Although much of the cave allegory of Republic VII is spent describing the philosopher's ascent out into the sunlight, we are also told of the corresponding descent (κατάβασις) back into the darkness. This second feature of the allegory raises a question about political obligation, one that has received considerable attention among commentators. What justification, they ask, does Plato have for requiring the philosopher to return to the cave?¹ Yet the descent also has an epistemological dimension in so far as it continues the process of philosophical education. The philosopher must come to see the contents of the cave in terms of what lies outside, and this is no easy process. At 518a1-3, Socrates distinguishes two kinds of blindness, one caused by the movement out of the darkness of the cave, the other by the return from light to darkness; and the philosopher who goes back into the cave, and learns to see the images as images, can only do so after getting used to the darkness again (520c1-6).

An essential aspect of descending is what I shall call 'revisitation.' On returning to the cave, the philosopher comes to see the objects he viewed as a prisoner from an entirely different perspective. Although he may revise and explain his former beliefs, we can use the term 'revisitation' to capture more specifically what is involved, viz., making a departure from one level of reality to another and then comparing the two, so as to see one as derivative upon the other.

It is important to note that revisitation is not a single process—for example, a one-off comparison between the inside of the cave and the outside. Instead, it is something that can happen between any two stages in the allegory. For example, as soon as one has turned towards the puppets, one is expected to think back and compare them with the shadows (515c4-d8). In fact there will be a cumulative series of revisitations: both the puppets and the shadows will be seen from the perspective of the objects outside the cave. The original shadows will be "re-revisited," as it were.

In this paper I wish to argue that revisitation plays an important, though complex role in the argument of the Republic itself, specifically in the defence of justice prompted by Glaucon at the beginning of book II. In section 1, I shall argue that a case of revisitation can be found by comparing Glaucon's challenge to justice at the beginning of book II with Socrates' defence of it at the end of book IV. But the question that will dominate this paper concerns what happens

to Socrates' argument thereafter: to what extent, if any, does he attempt to revisit the conclusion of book IV in the light of the metaphysics introduced from book V onwards? Answering this question will, among other things, enable us to see how far different sections of the Republic are meant to fit together to form a unified defence of justice.

I. Republic II-IV

At the beginning of book II, Glaucon takes up Thrasymachus' challenge and, though much more sympathetic to Socrates' position, tries to put the case against justice as forcefully as he can. The moral outlook that he presents had a wide and powerful appeal (358a3 & c8): justice is a compromise between the best case—doing injustice and getting away with it—and the worst—suffering injustice (358e3-359c6). Through the story of Gyges, he tries to show how attractive it would be to lead the life of injustice with impunity: anyone who had the power of a Gyges, but still acted justly, would be dismissed as a pitiable idiot (360d4-5). To clarify what is at issue, he describes two opposite characters (360e1-362c8): one who is completely unjust but expert at covering his tracks (thereby enjoying all the benefits of injustice with the rewards of justice), the other who is completely just but who suffers from a reputation for injustice. The challenge is to show why one would rather be the second person than the first.

Socrates then embarks upon an argument by redescription. First of all he sketches justice and the other virtues in the ideal state, before turning to the soul. From IV, 435e1 onwards, he argues for the tripartite division of the soul and then proceeds to define the virtues, reaching an account of justice by 442d5. This is analysed as a state of psychic harmony in which the three parts of the soul are in their natural order, no one interfering with the proper functions of the others. By contrast, the unjust soul is portrayed as suffering from psychic disorder and disease. Faced with this redescription of the two characters, Glaucon is persuaded to reverse his original order of preference (445a5-b4).

In the original challenge, both the just and the unjust characters had been described externally: Glaucon focused on the actions typically associated with each, and on this basis drew conclusions about their well-being and happiness. By taking us through the political and psychological theory of II-IV, Socrates shifts all the emphasis towards understanding the internal state of each character: justice and injustice are now defined in terms of psychic states; actions derive their claim to be just and unjust depending on which state of the soul they promote (443c9-444a2).

Socrates' argument involves something more specific than mere revision; it is a case of revisitation. Leaving behind Glaucon's emphasis on externals, Socrates directs our attention elsewhere, to within the soul, and then sets the external and internal perspectives in a relation to each other such that the former is now