it recognizes even if it does not understand it. But fleeting is that memory, and goes ere it can be grasped; and then we grow blind. And those among us who have known the Eldar, and maybe have loved them, say on our side: "There is no weariness in the eyes of the Elves". And we find that they do not understand the saying that goes among Men: *too often seen is seen no longer*. [– –]' (*Morgoth's Ring*, 316.)

Andreth's description is almost that of a dream that one almost remembers at the moment of waking but that soon slips away beyond reach. Her concluding remark sharpens the core difference between Elves and Men and their separate ways of perceiving and approaching the world. The way of the Elves seems to follow a more Aristotelian path: the Elves are not weary of the surrounding reality, and they are able to find joy and beauty in everything dear at hand. Men, then again, hold that *too often seen is seen no longer*, indicating their desire to seek something beyond. In this sense epistemic *anamnesis* and the supernatural go hand in hand precisely with respect to knowing the supernatural, striving towards something outside everyday experience that is sufficient for the Elves who never become perceptually saturated, so to speak.

Returning to the previous quotation, one of the answers Finrod proposes to solve his own question, *where are these other things*, is the Vision itself. He speculates whether it is the eternal Arda as designed to be when completed that Men compare the physical world with, or, if not so, if it is another world entirely of which the things on earth are "only tokens or reminders". (*Morgoth's Ring*, 318.) Andreth's response to this metaphysical speculation is short but remarkable: "If so, it resides in the mind of Eru, I deem" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 318). In section 2.1 a brief notion is made about the possibility of contemporaneous worlds with respect to the belief-system of the Elves. Of contemporaneous, non-contiguous worlds it is said that they are "either altogether unknowable, even as to whether they are or are not, or else if there are any intersections (however rare) they are only provinces of one Eä" (ibid. 252). Andreth's sentiment entertains the possibility of a reality that solely exists in the mind of a creator-god, a remark that could well show the metaphysical nature of the entire fictional universe in a very different light, evoking questions of different forms of idealism and the mind-dependency of reality. This remark is, however, only a speculation, not a claim or an expression of certainty.

Throughout this conversation it is Finrod who appears to hold the position of epistemic authority[79] whereas Andreth's knowledge is less vast and some of her conceptions concerning being in Arda and in time are erroneous. In many ways, Finrod has the epistemic upper hand, so to speak: his genealogy includes lines from all three Calaquendi-families, the Noldor, the Vanyar and the Teleri, all of whom have been instructed by the Valar with different emphases (*The Silmarillion*, 60–61).

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[79] The aspect of authoritative knowledge has not been discussed explicitly although some of the forms of supernatural knowledge, such as dream visions, can under certain circumstances be interpreted as angelic instruction. Tolkien's fictional universe presents different kinds of hierarchies between beings and levels of existence, and the hierarchical nature extends to characters as well. The divine or angelic authorities are not the only ones in Arda: in addition to these, some characters such as Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond are clearly epistemic authorities. There are differences between individual characters but also between peoples and families, and this can best be exemplified with the help of Flieger's (2002, 92) analysis about Elves. She parallels the levels of knowledge and wisdom with proximity to light, and writes that "[g]rey is a middle shade, twilight a midpoint between daylight and dark. Like their name, the Sindar occupy the middle ground between Calaquendi and Moriquendi, between enlightenment and ignorance." (ibid. 92.)

The faults in Andreth's inference – and in the belief-system evolved among Men – are revealed in the discussion with Finrod. Yet perhaps the greatest epistemic friction present in Arda can be found precisely in this discussion: Elves, who repeatedly are perceived as wise authorities, are in fact unable to grasp the knowledge Men possess. It is problematic, then, that Men who are very much aware of this situation, identifying as second-born and in many ways inferior to the Elves, learn this condition, too, from Elves. Elves instruct Men also concerning that in which Men surpass them, that is the peculiar process of *anamnesis* of which Men are mostly ignorant. At this point of the discussion Finrod and Andreth arrive in a place whence neither can go further, Finrod because he does not know and Andreth because she cannot recall. The difference is that Andreth *has* known whereas Finrod has been and remains in the dark.

This is where the Aristotelian notions favoured by Wood, for instance, cease to apply. The Elves truly are superior in knowledge *for as long as this knowledge concerns the world*. They know nothing of the reality beyond, the reality whence Men come from and that they partially begin to remember, a process of recollection disguised as learning. Given the interpretations about the metaphysics of Arda I proposed in the second chapter it can be said that the knowledge Elves have, including their supreme memory, only covers the physical world and its course, the fluctuating world of becoming. The Ideas, while being beyond the Elves, are innate to Men; they cannot be fully rediscovered in the physical world but they are the firm yet unknown object of their incessant search. This presumption is acknowledged in *The Silmarillion* (and its effect can indeed be seen nearly everywhere in the stories of Arda) but in a context that emphasises the afterlife, free will and the condition of the soul:

> 'Behold I love the Earth, which shall be a mansion for the Quendi and the Atani! But the Quendi shall be the fairest of all earthly creatures, and they shall have and shall conceive and bring forth more beauty than all my Children; and they shall have the greater bliss in this world. But to the Atani I will give a new

> gift.' Therefore he willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else; [– –]. (*The Silmarillion*, 35–36.)

The Elves are bound to Arda whereas Men seek beyond. The predisposition of Men is not unlike that of the released prisoner of Plato's allegory: "[m]oreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell" (*The Republic*, 208). While the present treatment focuses on the supreme knowledge acquired *before* descending to the world, the promise of regaining this knowledge in the (timeless and eternal) future was a central matter in Aquinas' theory according to which human knowledge about essences is always imperfect: Knuuttila (1993, 103) writes that "Aquinas beliefs that in heaven the human intellect will be improved in this respect so that it will fully understand the intelligible nature of the essences it now knows only partially." Also in Tolkien's universe, being in the time-bound world can be treated as an epistemically obscure state in between two eternal states of enlightenment: the soul, having descended from the otherworldly realm, momentarily leaves behind understanding of true beings, essences and the good, but being reunited with them is within the realm of possibilities.

Already at this point it is clear that the chapter "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" addresses many philosophically relevant problems, but I argue that its significance expands far beyond the borders of Arda – or, in fact, all of Eä. The dialogue, I perceive, can be read in a broader context with respect to the overall endeavours and aspirations often linked to fantasy literature. In section "Knowledge and magic of language" of the third chapter I introduced Le Guin's views about fantastists who, according to her, are "trying to restore the sense – to regain the knowledge – that there is somewhere else, anywhere else, where other people may live another kind of life." (Le Guin 2007, 87). It appears that Finrod is in agony to

comprehend the nature of said *somewhere else* yet he obviously accepts that it is beyond his knowledge. Furthermore, the entire discussion exemplifies such aspirations and the excursions fantasy makes to larger realities and unknown zones Le Guin writes about – the process of *anamnesis* does not necessarily concern Tolkien's Men alone but the overall pursuits of fantasy.

Another matter regarding the epistemic positions of the two characters needs to be addressed. The notions on afterlife, the soul and its innate understanding are presented in a dialogue as doctrines that form a part of Finrod's belief-system and as such they can be erroneous. Yet Finrod claims to know some things for certain, particularly the kinship between Elves and Men and their equal position as the Children of Ilúvatar:

> But consider this well, Andreth, when we name you "Children of Eru" we do not speak lightly; for that name we do not utter ever in jest or without full intent. When we speak so, we speak out of knowledge, not out of mere Elvish lore; and we proclaim that ye are our kin, in a kinship far closer (both of *hröa* and *fëa*)[80] than that which binds together all other creatures of Arda, and ourselves to them. (*Morgoth's Ring*, 308.)

The place of the Children in Arda's chain of being (see for instance Korpua 2015, 69–70) can hardly be questioned: it is plainly explained in "Ainulindalë" and it endures throughout Tolkien's fiction. What is epistemically relevant here is the distinction Finrod makes between knowledge and "mere Elvish lore". The epistemic hierarchy Finrod builds between the two is interesting because of the general appreciation of Elvish lore in the wider context of Tolkien's work. Yet there are matters with respect to which the Elvish lore reaches its limit and ceases to apply. What remains oblique is what the knowledge Finrod speaks of is; it is here deter-

[80] *Hröa* and *fëa* are the rough equivalents of body and soul. Korpua (2015, 70–72) analyses the relationship between hröa and fëa and the ways Elves differ from Men in this matter. Fate and immortality are crucial conceptions in this analysis and important in the overall cosmology of Arda.

mined by negation as something *other* than lore but its nature remains unexplained. It cannot be equivalent with the knowledge of Men, either, since their knowledge is derived from outside the world, a reality unknown to the Elves. Solid answers are hard to find for this question. It would be justifiable to assume that Finrod is referring to the wisdom the Firstborn learned from the Valar in Aman; the kind of wisdom that relies on solid epistemic authorities that clearly surpass the Elves themselves could be something that Finrod values higher than "mere Elvish lore". This interpretation, however, has its problems: as has been stated already in the second chapter, the Children of Ilúvatar are beyond the comprehension of the Valar and their knowledge of the Children, their origin and faith in uncertain. What Finrod means precisely remains unclear.

The origin of Finrod's notions and the justification for granting him the position of an epistemic authority has been briefly discussed in the Author's Notes attached to "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth": "With regard to King Finrod, it must be understood that he starts with certain basic beliefs, which he would have said were derived from one or more of these sources: his created nature; angelic instruction; thought; and experience" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 330). Even though the comment concerns the one specific conversation alone and Finrod's adequacy to discuss the questions that surface in its course, the remark is rather interesting when applied to the wider context of Arda's epistemology. The sources named in the comment could be paired with the epistemic approaches this study examines so that *his created nature* is united with innatism; *angelic instruction* with epistemic authorities and some form of foundationalism; *thought* with interpretations and inferences; *experience* with perceptual and practical knowledge acquired by actively engaging in the world. Of these the authoritative view has been of lesser interest in the preceding analyses. There are, for sure, certain fundamental beliefs that are shared at least among the wise and learned, Elves in particular. Such beliefs are, for instance, the existence of Eru Ilúvatar and his status as the only creator-god, and the nature of Elves and Men as incarnate beings that consist of both *hröa* and *fëa*, the approxi-

mate equivalents of body and soul. I consider such basic beliefs an important part of Arda's epistemic system but one that does not provide much for an intriguing analysis to work on. Their value is here recognised and instances have at times been given in sections where they arise among other phenomena, but their epistemic justification systematically returns to *Estel*, a concept that roughly translates to trust. In *Morgoth's Ring* (320), Estel is (again, according to Finrod) said to be a constituent of the nature of the Children's being that does not originate from experience, and as such it could be seen as a predisposition akin to innatism. It cannot therefore perish because of the ways of the world. Estel is called trust but in my opinion, it is also rather close to faith for its foundation is in Eru. In the mythological system of the fantasy universe, it is a reliable foundation of beliefs but its epistemic analysis would very much likely fail to find other forms of justification.

Returning to the relationship between *anamnesis* and perception, the act of looking is foregrounded instead of the thing beheld itself – that is, when it comes to Men. The Elves have marked, as Finrod explains, that Men tend to "look at no thing for itself". The act of looking itself is not questioned; it is the object that becomes secondary. Regarding the overall system of Arda both metaphysically and epistemically this supports the idea that the kind of knowledge-formation that takes place in the physical Arda is able to provide some kind of brief access to the world of Forms. One possibility is that provided by light, as analysed in the preceding section, "Leaving the Cave": light, while itself refracted and part of Arda, has revealing powers beyond mere physical illumination and may allow glimpses of times and places that are closer to that which they unsuccessfully mirror. Any form of perception, then, can be the beginning of recollection and a part of the search the souls of Men cannot be free from. Knowing the physical object for what it is has great practical relevance but none regarding truth.

While *anamnesis* characterises the epistemic nature of Tolkien's world fittingly and reveals some of the most critical epistemic problems of the legendarium, it is not unique to Tolkien: *anamnesis* of a kind occurs also in Lewis's *The Last Battle*. At

the end of the battle, Narnia ceases to be: the sun dies and time comes to its end. Instead of emptiness, the characters now find themselves in a strangely familiar yet novel place:

> It still seemed to be early and the morning freshness was in the air. They kept on stopping to look round and to look behind them, partly because it was so beautiful but partly also because there was something about it which they could not understand.
> "Peter," said Lucy, "where is this, do you suppose?"
> "I don't know," said the High King. "It reminds me of somewhere but I can't give it a name. Could it be somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small?"
> "It would have to have been a jolly good holiday," said Eustace. "I bet there isn't a country like this anywhere in our world. Look at the colours? You couldn't get a blue like the blue on those mountains in our world." (*The Last Battle*, 829.)

The novelty, familiarity and slowly growing understanding of recollection are written here very plainly. The Platonic context can only be further emphasised in one way, by naming Plato himself, as is indeed done when professor Kirke explains the relationship between the New and Old Narnia to his companions: "'"[– –] And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream." His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!" the older ones laughed." (*The Last Battle*, 830). In the first quoted passage the most interesting contrast between the two worlds is the nature of colours. *Anamnesis* is quite obviously referred to by Peter who speculates whether he has indeed once been in the land before, perhaps many years ago as a child: there is a sense of familiarity but none of the company can put their finger on it. The thematic of the World of Ideas and the comparisons drawn between it and the world of perception deepen in the words of Eustace. Eustace, a

cousin to the Pevensie's and one of the main characters of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, doubts that such colours could ever be found in his world. He recognises and names the colour of the mountains blue but simultaneously marks its striking uniqueness.

The children, and all those who left the dying Narnia and followed Aslan, now lay their eyes upon the new yet eternal world, the World of Ideas. Eustace's attention is drawn to the stunning blue of the mountains, a colour so radiant that the hues seen in the physical world are little more than shadows compared to it. This remark is a very clear comment on the problem of universals: the blue perceived by the children is indeed recognisable, but in all its splendour it is plain that this blue is the *true* colour, the universal idea of blueness that has its imperfect representatives in the ever-changing physical world. This contemplation on colours comes close to the passage discussed in section "Leaving the Cave". Frodo's view from Cerin Amroth is described in a very similar manner: "[h]e saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful". (*The Lord of the Rings, FR*, II, vi, 359). Frodo's view is, as argued, a brief glimpse into the World of Ideas, and in this respect it must be noted that the case of the Narnians is different: Lucy, professor Kirke and the others indeed enter the eternal world, forsaking the secondary reality for good and beginning their life in the world beyond. Frodo, then again, remains bound to the physical world. However, in both worlds of fantasy, universals are recognised as essential constituents of reality and as such they have adopted some form of metaphysical realism. The mode of realism, however, is somewhat unclear. Moderate realism proposes that while universals, such as blueness or goodness, exist, they are dependent on the particulars and only exist *in rebus* – this view is favoured by Aristotle, for instance. Platonic realism, then again, holds that universals exist *ante rem* and independently of particulars, and they cannot be grasped through any sensory contact (see for instance Dumsday 2020, 732).

The treatment of universals in Arda differs from the description they receive in Narnia. As "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" shows, the realm to which the (assumed) universals belong to, is beyond understanding because those who have perceived it have forgotten it. The universals are shortly glimpsed in the physical world but the realm beyond is inaccessible. The concluding chapters of the *Narnia*-series, then again, describe the transition in detail: the world beyond is finally found and entered. It would now seem that the literal reading that has been favoured both in Plato's formulations and in the readings made about Tolkien's fiction should be adapted here, too. While the overall context and the theories of Platonic realism suggest that the realm of the universals, the World of Forms, is abstract and inaccessible through sensory perception, it is obvious that this is not the case of New Narnia. The brilliance and perfection of the things encountered, their superiority compared to the familiar world left behind, are recognised and marvelled, but the realm is far from abstract: it is, from the perspective of the newcomers, quite as physical as the other worlds they have explored during their adventures. Furthermore, the quality of blueness that in the everyday world is shared by countless particulars, continues to be just that – shared and shattered, albeit fairer and truer than ever before. In the new world the universals or ideas are still only encountered *in rebus*, not independently as such. Blueness, that serves as the most plainly expressed example in the passage, is here attributed to mountains.

It is interesting that while Wood in the previously mentioned article finds Lewis's literature much more Platonic than Tolkien's, it seems that with respect to universals the adopted form of realism would rather be Aristotelian than Platonic. It should, however, be noted that Wood (2003, 324) openly admits that of the Platonic notions Lewis adopted those that "were useful for Christian faith and life, just as he repudiated those that were inimical to it." Lewis was, according to Wood, a Platonist Christian, not a Christian Platonist, which may explain some of the inconsistencies that occur when reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* from a Platonist viewpoint. I would therefore argue that the realm the characters enter at the end of

the final book is closer to a Christian notion of heaven than a Platonic realm of abstraction and Ideas. The Platonic aspect can be used in a manner similar to that wielded by professor Kirke, who uses Plato's theory in order to explain the new world to others: the realm itself is Christian, but it is made understandable through Plato's philosophy. Despite this turn the transition from one world into another *does* bear resemblance to the allegorical transitions between the Worlds of Perception and Form, and the element of *anamnesis* is also very much present.

This kind of engagement in the deep questions of existing and the metaphysical characteristics of the world, whether correct or incorrect, leads back to the Introduction of this study and to one of its primary motivations, the still often occurring neglect of speculative fiction when discussing deeper and wider relevance of literature for instance in a philosophical context. Finrod and Andreth's debate is of course an example most direct, but elsewhere in Tolkien's fiction these questions arise, too, though in a form more disguised, embedded deep in the different ways of worldbuilding and expeditions to the borders between possible and impossible, natural and supernatural. Fantasy is itself interested in questions of knowledge, being and certainty, asks them but leaves them open – and this is where literary studies alongside philosophical theory enter, having much to offer.

4.4.2 *Anamnesis* Within the World and Existence Through Time

Anamnesis has thus far been analysed as an epistemic bridge that connects the two metaphysical levels of Tolkien's Arda, that is the abstract level of Ideas (in Platonic terms) and the perceptible, physical reality. As such it is most clearly connected to the section "Knowing the supernatural" and the questions of reaching the divine and that which is beyond, things that do not belong to the created world: unlike the Elves or even the Ainur, Men have in their possession knowledge of a reality that is completely beyond the physical world and nature. Recalling the world beyond is a remarkable epistemic peculiarity but it is important to mark that *anamnesis*

in a more imperfect form occurs within the world as well – the Elves, being bound to Eä, experience *anamnesis* of a kind in the process of rebirth:

> As for this re-birth, it was not an opinion, but known and certain. For the *fëa* re-born became a child indeed, enjoying once more all the wonder and newness of childhood; but slowly, and only after it had acquired a knowledge of the world and mastery of itself, its memory would awake; until, when the re-born elf was full-grown, it recalled all its former life, and then the old life, and the 'waiting', and the new life became one ordered history and identity. This memory would thus hold a double joy of childhood, and also an experience and knowledge greater than the years of its body. [– –] For the Re-born are twice nourished, and twice parented, and have two memories of the joy of awaking and discovering the world of living and the splendour of Arda. (*Morgoth's Ring*, 221–222.)

Fëa, the spirit, reincarnates as an elven child. Treating rebirth and recalling past life and the knowledge acquired in it as an instance of *anamnesis* is not without problems. In Plato's theory, *anamnesis* refers to recalling the world of Forms which the soul once had access to; in other words, memory extends beyond the restrictions of the physical world. In the case of the Elves this does not occur for the fëa never leaves the world: it remains within its borders unhoused but a part of it nonetheless, and therefore the *anamnesis* experienced by the Elves is not quite congruent with the Platonic notion. Recalling does not reach towards the Ideas but the reality that is accessible as such. One similarity is, however, the idea of birth as an erasing event: the mind is emptied of its former knowledge, and the elf-child's "memory would awake" only after gaining some new acquaintance with the world.

The later developments of the legendarium question the idea of reincarnation through childbirth[81]. After Tolkien finally abandoned this long-held notion,

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[81] The reincarnation of Elves is discussed and rejected for instance in *Morgoth's Ring*, pp 363. Surprisingly, some form of reincarnation has been suggested for Dwarves, too. A very late manuscript introduces a belief held by Dwarves that the spirits of their Seven Fathers might reappear in their

the sole possibility of reincarnation was for the Elves to be again housed in a remade hröa identical to their first physical form. This can be done since "the *fëa* retains a memory, an imprint, of its *hröa*, its 'former house', so powerful and precise that the reconstruction of an identical body can proceed from it" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 363). Even though the undeniably problematic process of rebirth is cast aside, new philosophical questions arise. It is because of the remaining element of the severance of body and soul, a breach in being, due to which one specific problem surfaces no matter which form of reincarnation finally finds its place in the canon: the problem is that of identity and change, and also persistence more generally.

Persistence and identity have more to do with metaphysics than epistemology but they cannot be completely disregarded here. Persistence, a problem studied in contemporary philosophy by Jiri Benovsky (2006), for instance, refers to objects existing through time and maintaining their essence regardless of certain changes in their being: there are properties that change in time and properties that remain the same, and the question is whether a being that changes in time remains the same, perishes or becomes something else, and how a being can justifiably be considered the same it was at an earlier moment in time. A central division offered by David Lewis is that between *perdurance* and *endurance*. If something perdures, its persistence is based on the existence of different temporal parts none of which is entirely present at all times or more than one time. Endurance, then again, means that something persists and is wholly present at all times[82]. (Benovsky 2006, 19–20.)

kindreds and recall their previous lives as kings. However, the idea of rebirth is replaced by another explanation according to which the spirit of a former king may at times return to its preserved body. (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 382–384). Either way, the place of Dwarves in the cosmology of the legendarium is that of outsiders, as Korpua (2015, 72) remarks, and often quite unclear compared to other peoples.

[82] What is missing from the treatment, according to Benovsky, is a theory about time. He therefore approaches persistence by bringing into discussion the views of eternalism and presentism and explores the possible combinations of the notions of time and notions of persistence. Eternalism, in short, assumes no ontological difference between past, present and the future which are all equally real, whereas the presentist view holds only presently existing objects to be real. (Benovsky 2006, 20–21.) The different approaches to time are epistemically relevant particularly with respect to justifying beliefs about the future, a matter discussed in chapter 3.3.2.

The perdurantist treatment of beings as "aggregates of *temporal parts*", as Benovsky (2006, 19) writes, is rather unfitting to solve the problem of persistence in the case of Tolkien's Elves. That is not to say that the endurantist view would be perfect, either; in fact, the fundamental breach in existence and the very remaking of the former hröa marks a substantial change the result of which is, however, a new, identical body. An imperceptible change occurs. The most famous reincarnation (if such a term can in this case be used) would be that of Gandalf the Grey, whose "physical shape dies", as Korpua (2021, 74) puts it. Gandalf succumbs to darkness in his fight against balrog, an ancient monster, but returns to Middle-earth as Gandalf the White, indubitably transformed and yet the same: "'Gandalf,' the old man repeated, as if recalling from old memory a long disused word. 'Yes, that was the name. I was Gandalf.' [– –] 'Yes, I am white now,' said Gandalf. 'Indeed I *am* Saruman, one might almost say, Saruman as he should have been.'" (*The Lord of the Rings, TT*, III, v, 507). Regarding the larger epistemic significance of Gandalf's change and his brief departure from the physical world after fighting the Balrog, an interesting parallel can be found in the seventh book of *The Republic*. There Socrates argues that the best minds "must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now." (*The Republic*, 211). According to Socrates, the enlightened, learned minds must descend again and abide among the prisoners. Gandalf was sent back for a brief time because of his uncompleted task as the herald of the Valar, but his return can also be seen as a necessity that has its origin in the epistemic and metaphysical laws of Arda: departure from the physical world and accessing the otherworldly and eternal can only happen momentarily – at least for as long as the time-bound world endures.

The epistemic relevance of Gandalf's resurrection has been commented by McBride, who makes a nuanced observation about increased understanding with respect to sight – this aspect is noteworthy also because it reveals the cooperation of different epistemic operations, in this case, that of acquiring perceptual

knowledge and *anamnesis*. McBride writes that the resurrected Gandalf has gained not just greater power but greater understanding, too, and when the wizard is gazing over the battlefield with his marvellous eyesight, the remarks "imply more than just superb eyesight, but the ability to comprehend events and their causes." (McBride 2020, 66.) Gandalf's increased epistemic capabilities include physical powers of observation, knowledge gained from beyond the borders of the physical world and the superb cognitive ability to understand causal relations, patterns and connections. In a later context, the theme of gaining knowledge prior to entering the world surfaces in McBride's discussion of óre, heart-knowledge, and this detail is a good remainder of the distinction between *anamnesis* and the knowledge the Valar and Maiar possess before entering the physical world. According to McBride, "Gandalf places heart-knowledge parallel to knowledge acquired prior to entering Middle-earth, and both in contrast with knowledge possessed in his conscious mind; yet Gandalf will not discuss knowledge from beyond Middle-earth except with other beings from beyond Middle-earth." (ibid. 95). This should not be confused with *anamnesis*, since not *all* a priori knowledge about the world works similarly: in the context McBride refers to, Gandalf is not discussing his resurrection but his instinctive knowledge about the fact that Bilbo should join the company of Thorin Oakenshield.

Gandalf's transformation is of a very different nature than that of the Elves returning to physical being: this is best highlighted in Gandalf's remark "[i]ndeed I *am* Saruman[83]". The temporal change is clearly marked, as is the change in Gandalf himself: his name *was* Gandalf, he *is* now white and he almost claims to *be* Saruman, someone other than his former self, although it is obvious that he is speaking figuratively. However, a qualitative change occurs, and as a result, something about Gandalf is profoundly different at t^2 from what it was at t^1. Despite the change, both in the overall context of *The Lord of the Rings* and in common intuitive

[83] He is here referring to the treason discussed in section 4.2, particularly the new status Saruman claimed for himself as Saruman of Many Colours, and as a result of Saruman's descent, Gandalf takes his place and returns to Arda in a higher and nobler position.

reason it is natural to perceive Gandalf as the same person before and after his fall from the Bridge of Khazad-dûm. To solve the problem that follows from identity of indiscernibles[84], Gandalf's persistence can be seen to follow either from the persistence of *numerically different* beings, or from *one* persisting being – that is, if the problem is to be approached from either perdurantist or endurantist view. The endurantist view, I suggest, is able to explain Gandalf's change more fittingly: rather than treating Gandalf as consisting of a sequence of temporal parts, I interpret that he persists because of the remaining substance that can shed its attributes without perishing: as one of the *maiar*, Gandalf is, unlike Elves and Men, a spiritual being to begin with, and despite the breach his mind, thoughts and memories remain. Change, or what looks like change as it is perceived from outside, is pondered in a thoughtful passage from *The Peoples of Middle-earth*:

> But behold! Ælfwine, within Eä all things change, even the Valar; for in Eä we perceive the unfolding of a History in the unfolding: as a man may read a great book, and when it is full-read it is rounded and complete in his mind, according to his measure. Then at last he perceives that some fair thing that long endured: as some mountain or river of renown, some realm, or some great city; or else some mighty being, as a king, or maker, or a woman of beauty and majesty, or even one, maybe, of the Lords of the West: that each of these is, if at all, all that is said of them from the beginning even to the end. [– –] Though we, who are set to behold the great History, reading line by line, may speak of the river changing as it flows and grows broad, or dying as it is spilled or devoured by the sea. (*The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 398.)

This passage, the last one to be presented in this work, embodies much of what is central to the metaphysics of Tolkien's world and, consequently, to its epistemology. The idea of continuously unfolding and shaping metaphysics is plainly uttered,

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[84] Identity of indiscernibles denies the existence of two separate entities that share the same properties: if all the properties are the same, the entities must be identical. The principle is usually associated with Leibniz's law. (See for instance Cover & O'Leary-Hawthorne 1999, 185–186.)

and the importance of hindsight and interpretation is laid bare, enabling understanding within the limits of the observer's skill and intelligence. The unfolding of the world is perceived and studied from within the world, and even though interpretation enters in retrospect, the event and its observation are simultaneous. The remarks made concern the perceptible, changeable world, and the question is whether change indeed occurs if all the properties of the changeable being are already deterministically present, even if only as potential, from the beginning and creation. Either way, whatever changes or appears to do so, is only understood through the dialogue of parts and the whole: the unfolding of the History is read "line by line". What, then again, can be known about the higher level of being and what role perception plays in these epistemic aspirations, I hope to have given some useful suggestions in the chapter at hand.

To return to the problem of sameness and identity, the whole idea of memory that bridges the gulf between the two phases of being caused by the breach in existence (which can in both cases, that of the Elves and that of Gandalf, be called "death" although the word means a very different thing that it does when used about Men) is very much the same. The identity and self-consciousness of the reincarnated person is continuous and carries with it everything acquired in the previous life. It however appears that the memory does not always return at once, as can be expected if the process is interpreted as some, albeit imperfect, form of *anamnesis*: Gandalf is aware of his own being but *not necessarily as it was in Middle-earth*, where he was for many known as Gandalf. This time it is the physical world that is returning to the recollecting soul that has been briefly cut out of its carnal being.

Alongside reincarnated being's self-knowledge, their knowledge of the world is readjusted. Gandalf specifically observes this change in himself: "I have passed through fire and deep water, since we parted. I have forgotten much that I thought I knew, and learned again much that I had forgotten. I can see many things far off, but many things that are close at hand I cannot see. Tell me of yourselves!" (*The*

Lord of the Rings, *TT*, III, v, 507.) While the remark illustrates quite clearly the workings of *anamnesis* and the change of perspective and memory it sets in motion, it is also an excellent example of the way knowledge becomes a matter of ponderings and commentaries in Tolkien's fiction; and these commentaries are not infrequent. Besides, Gandalf's passing back into the world of perception from beyond whence he was "sent back – for a brief time" (ibid. 514), echoes the changes Frodo goes through when gazing over the world from Cerin Amroth, as analysed in chapter 4.3 – returning to the physical world requires adjustment after one has had the chance to ascend, if only briefly, to the higher reality and its truths. When Gandalf was cut off from his physical being and Middle-earth, he gained, I argue, a new, deeper understanding of the grander scale of things, the more universal truth; he was able to "see many things far off", as he utters, but the present matters of the material world he had to relearn and become acquainted with.

Finally, I would like to suggest that while *anamnesis* in its purest form occurs in the fate of Men and imperfectly – in some versions in the legendarium – in the reincarnation of the Elves, *anamnesis* can also be interpreted figuratively as a motif. I have argued elsewhere (Kärkelä 2019, 104–105, 108) that the fifth chapter of *The Hobbit* describes an epistemic transition between two stages of reality and that the element of *anamnesis* plays an important part in the process. The chapter "Riddles in the Dark" tells how Bilbo Baggins is separated from his dwarf-companions after being ambushed by goblins, and gets lost in the endless tunnels under the Misty Mountains. By a subterranean lake he accidentally crosses paths with Gollum, who forsook his friends, family and the entire aboveground world after killing his friend and taking from him the One Ring. Bilbo is forced to engage in a game of riddles, and unwillingly gambles for his own life. One of Bilbo's riddles, Sun on Daisies (*The Hobbit*, 80), is a remarkable turning-point for Gollum. Gollum has willingly turned away from the sun and the world outside, hiding in his cave and forsaking everything but the Ring. He has long forgotten the sun which already holds great epistemic significance (as does the cave), and its memory returns to him first

through Bilbo's riddle. Alongside the sun other memories return, too. Sunlight re-enters Gollum's life first on a literal level as a thought and a memory, and only after that as a real-world entity once Gollum is finally ready to leave the darkness of the tunnels and return to the aboveground world. While it is obvious that all characters are necessarily bound to the secondary world of perception, Gollum's cave can be read both literally and figuratively as a self-chosen epistemic prison, a place not of knowledge but of shadows, conjecture and illusions.

This chapter as a whole has in many ways brought together the analyses made and conclusions drawn in the second and third chapters. It has also challenged and at times broken the metaphysical hierarchy outlined in the second chapter: there are several epistemic crossings over the boundaries between Arda's version of the ideal and the perceptible reality, and the analyses of these occurrences reveal the incongruence between the object of knowledge (*truth* and the world beyond) and the manner of acquiring it (perceptual phenomena instead of pure reason and thinking favoured in Plato's epistemology). The analyses focused on the supernatural aspects of perception and its relationship between different metaphysical levels of the world, and also its relationship with a priori and a posteriori knowledge: the element of *anamnesis* in particular complicates the division and brings new aspects to the problem of knowing the supernatural discussed at the end of the third chapter.

The key finding is that while the Platonic framework strongly suggests that perceptual knowledge is unreliable to begin with, the supernatural possible world of Tolkien's legendarium allows reaching towards the true and the genuine also with the help of the senses. This reading is a result of a method that constantly pays attention to both literal and figurative levels of perceptual phenomena, including the recurrent motifs of light and ascending. Also, the analyses explain the role of different components of the knowledge-formation process, that is the interaction between imagination, perception, reason and interpretation; this interaction is also tightly intertwined with the causal chains of perceptual knowledge, and one

where the supernatural qualities of perception play key role. The element of the supernatural, I find, enables the double role of perception: on one hand, it provides practical information about the surrounding reality and allows the possibility of seeing into the future by visualising the immaterial; on the other, it reverses causality through the process of *anamnesis* and in doing so permits higher knowledge. Therefore, perception partakes in *sophia* as well as *phronesis*, being concerned with practical and applicable knowledge but also wisdom of another kind.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study I have examined the epistemic laws and peculiarities of Tolkien's Arda pursuing to find out how the epistemic structure of the fictional world works together with its metaphysical whole on the one hand, and with the element of the *supernatural* on the other. While the earlier scholarly work on Tolkien is indeed extensive and profound, it has not yet examined Arda as an epistemic whole; the intertwined questions of Arda's epistemology and metaphysics have been addressed and pondered in many works, but the philosophical whole they create has not been the core matter of interest for its own sake. In this study I have brought the philosophical questions from the margin to the centre, approaching Tolkien's universe not only as a sub-created world of fantasy but as a philosophical commentary on the nature of knowledge with respect to Plato's dialogues, medieval theory of dreams, the divine, the reliability of perception and the cooperation of imagination, the senses and reason.

The theoretical contexts this study proceeded from have certainly not been alien within Tolkien studies: the medieval framework, Platonic theories and possible world semantics are aspects that many Tolkien-scholars have explored very meticulously, whether their focus has been on more genre-specific questions of fantasy and worldbuilding, theological and philosophical problems, or intertextual relationships between Tolkien's legendarium and real-world mythologies, to name a few approaches. The study at hand shares the core elements of this theoretical foundation, and its aim has been to provide an acceptable account of the epistemic system of the fictional universe. It differs from the work of previous scholars by weaving together ancient and medieval philosophy and more recent epistemological analyses: as strong as the medieval framework has been in Tolkien studies, its

epistemic aspects and the manner in which it becomes intertwined with modern notions of epistemology, such as the causal processes of knowledge-formation, have not yet been examined in depth. My approach has been to study the elements of medieval dream theory and modal philosophy in Tolkien's universe and find out how they can help to understand the epistemic, supernatural phenomena of Arda.

The preliminary assumption on which I based my research questions – one that concerns the metaphysical structure of the fictional universe, one that asks where the supernatural occurs, and one that seeks to understand the role and workings of perceptual knowledge – was that a supernatural possible world of fantasy allows the concept of knowledge to be extended beyond its actual-world use and criteria. All three main chapters have from different perspectives and emphases explored this possibility, seeking to determine whether such an assumption can be justifiably adopted in the first place and, indeed, whether in a world of fiction there is such thing as supernatural knowledge. As a whole this study is a literary-philosophical examination about the workings of epistemic structures and processes in a supernatural possible world; on the other hand, it also discusses the abilities of fantasy fiction to address philosophical issues and partake in theoretical conversation.

Before the epistemic structure of Tolkien's Arda was given deeper thought, its metaphysical structure was discussed in the second chapter. The starting-point, later challenged in the fourth chapter, was that the metaphysical constitution of the world determines how the world is accessed epistemically. In this analysis Plato's metaphysics and Theory of Forms were the main theoretical context, and the structural and philosophical similarities between Plato and Tolkien, previously studied by many scholars whose thorough work this thesis owes a great deal to, provided the main premises from which the later analyses proceeded. However, the approach I have suggested differs from previous readings by emphasising the intrinsic value of the philosophical and epistemological material present in Tolkien and Plato's work instead of focusing on their treatments and reworkings of myth: phi-

losophy is not only a tool that can help to understand the literary characteristics and world constructions of fiction but a thing to be studied in itself as it is formed in the fictional world. I claimed that Tolkien's universe both by its process of creation and by its structure follows the Platonic division into Ideas or Forms and the perceptible, realised copy that is inevitably imperfect. Tolkien's universe constantly shows mimesis at work, both artistically and metaphysically, making visible the endless chains of making replicas and partaking in the sub-creative, imaginative processes that do not merely produce new layers to the world but also serve as interpretations of that which already exists. At this point, because of Plato's dominance, the theoretical context was mostly restricted to ancient metaphysics on the one hand and possible world semantics and fictional worldbuilding on the other.

The epistemological framework and the element of the supernatural became the main focus in the third chapter in which supernaturality was discussed with respect to modalities of fiction and possible world theories, and medieval currents of thought became increasingly prominent in the analyses of (prophetic) dream visions. The different sections discussed among other issues the magic of language (3.3.1), the reliability of the supernatural processes of acquiring knowledge (3.3.4) and the epistemic value of visions (3.3.2). Tolkien's work both as a scholar and as a writer of fiction has been much concerned with medieval themes, philosophical discussions and authors, and as the continuously expanding scholarly material on Tolkien shows, the medieval context and influences evoke great interest; on the other hand, this tendency and the vastness of the branched discussion at times make it hard to discuss medievality with precision. In this study, the primary medieval elements of interest have been the literary dream-vision genre on the one hand, and the significant changes in modal philosophy on the other– the relevance of medieval modalities is partly indirect because of their influence on modern conceptions of modal theory and possible world semantics. All in all, the epistemically significant role medievality plays in Arda is primarily connected to the philosophical debates of the time concerning the relationships between the spiritual and the

material, imagination and reason, and also the conceptions of modality with respect to the divine and the supernatural, for instance. While the medieval framework has been much explored in Tolkien-studies, many of the epistemically relevant aspects have remained if not entirely unaddressed, at least for the most part unresolved: dreams, visions, divine interventions and the constant cooperation – or, in some cases, rivalry – of reason, imagination and interpretation characterise the epistemic system of Tolkien's world probably more than any other individual feature. This is indeed the key finding of the third chapter in its entirety; the other central theme discussed throughout the chapter concerned the problems of the very concept of the supernatural and the difficulty of correctly attributing it. Writing about the supernatural was chosen as a means to bring together the theoretical framework, that is primarily the ancient and medieval philosophical discussions in which the divine and miraculous were common elements, and the literary analyses of fantasy and its deviant modal operations.

The third chapter, particularly the dream-vision analyses, paved way for the problems later ventured in the fourth chapter, namely the possibility of perceiving the immaterial and acquiring knowledge through means of perception in the first place. Here the Platonic framework came to the fore again, particularly because of the unreliable and secondary position perceptual reality has been given in Plato's theory compared to the primary world of Ideas; on the other hand, medieval philosophy remained an important point of reference because of the crucial role of imagination and interpretation, and the medieval approaches to perceptual errors and anomalies, for instance. In Tolkien's world, the perceptual reality can be manipulated in many ways by utilising the supernatural, such as by performing magic; on the other hand, the sensory world itself may act in unexpected ways, by mingling senses and fading the borders between hearing and seeing. In addition to the changing, fluctuating nature of the physical world itself, perceptual abilities and phenomena can also reach towards the abstract and immaterial, and this observation questions the basic assumption outlined in the second chapter: while Tolkien's

Arda is divided into two spheres, the Idea and its realisation, and by extension to the material and the immaterial, the borders are not fixed, and the opposite ends are connected by intermediate planes of shadows that are not wholly either. In its entirety the analyses of the fourth chapter show that the epistemic pursuits often work through an incongruence between the object and the means: the truths that, following the Platonic conception, are restricted to the realm of the abstract and Ideas, are striven for with the help of the senses. In this process light more often than not is in key role.

The third and fourth chapters together heavily indicate that the element of the supernatural, whether attributed to the means or magical objects, the abilities of the person or the object of knowledge itself, influences the epistemic whole of the fictional universe especially by bringing into the sphere of reliability things that otherwise would be regarded as epistemically irrelevant or deceitful, even. As such they also constantly comment the main friction present throughout the study, that is bringing together strict philosophical concepts and a world of fantasy that operates by different criteria and modalities. This friction I have sought to ease with the help of supernaturality, and also the theoretical framework of medieval philosophy has aided a great deal: elements such as the interference of the divine and supernatural phenomena like mirages, visions and miracles, even, had genuine epistemic significance in the philosophical discussions of the time. In Tolkien's world, deepest knowledge is often enabled by the very things that in modern-day epistemology signify unreliability: the supernatural element, a vision, for instance, can usually be considered reliable, but the cognitive abilities of inference and interpretation of the receiver are fallible.

The concluding section (4.4) of this study introduces the final but noteworthy characteristic of the epistemic system of Arda, that is the dual nature of perceptual knowledge. Perception provides mundane knowledge about the surrounding reality, enables seeing into the future or making inferences by bringing the immaterial into the sphere of visual perception, but it can also ignite processes of recollec-

tion that lead back to the higher truths learned by the soul. This is the greatest breach in the division between the two levels of existence and epistemic hierarchy formulated in this study, and regarding epistemological concepts it interestingly confuses the lines between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. The process of *anamnesis* also disconnects and reverses epistemic causal chains: while perceptual beliefs, also those in Tolkien's world, usually follow a certain pattern that begins with (inner or external) sensory stimulus and proceeds to belief-formation and knowledge, *anamnesis* works backwards by reigniting previously learned but forgotten a priori truths. This dual role of perception is, alongside the overall tendency of perceiving the immaterial and breaking the metaphysical hierarchies, the most significant epistemic feature formulated in the fourth chapter.

Because metaphysical and epistemic literary worlds form simultaneously, influencing one another and depending on each other, herein lie many possibilities for further inquiries: Tolkien's Eä, while often considered a fantasy world *par excellence*, represents one kind of cooperation between metaphysical and epistemic worldbuilding, a kind that is deeply influenced by Platonic and medieval currents. However, similar philosophical influences are by no means a requirement for applying the approach I have proposed to other worlds of fantasy – the method of examining a fictional world simultaneously as a fantasy world construction and as an epistemic whole always begins with the characteristics of each literary world, and the cooperation of the epistemic and the metaphysical evolves accordingly, resulting in different readings of how these two cooperate and what kind of philosophical commentaries they generate. Some of the examples introduced in this study, such as *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* to a degree share similar structures with Tolkien's legendarium, but epistemic analyses of a fantasy world that is structured very differently are likely to bring into light other kind of aspects and emphases. Furthermore, with respect to both Tolkien's legendarium and fantasy fiction in general, new aspects arise depending on which branches of Platonism are emphasised in the application of theories: Neoplatonic

tradition, for instance, would be a very fruitful direction for new readings and interpretations.

What my study hopefully has added to the vast and thorough tradition of Tolkien-studies is an account of Arda's elaborate, peculiar and deep epistemic system that has not received quite as much scholarly attention as it deserves: Tolkien's legendarium has righteously been much studied from viewpoints that combine metaphysical theories, fantasy worldbuilding and possible world semantics, but while Tolkien built – or sub-created – a vivid and detailed metaphysical whole, he also wrote an insightful commentary on the cooperation of perception and interpretation, imagination and reason, the material and the immaterial, knowledge and wisdom. These do not always cooperate flawlessly and without friction, but I argue that worlds of fantasy, such as the one Tolkien spent decades devising, are able to produce at least an imperfect image of the process of *anamnesis*, striving towards things once known but now lost.

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