

The Republic of Plato

– Rex M Heyworth PhD

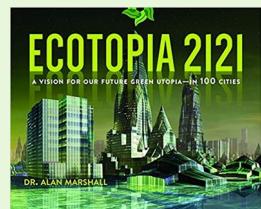


Have you ever wondered what the perfect society would be like? What it would be like to live in such a society? There are been many attempts to describe such a society.



Five hundred years ago, a powerful new word was unleashed upon the world when Thomas More published his book **Utopia**, about an island paradise far away from his troubled land (England). (His utopian island is depicted in the image on the left.) His utopia was a blend of social fantasy with a deep desire for a better world. His work was published in 1516 in Latin. He coined the word 'utopia' from the Greek ou-topos meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere'. But this was a pun – an almost identical Greek word eu-topos means 'a good place'.

Other utopias have been described both before and after this. A recent one, from 2016, is **Ecotopia 2121**, and it once again harnesses the power of the utopian imagination to confront current problems, among them climate change, and offer a radical, alternative vision for the future of our troubled planet.



But, for this project, we look at perhaps the earliest conception of a utopia. This is the **Republic** (c. 370-360 BC) by Plato, a philosopher in the days of ancient Greece.

Plato's conception of the ideal state is perhaps the first fully developed theory of politics which still has great influence today, some of which will be discussed in this project.



Contents

Topic	Page
Plato's Republic: An Overview	1
- Timeline	1, 2
Background to Greece and the Times	3
- Athens and Sparta	3
- The age of Pericles	4
- The Peloponnesian war (431 – 405 BC)	4
- Coups and counter-coups (411 – 403 BC)	5
Introduction to Plato the Man and his Life	5
- Socrates (c. 469 – 399 BC)	6
- The Academy	7
- Plato's visits to Sicily	7
Emergence of Philosophy	8
- Sophists and morality	9
Platonic philosophy: Dualism and the Theory of Forms	10
- Dualism – Plato's two worlds	10
- Dualistic view of man	11
- Dualism and knowledge	11
- Allegory: The Divided Line	11
Introduction to the book itself – the 'Republic'	13
- The <i>Republic</i> uses Dialogues	14
- Use of the Socratic Method (Question and Answer)	14
The use of Allegories and Myths	15
Why did Plato write the <i>Republic</i>?	16
Two related themes in the Republic	18
- Justice throughout the Republic	18
From where did Plato get his ideas for the ideal state?	19
- The perfect/ideal state: three classes in society	20
- Allegory of the metals / Division of labour	21
Education and Programme of Studies	22
- Basic and higher education / Censorship	23
The perfect/ideal individual: three parts to the individual soul	24
- The three parts of the soul: The myth of creation	25
Methods used to rule/control the ideal society	26
- 1. The use of deception, or the 'noble lie'	26
- It is not a 'lie'	27

- 2. Communal living	27
- Wives, children and families	27
The Theory of Forms/Knowledge	28
- The two worlds	29
- The Form of the Good	29
Allegory of the Sun	29
Allegory of the (Divided) Line	30
Allegory of the Cave	33
The Decline and Fall of the Ideal State	36
- Timocracy and the timocratic man	37
- Oligarchy (Plutocracy) and the oligarchic man	37
- Democracy and the democratic man	38
- Despotism and the despotic man	38
- Do societies actually decline in this way?	39
Immortality and the Myth of Er	40
The Influence of Plato's Republic over the Centuries	43
- Plato and rulers over the centuries	43
- Ancient Rome – the five good emperors	43
- Marcus Aurelius, Plato's philosopher-king	43
- The grandson of Louis XIV	44
- Frederick the Great	44
- Catherine the Great	45
- Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī / President Macron of France	46
- Plato's dualism and the development of Christianity	47
- Is Plato's Ideal State a Totalitarian State?	49
- One view: It is extremely totalitarian	51
- Another view: Yes, totalitarian but ...!	52
- Would the population in Plato's totalitarian state revolt? Would the state collapse?	53
- China 2018	54
- Was Plato right or wrong?	54
- Should we modify Plato?	55
Plato and Issues Today	56
- Plato's warning: Global warming will not be stopped	56
- Is Democracy making way for Oligarchy?	58
- A US oligarchy	58
- 'Noble lies' and wars in the 20th century	59
- Goering and 'noble lies' in World War II	59
- 'Noble lies' and the 'neocons' and the Iraq War	60

- 'Noble lies' and modern China (2018)	61
- Plato and genetic engineering, CRISPR and eugenics	62
- Eugenics in Germany	63
- CRISPR	63
- Plato and plumbers, or, are Plato and philosophy for everyone?	64
- Plato's ideal state and the world of insects	65
A final thought	67
Summary: Main Points	68
Website References	72
Appendix: The Republic of Plato (Cornford's translation): Contents	78

Plato's *Republic*: An Overview

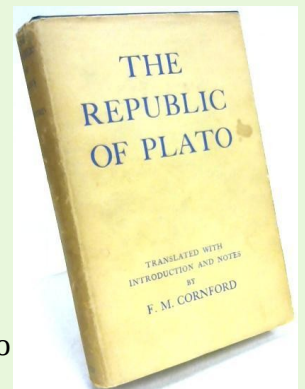
Thirty-five dialogues (books) have traditionally been ascribed to Plato. Of these, the *Republic* is his best-known work, and has proven to be one of the world's most influential works of philosophy and political theory, both intellectually and historically.

An overall theme in the *Republic* is to define justice and how it should be the basis of the ideal society, for both the rulers and the citizens of this society.

Plato's philosophy has had a profound effect throughout history. This includes the development of Christianity, competing forms of government such as democracy and totalitarianism, and also eugenics. It has also had an effect on rulers, from Roman emperors to those of today. These are discussed later in the article.

With the *Republic*, Plato is often thought to be the ideal author from whom people should receive their introduction to philosophy. In his book, readers are not presented with fully worked out ideas that need no further exploration or development; instead, Plato presents key ideas with suggestions and problems about how those ideas might be deployed. Readers are drawn into thinking for themselves about the issues raised. Hopefully this will be the case with the ideas and issues presented in this project.

My introduction to the *Republic*: I was first introduced to the *Republic* while at university many years ago. The work I studied was '*The Republic of Plato*', a translation by Francis MacDonald Cornford. It is also the translation I refer to in this project. The picture shows the cover of Cornford's book.



In doing this project, I realised just how superficial my introduction was. In doing this project, I essentially had to start from scratch. That included reading the book itself (*very tough going!*). What was going to occupy me for weeks has turned out to be many months as I kept raising questions and looking for answers.

Actual title of the book: The book was originally written in ancient Greek (which is different from modern Greek). But the English title of Plato's work seems to depend on the translator or the commentator. So one sees, for example, *Republic*, *The Republic*, *The Republic of Plato*. I will refer to it simply as the *Republic*.

Timeline

Plato's *Republic* was written at a very tumultuous time in ancient Greece and in order to fully appreciate it, one needs some understanding of the times. The timeline on the next page shows key people and events both during Plato's lifetime as well as before and after.

A note on Greek calendars and dates

The ancient Greeks *did* have calendars, but not as we know them today. In fact, they had many calendars constructed for different purposes. They had both lunar and solar calendars. Also, Greek years ran from summer to summer (unlike our year). So, when using our modern calendar, historians often use a slash (/) for years to indicate that part of a year was before/after the year in our modern calendar. Thus historians

render the first year of the first Olympic Games as 776/5 BC and the birth of Plato as 428/427 BC. For simplicity, I do not use slashes in the timeline.

The pictures shows Greek runners and wrestlers at an Olympic Games.



For more on Greek calendars, here is one useful site:

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/833/the-athenian-calendar/>

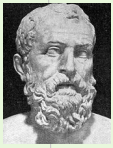
Timeline (BC)

1100 BC 1000 900 800 700 600 500 400 300



— [1091-1070] King Codrus (supposed ancestor of Plato)

• [~800] Sparta founded



Solon (another ancestor of Plato) [638-558] —

Athens founded (by Solon) [594] •

[6th century BC: emergence of philosophy]



Construction of Parthenon started [447] •



Pericles [495-429] —

Peloponnesian war [431-405] —

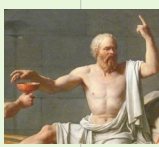
Plato born [428] •

The '5000' [411] •

Democracy restored in Athens [410] •

Athens loses was to Sparta [~405] •

Oligarchic reaction against democratic leaders (the 'Thirty') [404] •



Socrates executed; Plato and friends retire to Megara [399] •

Plato sets up the Academy [387] •

The *Republic* written [~370-360] —

Plato's three visits to Sicily/Syracuse [388, 367, 361] •••

Plato dies [348] •



Alexander the Great [356-323] —

Background to Greece and the Times

The *Republic* is set in the times of ancient Greece. The Greeks of those times were a people living mainly in small *city-states* scattered around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. **Athens** was the most prominent of these city-states. And for the purposes of our discussion we must distinguish **Sparta**, another city state in the south in the Peloponnesian peninsula. (The *Peloponnese* or *Peloponnesus* is the geographic region in southern Greece – see green circle on map).

The map below shows the Greek city-states in about 500 BC. The *Peloponnese* is the area in the green circle. Other places that will be referred to are Miletus (in what is now Turkey), and Syracuse in Sicily.



Athens and Sparta

The two most well known city-states during this period were also rivals: Athens and Sparta.

Athens: The Athenian democracy was reformed by **King Solon** in 594 BC. Solon wanted even the poor to take part in the Athenian government. He was the author of the city's first constitution and is often credited with having laid the foundations for Athenian democracy by strengthening the rule of law (rather than the law of a ruler). After completing his work of reform, Solon left the country! Athenians then began fighting amongst themselves again and for two years the city was a leaderless anarchy. This cycle of stability and turmoil tended to be a feature of Athens was to be repeated many times over the years. The image (above right) is a depiction of Solon as the wise lawgiver of Athens.



Sparta: Founded c. 800 BC. It was a very militaristic society. After a war (with Messinia, a region in the south-west of the *Peloponnese*) in the late 8th century BC, the Spartans subjugated the entire population of Messinia as helots (slaves) who were forced to work the land. The



Spartans created a society that would protect themselves not just from external enemies but also from a helot revolt from within. Men lived in barracks and male children were taken from their mothers at a young age to learn how to serve the state, meaning the art of warfare. Unhealthy children were killed or left to die. Life had one purpose: to defend the state. Sparta was an extreme totalitarian state; they feared democracy. The image (above right) is a depiction of Spartan soldiers

Plato's connection with Athens and Sparta

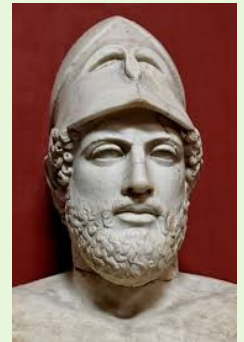
Ancient sources claim that Plato's father, Ariston, was a descendant of **King Codrus**, the last in a line of semi-mythical Kings of Athens and an ancient exemplar of patriotism and self-sacrifice. The image (right) is a depiction of Codrus on a cup.



Likewise, Plato's mother, Perictione, is supposed to have descended from **King Solon**. It does seem to enhance a person's credentials if they have such famous links (and this is true for many others besides Plato).

The age of Pericles

Pericles was a ruler who dominated Athens from 461 to 429 BC and this period is sometimes called the **Age of Pericles**. Pericles had three goals: to strengthen Athenian democracy, to hold and strengthen the empire, and to glorify Athens. He also introduced *direct* democracy, which was a concept in which citizens ruled directly and *without* representatives, that is, *all* citizens took part in the making of decisions. The period in Athens from 461 to 429 BC, when Pericles died, is often called the '**golden age of democracy**'. The image (right) is of a bust of Pericles.



This is how democracy in ancient Greece worked: Athenian population = 250 000. Number of adult males eligible to vote = 43 000. Participation was direct – all *men* voted on all issues of government. Only adult male citizens of Athens were eligible to participate (so women, non-citizens and slaves were ineligible – and slaves made up about 25% of the Athenian population in the time of Plato).

Pericles was also the mastermind behind the Parthenon (construction started in 447 BC; pictured right as it is now).



Turmoil breaks out: Towards the end of the 'Pericles' century, turmoil breaks out. In 431 BC, the [Peloponnesian war](#) between Athens and Sparta began. Then, two years later, in 429 BC, there was a plague which ravaged Athens killing one-third of the population, including Pericles.

The Peloponnesian war (431 – 405 BC)

The war resulted from a struggle between Athens and Sparta, and especially their business interests for commercial supremacy. It was the thirst for power and territory, in both Athens and Sparta, and their jealousy that brought about the Peloponnesian war. Sparta declared war on Athens in 431 BC and the war lasted for 26 years.

Early on, the two sides signed a treaty only to be broken by the Athenians a few years later in 415 BC

when, in an attempt to recoup losses in the war, it launched a naval expedition to Syracuse in Sicily (see map again page 3), the richest island in the Mediterranean, which Athens had ruled but had been lost to Sparta. The attempt failed disastrously, and the war continued again until 405 BC. Sparta eventually won and Athens lost her empire to Sparta but the war left both Athens and Sparta mere shadows of their former selves.

The map (right) gives information about the war, the extent of the war (there was fighting in many places) together with the years and locations of important victories.



Coups and counter-coups (411 – 403 BC)

Because of the war, Athens was in turmoil and very unstable. This offered the opportunity for disgruntled groups to take control of the government.

411-410 BC: Several years before the war finished, there was a coup by a group known as the **Four Hundred**, which overthrew the democratic government of Athens and replaced it with an **oligarchy** (that is, a government run by only a few, such as the wealthy or nobility). After ruling for only four months, the Four Hundred were replaced with a larger body of **5000**, chosen from the citizens of Athens, whose task was to redraft the Athenian constitution. Soon after, in 410 BC, democracy was restored.

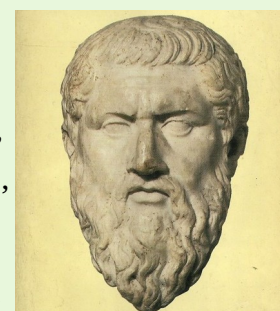
404 BC: Just after the Peloponnesian War ended, Athenians didn't have much faith in the restored **democracy** and a group of wealthy pro-Spartan citizens (including an uncle and cousin of Plato) known as the **Thirty**, in a reaction against the misconduct of the war by democratic leaders, seized control, exiled democrats and their supporters, and briefly turned Athens into another **oligarchy** marked with brutal and repressive actions.

403 BC: After just eight months in power (or 18 months, depending on sources), the thirty were overthrown and superseded by the democrats who had been exiled, and another **democracy** (of a sort) restored. As a result of the Thirty's actions during their rule, the Athenians abandoned even entertaining the idea of oligarchic rule for the next 40 years.

Introduction to Plato the Man and his Life

Plato was born in Athens in 428/7 BC to an aristocratic family and died at the age of 80 or 81 in 348/7 BC. As mentioned above, ancient sources claim that his father, Ariston, was a descendant of Codrus, the last king of Athens, and his mother, Perictione, a descendant of Solon. Plato had two brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, and they appear as two of the main characters in the *Republic*.

Plato as a boy would have known little save war and the rumours of war, revolution



and the rumours of revolution and living through the coups and counter coups discussed above (check the dates!). All his childhood and youth were spent under the shadow of the Peloponnesian War. As a child of 12, Plato had seen the Athenian fleet set sail on the disastrous expedition against Syracuse (416 BC), and he was 23 when Athens lost her empire to Sparta in about 405 BC.

Because of his noble birth and intellectual talents, young Plato could have had fine prospects in Athenian politics. The political upheavals of his youth *did* attract him to the public sphere. But this was not to happen. One reason was the coup by the 'Thirty'. He had mixed feelings about the takeover as he was related to members of the Thirty. In addition, his growing rational outlook made him critical of the government for its tyrannical leanings and instability. He was active in supporting the restoration of democracy in 403 BC, when he was aged about 23, but that system too proved itself less than perfect, especially in its treatment of Socrates (see next).

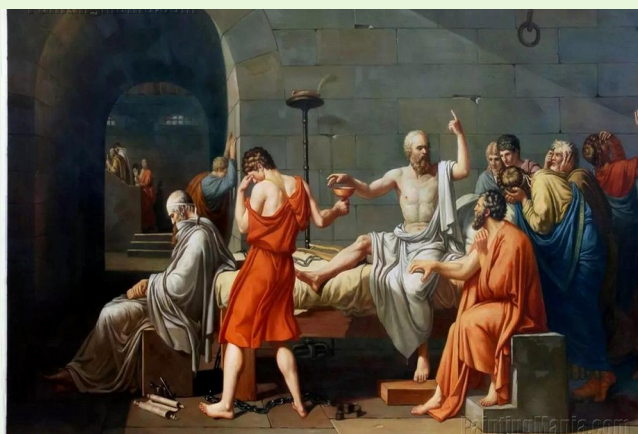
Socrates (c. 469 – 399 BC)

Socrates was a Greek (Athenian) philosopher credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy. An enigmatic figure, he made no writings, and is known chiefly through the accounts of classical writers writing after his lifetime, particularly Plato. Socrates was the one man in Athens in those distracting days of war and revolution, who stood aloof from an active life to inquire, with anyone who cared to talk with him, what men should live for.

Plato became attracted to Socrates. Under his influence, Plato's thought, from first to last, was chiefly bent on the question of how society could be shaped so that man might realise the best that is in him. This is, above all, the theme of the *Republic*.

But in 399 BC, those who had just recently restored democracy, accused Socrates of the charge of 'not believing in the gods of Athens and corrupting the youth of Athens'. Socrates was found guilty by a narrow margin and sentenced to die by drinking the poison hemlock. Socrates used his death as a final lesson for his pupils; rather than fleeing if the opportunity arises, face it calmly.

The image (right) is an oil painting of 1787 depicting the death of Socrates. However, it apparently contains many historical inaccuracies!



After Socrates' death, Plato and his closest friends withdrew to Megara (a town west of Athens), and resolved to defend his memory and continue his work. Plato began to write imaginary conversations, showing how very far Socrates' philosophy had been from 'corrupting the young men'. The death of Socrates was the last straw for Plato: when aged about 40 (388 BC), he finally decided *not* to be drawn into an active/political life.

From then on, Plato devoted himself to continuing the work of his teacher. He spent years travelling around the Mediterranean, teaching and learning. Among the places he visited was Sicily, the centre of Pythagorean thought, which impressed him a lot.

The Academy

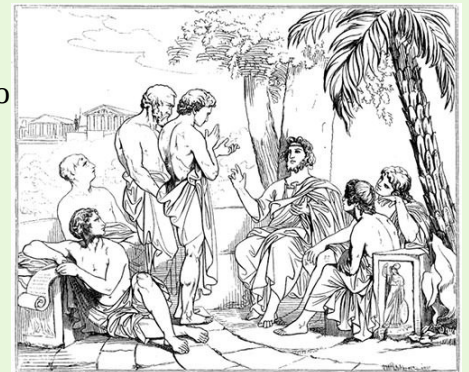
In 387 BC, at the age of about 40, Plato resettled in Athens. In that year (or in 385 BC depending on the source), he founded the *Academy*, probably the first institution of its kind, and the model for the Western university, and from which we get the word 'academic'. The school owed its name to the grove of a hero *Academos* in the garden in Athens where it was built. The pictures above show the site of the Academy and some of the ruins.



Plato and other teachers instructed students, which included the sons (and daughters!) of some of the most distinguished families in Greece and from all over the Mediterranean, in various subjects including philosophy, politics, and the natural and mathematical sciences.

Although the *Academy* was *not* meant to prepare students for any sort of profession, such as politics, law, or medicine, the topics taught there were not divorced from the larger world. Members of the *Academy* were invited by various cities to aid in the development of new constitutions and Plato hoped that they would carry back with them to their homes the revolutionary creed of the *Academy*.

Plato spent the rest of his life as the director of studies at the *Academy*, although it is not at all clear that he himself taught there. He is thought to have written *The Republic* there in around 380 BC. The most famous student of the *Academy* during this time was the philosopher Aristotle who entered at the age of 17 and remained until Plato's death 20 years later. The picture (right) is a depiction of Plato teaching in his academy (or at least in its grounds!).



As Plato no longer sought a life in politics, he could never hope to rule Athens. But he could aspire, as president of the first university, to stimulate the possible future rulers of other states. At the same time, he would continue to set forth, in his writings, his own development of the Socratic philosophy in a form that would reach the educated public throughout the Greek world and attract more pupils to the *Academy*.

The usual suggestion is that the *Academy* lasted in one form or another until AD 527, when it was disbanded, after 912 years in total (or 914 years, depending on when it was founded). It had fallen foul of the Christian Roman emperor Justinian who claimed it was a pagan establishment and closed it down. Death penalties were issued and the philosophers fled. But historians argue about the accuracy of this account.

Plato's visits to Sicily

From 385 BC until his death in 347 BC, Plato only left the *Academy* three times, each time to visit Sicily. What drew him away from his school was the possibility of putting into practice the political theory he outlined in the *Republic* for the ideal ruler.

First visit 388 BC: Plato first visited Syracuse (in Sicily – see map again) in 388 BC while it was under the rule of a tyrant named Dionysius I. During this first trip, Dion, his brother (some sources say brother-in-law), became one of Plato's disciples, but the tyrant himself turned against Plato. It is probable that Plato included several of the (bad) traits of Dionysius I in his portrait of a despot (the worst kind of ruler) when he wrote the *Republic*.

Second visit 367 BC: Dionysius I, the tyrant of Syracuse, died. He was to be succeeded by Dionysius II, the son of Dion, in 366 BC. On the death of the tyrant, Dion had immediately sent for his teacher Plato in the hope of guiding Dionysius II to become a wise and just ruler. But the visit turned out to be a failure. Dionysius II remained unconvinced that the vigorous study of mathematics and philosophy, which Plato's instruction required, would be the best preparation for his rule though Plato still attempted to advise the young ruler anyway.

Third and final visit 361 BC: Plato, now aged about 67, was, perhaps surprisingly, invited back to Sicily by Dion, who had been, for some time, attempting to turn the king into a philosopher-king. Again Plato was not successful. So Plato – and the world – lost its chance to test the first philosopher-king ruling an ideal state.

A great Plato movie!

These three visits of Plato to Syracuse were not as straight-forward as they might seem. There were lots of intrigues, murders, assassinations and even a naval invasion. Plato himself fell under suspicion of seeking to overthrow Dionysius II during the third visit, and had to be spirited out of Syracuse in fear for his life. (This would make a great movie!). For some more on his visits to Sicily, go to:

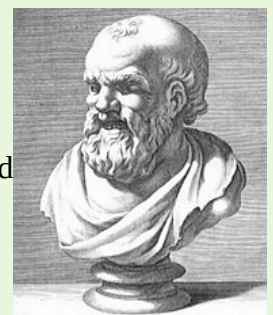
<http://www.bestofsicily.com/mag/art407.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh_Letter

Emergence of Philosophy

The word *philosophy* originally meant 'curiosity', the desire for fresh experience.

Philosophy first emerged in the 6th century BC in the Greek city of Miletus, situated on the western coast of what is now Turkey (see map again). The first **philosophers** focused on questions of natural science, trying to explain the world that they observed around them in terms of a few simple principles. One of these philosophers was Democritus (c. 460 – c. 370 BC), depicted in the bust, right) who gave the world the idea of the atom, and whose very long life overlapped with that of Plato, who is said to have disliked Democritus!).



Initially, philosophers gave little attention to issues in ethics and politics. **Poets** (such as Homer), *not* the philosophers, addressed the values of society.

In the 5th century BC, two tremendous political upheavals cast traditional Greek values into question and thrust issues of ethics from the poets into the hands of the philosophers:

1. The **Peloponnesian War**, which, as already mentioned, Athens finally lost. The ravages of war cast doubt on the martial virtues promoted by the ancient poets (such as Homer), and the growth of

democracies, especially in Athens, called for new civic virtue: the ability to speak persuasively in the assemblies and law courts became more valuable than warcraft.

2. The emergence of **Sophists**. These were itinerant teachers who would offer instruction in nearly any subject if the student was willing and able to pay a fee. Their focus was on *rhetorical* skills, and they emphasised the primacy of persuasiveness over truth. Reduced to its simplest terms, rhetoric means the art of persuading a crowd that a certain course of action is the right one to take, or a certain person has the right on his side, even if the orator doesn't know what is right.

Sophists and morality

The Sophists exploited the new uncertainty about traditional moral values. There was no cohesive school of Sophism, and the views of teachers varied widely. What we know of their thought indicates that they frequently claimed that whether an action is right or wrong is less important than whether or not it benefits the interests of the agent.

Many of the sophists argued that there were no such things as right and wrong and that objective moral standards did not exist. They claimed that morality is a convention imposed by the rulers of societies upon their subjects. In the *Republic*, the Sophist *Thrasymachus* declares that immorality is a *virtue* because it enables us to advance in the competition of life. In another work by Plato, the *Gorgias*, an even stronger view is attributed to a man named *Callicles*; he claims that conventional morality is unjust because it attempts to deprive the strong of their natural right to exploit the weak; to get more than one's equal share of the world's advantages is the natural right of the strong man. *Callicles* gives us the example of the selfishness that always governs international relations.

While some Sophists were adamant in their refusal of such doctrines, we have reason to believe that the trend toward a belief in **justice** as the '*interest of the stronger*' was strong among Sophists. And justice, which Plato believes is necessary for his ideal state, is a major theme of the *Republic*.

A little more on Thrasymachus: Thrasymachus, as mentioned, was a sophist. His name means 'rash fighter'. In the conversations in the *Republic*, Plato seems particularly eager to engage Thrasymachus' arguments, and the two nearly reduce a philosophical dialogue to a petty quarrel (Chapter III in Cornford's translation). Thrasymachus' argument is that might makes right. It is clear, from the outset of their conversation, that Plato and Thrasymachus share a mutual dislike for one another. More about Thrasymachus later!

Socrates and morality

And now to the times of Socrates' and Plato's – the late 5th century and early 4th century BC.

With the sophists and their moral climate in Athenian culture, **Socrates** was motivated by a desire to combat what he viewed as forces creeping in against morality. He was also disturbed by what he perceived to be the moral complacency of the Athenian citizens; he watched with concern as they lived their lives in a selfish, unreflective haze, focused on gaining and increasing their own power and using the theories of the Sophists to justify their attitude.

Socrates' solution was to act as a '*gadfly*', stinging his fellow citizens into moral self-examination. He

used to stand in the marketplace daily, trying to engage anyone he could in conversation. He would force everyone he encountered to reflect on their lives and their beliefs as, he declared, ‘*the unexamined life is not worth living*’ (this is a famous quote of Socrates).

A gadfly

A gadfly is any kind of fly that annoys and irritates livestock. Thus, a person who annoys or criticises others, especially the authorities, in order to provoke them into action by posing novel, potentially upsetting questions is an example of a gadfly. The term is originally associated with Socrates, in his defence when on trial for his life.



Plato takes over – a new philosophy

Plato took over this mission when Socrates died. He too wanted to combat immorality and selfishness, which were widespread. He also wanted to combat the Sophists’ other sceptical claim: their avowal that there is no such thing as objective truth, no possibility of objective knowledge. We look at Plato’s philosophy next.

Platonic philosophy: Dualism and the Theory of Forms

Initial notes: 1. Two key words to keep in mind about Plato’s philosophy are **dualism** and **Forms** [the word **F**orms is almost always capitalised.] 2. The Theory of Forms is also known as The Theory of Knowledge.

Dualism – Plato’s two worlds

Plato’s philosophy is *dualistic* in nature (*dual* = two). Dualism means the division of something into two opposed ideas. For example, *mind-matter*, *heaven-hell*, *soul-body*, *spiritual-secular* (though it can be difficult to give a word for the original single idea).

Plato’s dualism separates the cosmos/universe into *two* worlds:

- 1) the **visible world**, the world of matter/objects, that is, the everyday physical world around us, and
- 2) an **invisible world**, which consists of ideas (concepts, as would call them today), which Plato called **Forms**. However, rather than using the term ‘concept’, modern translators and critics prefer to stick with the term Form.

In the *Republic*, uses the example of the concept of Beauty to explain what he means by a Form. But it is easier for us to understand if we use an everyday object such as a chair. There are many different kinds of chairs in the visible world around us. But the idea/concept/Form of a chair is the things common to *all* chairs. Unlike chairs in the visible world, which we can see, the Form of a chair exists separately in the invisible world and so we never see. The pictures are of a chair popular in the time of Plato (left) and a modern reconstruction (right).



For Plato, in contrast to how we probably think, the invisible world is actually more real than the visible/physical world. Unlike this visible/physical world and the objects in it (such as chairs) which are impermanent and always changing, the invisible world of concepts/Forms (such as the concept of a chair) is eternal and changeless and yes, he says, divine.

Further, Plato believes the visible world to be merely a replica/copy of the invisible world of the Forms and so is inferior. This is key in Plato's theory.

Dualistic view of man

Plato's dualistic view of the cosmos leads to a *dualistic view of man* which has two opposing components, a *body* and a *soul* (or mind). And, according to Plato, the body is basically evil and a hindrance to the soul and that the soul/mind, unlike the body which can decay, is eternal and can continue to exist without the body after death and is immortal. (Plato's views on the soul were very influential, and were combined with the Christian doctrine of a soul-body division as this emerged 2000 years ago. See page 47.)

The mind-body problem: Plato's dualism seems to make a person with both a mind and a body, essentially two *independent* things connected together. But modern work on the brain suggests that the mind is very *dependent* on the brain to function, and in the end, to exist at all. Damage to certain parts of the brain can make someone unable to think. So alterations in the body *can* affect the essential property of the mind; so the mind *cannot* be independent of the body.

Also, in modern cognitive psychology, when we see different kinds of chairs, our minds abstract/remove the common factors to create the concept of a chair which is then stored in the physical brain, and presumably dies with the body if there is no independent and permanent, eternal soul as Plato and religions would claim. So, on this view, ideas exist as concepts only in human minds.

But because of the modern conception of an 'idea' as a kind of 'thought' which is generated in a person's *mind*, this is why modern translators and critics of Plato prefer his term *Form*.

Dualism and knowledge

Plato also argues that there are *two* kinds of knowledge.

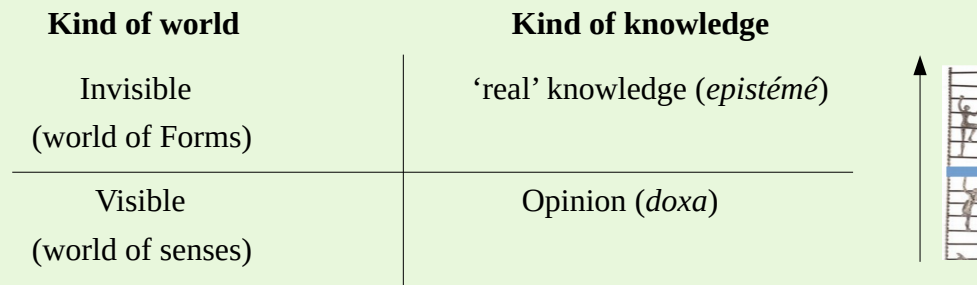
- 1) Knowledge that is *real* (the Greek word is *epistémê*), is infallible and which is part of his invisible world. This is knowledge of the Forms.
- 2) Knowledge that is *not* actually real and is the kind of knowledge most of we poor earthlings have in this visible world. Plato calls this kind of knowledge as opinion (*doxa*, the Greek word translated as 'belief' or 'opinion').

According to Plato, the only people who are able to acquire this 'real' knowledge of the Forms are those who will become the rulers (called philosopher-kings) in his ideal state. Later in this article (page 22ff.), we learn more about the kind of education they need to have in order to get this knowledge.

Allegory: The divided line

To help his readers understand more easily the idea of two worlds and two kinds of knowledge, Plato gives an allegory known as the **Divided Line** (or often just the **Line**). We will look at this allegory (and other allegories, which Plato uses in the *Republic*), in greater detail later (page 30ff.) but here is the basic

idea of the divided line:



You can see a horizontal line divided by a vertical line – hence the name of the allegory ‘the *divided* line’. The invisible world is deliberately put in the top half as it is the ‘higher or superior’ world. The arrow shows the direction we need to move in order to gain ‘real’ knowledge, that is, from the lower, inferior, worldly knowledge to the superior, eternal knowledge.

Also, look at *my* analogy of a ladder (Plato did not use a ladder), which a person must climb from the lower to the higher level. Halfway up there is an obstacle which, as we will learn more about later, makes the transition to the to part of the ladder difficult, just as it will be difficult for a person to move from the lower level of knowledge (*doxa*) to the higher level of real knowledge (*epistémé*).

Well, that is some background that needs to be known in order to comprehend the *Republic*. I will just emphasise two points about Plato, already commented on, that had a direct impact on how he proposed his ideal state:

1. Plato was an *aristocratic* and he held the strong belief that only aristocrats are fit to be rulers.
2. Plato was very *anti-democratic*, partly a result of what he lived through, and especially as it was democrats who executed Socrates, his teacher. As a result, many commentators believe his ideal state to be, not just anti-democratic, but totalitarian in nature.

More – much more – about this later.

So now to the *Republic* itself.

Introduction to the book itself – the ‘Republic’

- **Plato’s original works:** Plato did not write books as we know them today, that is, on paper and with as many pages as required. In Plato’s time, books were written on papyrus and formed into rolls. The *Republic* consisted of 10 such papyrus rolls, which was a large work in those days. The picture (right) shows an ancient Greek papyrus roll. In modern books, this traditional division into 10 ‘books’ (papyrus rolls) has been discarded as an accidental expedient of ancient book production. The *Republic* is a large work consisting of ten books.



- **Numbering of pages:** Each papyrus roll was a single roll and so did not need ‘page’ numbers as modern books do. But modern translations of Plato are just one book of course. They have conventional, modern page numbers. But they also include page numbers from a Renaissance edition of Plato’s works published in Geneva in 1578 AD by a famed printer and humanist of the time named Henri Estienne (1528 – 1598), also known by the Latin version of his name: Stephanus (pictured, right). He numbered *all* of Plato’s works, and not just the *Republic*, as if they were all just one very long book. So Page 1 of modern translations of the *Republic* is also numbered as 327, which is the page number given by Stephanus (meaning of course, that the Republic was not the first book in Stephanus’ list of Plato’s works). Also included, in Roman numbers, are the numbers of the papyrus rolls, so the first page of the first roll of Stephanus’ *Republic* is i 327 and the last number page is x. 620 where i is for Plato’s first roll and x is for his tenth and last roll.



- **Difficulty reading the book in English:** Most of us cannot read ancient Greek so need an English translation. Some authors translate almost word for word from ancient Greek to English. This often makes the English misleading, tedious, silly, and very difficult to understand especially as the meanings of many words such as *music*, *gymnastic*, *virtue* and *philosophy* have changed over time. Further, Plato made use of the Question and Answer method (see below), which for the modern reader becomes formal and far more tedious than just reading prose. Even Plato himself, in his later works, came close to abandoning it. The Cornford translation I have is written for modern readers and omits nearly all of the Question and Answer format used by Plato, using prose instead. Still, it is still hard going and I never actually finished reading it! Instead, I relied heavily on the summaries which Cornford gives at the beginning of each chapter. His book also includes Plato’s papyrus roll numbers (i – x) plus the Stephanus numbers (327 to 620). Thus page 142 of Cornford’s book also has ‘iv 445’ meaning Plato’s fourth roll and the Stephanus number.

In the appendix to this article (page 78), I have included the contents of Cornford’s book where you can see the chapters in his book, Plato’s book/papyrus roll number (Roman numerals) and the Stephanus page numbers. Note that in Cornford’s translation, his chapter numbers do not match Plato’s 10 papyrus rolls as he split up the papyrus rolls into chapters that make more sense to us.

Now, some more background before going into specific details about the *Republic*.

The Republic uses Dialogues

Most of Plato's writings are **dialogues** (conversations) in which discussions between people are presented – 'debates' would, in some cases, also be an appropriate word. We are used to narrative forms of writing in which lots of description takes place with dialogue punctuating the action. Plato gives very little description, and when he does it is usually through someone else's words. This can be disconcerting to modern readers.

Most of his dialogues have **Socrates** as the central figure. Socrates was Plato's teacher, but he himself never wrote anything. Even though the *Republic* is written as a dialogue with Socrates as the main character, it is actually Plato presenting his own ideas, using Socrates as his mouthpiece.

The participants in the dialogues/conversations/debates are friends or acquaintances of the central speaker, Socrates (that is of Plato), and they conduct their conversations in the house of one of the participants. The dialogue in the *Republic* takes place in Cephalus' house; Cephalus is an older man, a wealthy and retired merchant. Many of the characters in the discussions are real historical figures.

The main argument advanced in this dialogue – the *Republic* – is Plato's attempt to outline a possible and realistic policy for securing an ideal society, by means of the to-and-fro arguments of the characters in the dialogue.

Why did Plato use Socrates as his mouthpiece?

So why doesn't Plato just say what he thinks and write his opinions in his own name? This is one of the big topics in discussions of Plato's works. The general belief is that Plato went through a transition. In his earlier works, he reflected Socrates' own opinions and in some cases might have reported what Socrates actually said, particularly, as we have mentioned, Socrates never wrote anything. In later works, Plato took over and used the Socrates character as a mouthpiece for his own opinions. This is the case in the *Republic*. But one has to be careful when reading it and remember that although the name of Socrates is always used in the conversations, it is actually Plato expressing his own views.

Use of the Socratic Method (Question and Answer)

Socrates' (the real Socrates!) method of engaging conversations with his fellow citizens has come to be known in history as the **Socratic Dialectic** or the **Socratic Method**, and its method of pursuing a given truth is still adopted by many teachers to the



present day. It is the method that Plato adopted for the *Republic* and for all of his other dialogues. It involves the use of Question and Answer to try and get to a truth, a correct answer or a satisfactory conclusion rather than passively listening to a teacher.

(It is also *my* preferred method for teaching, though I was never as rigorous as Socrates and Plato,

especially in order to save time and to save classes from boredom.)

Socrates' (and Plato's) method of opening a dialogue is in almost every instance to pose a question of 'meaning' (that is, to ask for a definition of a term for the sake of forming up a logical argument). For example, Socrates might ask at the outset of a dialogue: "*If you claim to be an honest man, how would you define honesty?*" Or he might ask a person who claimed to be virtuous for a *definition* of virtue, or a person who claimed to be courageous for a *definition* of courage. And then Socrates might ask for *examples* of courageous, virtuous, or honest behaviour; or he might ask for *analogues* (things similar) to those things.

In this way, Socrates (again the real Socrates!) conversed with the young men of Athens, young men who were apparently disenchanted with their teachers (the Sophists, mentioned earlier) whom their parents had hired and who apparently did not know as much as Socrates knew.

Socrates also taught that politicians claimed to serve justice and to sit in judgment on their fellow citizens when at the same time those same politicians and 'leaders' of the state could not even define justice and might, in fact, be said to be culpable (guilty) of certain injustices perpetrated against their fellow citizens. How, Socrates asked, can any man claim to serve justice when that same man cannot even define justice? This question of justice is central to the *Republic* and is still relevant in the 21st century.

The use of Allegories and Myths

Besides Question and Answer, Plato uses allegories and myths to help readers understand ideas he is trying to get across.

An **allegory** is a story, poem, or even a painting in which the characters and events are symbols of something else. Allegories are often moral, religious, or political (taken from Collins dictionary). (Synonyms: parable, analogy, metaphor, symbol, emblem, story, tale, myth, legend, saga, fable.)

A **myth** is a story (often ancient) that explains some phenomenon or belief in a way that helps us to understand an underlying truth more easily. (Synonyms: story, folk story/tale, legend, fable, saga, allegory, tradition, parable (much like the parables in the New Testament).

All together there are six analogies and one myth in the *Republic*. They are:

- **Allegories:** metals, ship at sea, beast, sun, (divided) line and the cave.
- **Myth:** The myth of Er.

At this point, in order to give the reader an idea of these, we will comment briefly on the allegory of the **beast**. In this allegory, people are described as being like a powerful and savage **beast** which lets itself be handled by its keepers provided they study 'its moods and wants' and do all they can to humour it. There is, we shall see, a connection between this image of a democratic population being like 'beasts' and the 'handlers/beast's keeper' as the rulers/government who pander to the wishes and desires of the population. This myth reflects Plato's pessimism about democratic government and the ability of the human race to govern itself. The allegory could also be of a parent (handler) giving in to a mad child (beast)!

More on the allegories and myths as appropriate.

Why did Plato write the Republic?

Most city-states of ancient Greece in the times before and during Plato's lifetime were either *oligarchies* or *democracies* and many alternated through a series of revolutions between these two forms of class dictatorship, such as in Athens as we saw earlier (page 5).

In the *oligarchies* of the time, political power was held by an alliance of landowners and merchants with the support of the farmers and peasants.

In the *democracies*, the leaders of the town proletariat (that is, the working class or lower class) moulded policy with the uneasy support of certain commercial interests.

In both, the opposition was ruthlessly fleeced. The effect of the Peloponnesian war had been to intensify the political struggle. Defeat in war brought revolution in Athens and the establishment of the terror of the 'Thirty', an oligarchic group of aristocrats. Plato was just 24 when this happened. Until then, Plato had thought that 'gentlemen' (aristocrats) could rule justly. Now he realised that 'gentlemen' could behave worse than the proletariat.

In spite of problems with the oligarchic 'Thirty', Plato remained an aristocrat, and had a profound contempt for the working population, convinced that the peasant, the craftsman, and the shopkeeper were incapable of political responsibility. Then there was the death of Socrates (399 BC) and because it could happen under a moderate democracy, it disturbed him profoundly.

As Plato was an aristocrat, democracy was only another name for corruption and often mob rule. He believed Athenian democracy to be inherently flawed. He had lived through civil strife as a result of democracy in Athens and believed that if human societies sought *democratically* to decide what is the best thing to do, there would be no end of such strife and trouble. To show why, he gives us an allegory of a *ship at sea* (or *Ship of Fools*) as a picture of Athenian democracy.

The picture (right) is of a Ship of Fools woodcut of 1494.



The allegory of the ship at sea

“The owner of the ship is “a bit deaf and short-sighted” and ignorant of navigation. All of the crew on the ship quarrel over who should be captain, though they know nothing about navigation or any knowledge of how to steer ships. Whoever is chosen by the owner is called a ‘captain’ and ‘one who knows ships’. Anyone else is called ‘useless’. Further, this ‘captain’ will not risk popular disfavour by doing things that might make the others uncomfortable. His position depends on doing whatever keeps them happy, even if there are good reasons for not doing it.”

In this analogy, the *ship* is the city or government of Athens. The *crew* are the politicians in Athens; no one has any idea that there is real knowledge to be had, a run the city (let alone a ship!). The *owner of the ship* represents the people of Athens who have no idea how to choose the best person to rule. The *captain*

is the one from the crew (politicians) chosen by the Athenian people. Those deemed ‘useless’ correspond to the few good philosophers who truly know how to run things.

The ship’s captain is also the savage beast in the myth of the beast, who lets itself be handled by its keepers, those who chose him (the owner). He represents the democratic politicians as panderers (as described above).

If not an oligarchy or a democracy, what then?

Plato, along with others, believed that the State could only prosper if law and order and political power were granted to an *élite* of men (or women) who were to be specially trained for the task of using political power correctly. But who?

The *oligarchs* regarded government as the perquisite of wealth, the *democrats* of citizenship, and so under both, the government was selected for reasons which had little to do with their capacity for ruling.

Plato, being an aristocrat, believed that government was the perquisite of the gentry, who did not need to earn a living and could therefore devote their lives to the responsibilities of war and politics. Somehow, the aristocracy had to be trained to play their proper part as rulers. All that is needed to make a city possible, Plato believes, is a person that he calls a *philosopher-king* – one person with the right nature who is educated in the right way. This, he believes, is *not* impossible. We look in greater detail at these philosopher-kings later.

The Ship of Fools: Plato and Democracy

The picture (right) comes from the cover of a 2014 issue of a philosophy journal.

1. The picture does seem to suggest that the modern world is headed for the rocks. Can you explain the picture in terms of Plato’s allegory of a ship at sea?
2. In the journal are several articles on the theme of Plato and Democracy which you might like to read. The links are:

- The Ship of Fools

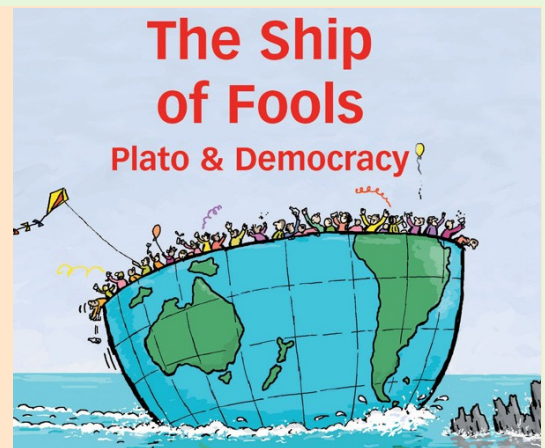
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LmuknKYmpSHFAxtZGjDmXVOKhB-DjiFe>

- Plato’s Ideal Ruler Today

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ROOtP2p4ZJJU9OKivvdBrkwhGVwNasQL>

- Democracy Is Sick

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uvYnjbeDn2wHQmVo7AArscBVypMUqyZ6>

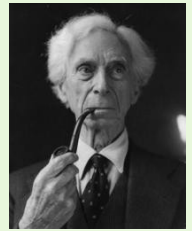


This finishes the background that led Plato to write the *Republic* with his plan for the building of a perfect state in which every citizen is really happy and the kinds of problems described above with oligarchies and democracies would not occur. Plato wrote the *Republic* in 380 BC when he was aged about 48, and in it is a plan for his ideal society that was to be *very* autocratic in nature.

The Republic of Plato

The intent of Plato in the *Republic* is to establish, philosophically, the ideal state, a state that would stand as a model for all emerging or existing societies currently functioning during Plato's time and even extending into our own times.

The tradition of utopian thinking probably began with Plato. The *Republic* is generally accepted as the first utopia – a depiction, that is, of the ideal state. Many others followed. It is interesting to note that Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), a British philosopher, commented that it is in man's nature to try to create utopias! (pictured right).



The *Republic* is also perhaps the first fully developed theory of politics which still has great influence today.

We must also remember to place Plato's work in its historical context. As has already been mentioned, Plato was a child of his times; he was a child of war and various sorts of enmities and strife. Consequently, he did not value much what we might praise as 'freedom' or 'personal liberty'. Had he lived in different times and had a different background, his *Republic* would doubtless be quite different, as were the later books on utopias.

Two related themes in the Republic

The two related themes in the *Republic* are **Justice** and the **Ideal State/Society**.

Plato seeks to describe **justice** and show how it is the *basis of the ideal society*, for both the rulers and for the citizens of this society.

In older times in Greece, there was no concept of justice and no laws to fix the idea of justice. People took by force of arms whatever they could from one another. In the *Republic*, Plato attempted to change this. He first talks about political or *societal* justice, that is, the just **state**, and then derives an analogous concept of **individual** justice.

Again, as already mentioned, Plato's emphasis on justice was due in large part to the unjust trial of his teacher, Socrates as well as the unjust, chaotic conditions of Athens at that time.

Justice throughout the Republic

The theme of justice occupies the *whole* book, though readers may not think so as there are many other things he discusses.

Justice for the individual

The discussion about justice begins right at the beginning of the *Republic* in the opening chapters of Book I. Plato gets those involved in his discussion to give their views as to what justice is. The views expressed tended to be the same as those current in Greece of the times and relate to justice for *individuals*. These are:

- 1) *Justice as honesty in word and deed*;
- 2) *Justice as helping friends and harming enemies* (that is, 'giving every man his due', which means bad things can happen to people who are enemies);
- 3) *Justice as the interest of the stronger* (who may be an individual, a ruler, the rich and powerful). This is

the view of Thrasymachus, the sophist, mentioned earlier on page 9.

Plato then returns to the idea of justice for the individual in the *last* two books of the *Republic* – Books IX and X. At the end of Book IX, Plato gives his *final* answer to Thrasymachus' contention that injustice pays when it goes unpunished and that it is *not* true, as Thrasymachus maintained, that the unjust always has the best of it. And in Book X, the last book, Plato concludes that on the whole, *honesty is a good policy*.

For most of the *Republic*, the discussion on justice focused just on *this* life. Finally, the question of justice and rewards and punishments *after death* is reserved for the very last seven pages right at the end of the the *Republic* when the **myth of Er** is introduced.

Justice and the Ideal State/Society

As mentioned, the views of the participants above are mainly about the behaviour of individuals. However, Plato believes that *real* justice is only possible when justice for the individual is combined with justice in the state/society; the two are inseparable. This comes about, Plato claims, when society is divided into classes and the individuals in each class perform jobs assigned to them (not jobs which they choose!) and for which they are competent. This will result in harmony for both the individual and society and ultimately produce justice for both. This idea is developed in this article.

Plato's definition of justice

Although the *Republic* is full of the *idea* of justice, Plato does not seem to give a *formal* definition of justice. In its original Greek sense, the word he uses for justice (*dikaiosyne*) does *not* have any moral connotation – it was not 'justice' in the moral sense as would think of it today.

So here are two sort-of definitions, which are related:

1. Based on the Greek word *dikaiosyne* and using Plato's own words in the *Republic*:

"To do one's own business and not to be a busybody is justice" (iv. 432, 434). Or *"the having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself"* (iv. 434a).

2. *Not* in Plato's exact words, but based on his organisation of society into classes:

Justice exists from the harmony that results when the citizens in each of the different classes do the appropriate job assigned to them and for which they are competent, and do only that job.

(We discuss in detail this division of society into classes beginning on the next page and see that Plato proposes three classes.)

From where did Plato get his ideas for the ideal state?

Plato did not think of his plan for an ideal state all by himself. For answers, he turned naturally enough – for he was an aristocrat – to aristocratic **Sparta**. Sparta, the state that had defeated his own Athenian state just a few years earlier! Here was a state which – apart from occasional serf revolutions – that had maintained its social and political stability for 200 years. His ideal state was to be framed on a Spartan model.

Sparta was an aristocratic dictatorship with the economy and government in the hands of a specially trained *hereditary* ruling caste to whom the pleasures of wealth and luxury were forbidden and where

education was rigidly controlled by the state. This to Plato was not however a *perfect* model, as Sparta used force – often brutal – to maintain control.

While Sparta provided the foundations of the Platonic State, the ideas from the *Academy* were to turn it from a Spartan tyranny into a *benevolent* dictatorship, which would rely *not* on sheer force, but on impartial government to retain the obedience of the subject class.

The perfect state was *not* to be a democracy of rational equals, but an *aristocracy* in which a hereditary caste of cultured gentlemen would take care with paternal solicitude of the toiling masses. It was still to be a dictatorship, but a ‘dictatorship of the best’. And to achieve this, there had to be no power from vested interests to influence the government. There would, therefore, be no big-business or international bankers to upset the natural harmony of economic interest.

[*My thought*: Perhaps Plato’s ideal state would not work today as our world would probably be impossible without big-business and international bankers.]

And yet, when the outline of his perfect society had been traced, Plato then confesses his doubt as to whether it would last and whether the perfection of any human institutions can withstand the disintegrating touch of time. Later in the *Republic*, Plato discusses the decline and fall of the ideal state, a decline in which democracy is near the bottom of this fall! (See page 36ff.)

The perfect/ideal state: three classes in society

According to Plato, an ideal society consists of three main classes of people (from ‘lowest’ to ‘highest’):

- **Producers** (craftsmen, farmers, artisans, etc. – the workers),
- **Auxiliaries** (warriors/soldiers as well as administrators), and
- **Guardians** (rulers, who are to be philosophers).

Each group must perform its appropriate *function*, and *only* that function, and each must be in the right position of power in relation to the others. Rulers must rule, auxiliaries must uphold rulers’ convictions, and producers must limit themselves to exercising whatever skills nature granted them (farming, blacksmithing, painting, etc.). A society in which relations between these three classes are right will lead to harmony and ultimately to justice and to the ideal state.

Justice then involves is a principle of **specialisation**: a principle that requires that each person fulfils the societal role to which nature fitted him and *not* to interfere in the business of anyone else, and especially, if they are in the lowest class of producers/craftsman, not to interfere in the work of the auxiliaries or guardians.

Plato is very rigid about this principle – ‘*any plurality of functions or shifting from one order to another is . . . utterly harmful and the extreme of wrongdoing*’ (Republic iv. 434c).

Although there are three classes, Plato really is primarily interested in the upper classes composed of the Guardians and Auxiliaries. There is an exclusive right to membership in these two classes and also a strict separation from the lower class of artisans, tradesmen and farmers. In the *Republic*, Plato focusses much less on the class of Producers.

Role of women in this class system: Every citizen is to be relegated to the job that best suits him. This is true of the women as well as the men. So women are to be considered as candidates both as potential guardians/rulers and auxiliaries.

Note on names for the three classes: The words Plato actually used to describe his three classes are 'craftsmen', 'auxiliaries', and 'philosophers', but the literal translation from the Greek of the first two terms is misleading. Also, different translations use different terms. In this text, I will use the above terms although for the guardians/rulers, the term 'philosopher-kings' will also be used. So be aware of this.

Allegory of the metals: (*Republic*, iii. 414)

Note: Also called the *myth* of metals.

Plato uses the story behind this allegory to help the citizens understand the principle of specialisation and ensure their loyalty to the community and to their respective classes.

The allegory says that all citizens of the city were born out of the earth. The allegory holds that each citizen is born with a certain sort of metal mixed in with his soul. In the souls of those most fit to be the *rulers* (that is, philosopher kings) there is **gold** (most valuable), in those suited to be *auxiliaries* (i.e. the military and government officials/administrators) there is **silver** (next in value), and in those suited to be *producers* (i.e. the lowest class of workers) there is either **bronze** or **iron** (of relatively little value). The city must *never* be ruled by someone whose soul is mixed with the wrong metal; if that ever happens, the city will be ruined.

[Remember that at this time, it was the iron age in Greece which lasted from about 1200 BC to about 1 BC when the Roman age took over (though dates varied in different regions). The bronze age had preceded the iron age. Look at my project "The Ascent of Man" for details about these ages.]

The people are also told that for the most part, iron and bronze people will produce iron and bronze children, silver people silver children, and gold people gold children, though this is *not always the case*. A chief injunction laid on the rulers is to watch carefully the metals, or mixtures of metals, children are born with (though Plato does not explain how the rulers are supposed to know this). Those children born to producers but who seem to have the nature/metal of a ruler or an auxiliary will be whisked away and raised with other such children. Similarly, those children born to rulers or auxiliaries whose metals seem more fit as producers will be removed from that upper class of society. Although the just society is rigid in terms of adult mobility between classes, it is not as rigid in terms of heredity.

Educating the gold class: Members of the gold/ruling class or the philosopher-kings are superior to members of the silver and bronze classes in terms of leadership ability and moral virtue and thus will receive an education that requires them to undergo and complete a laborious scholastic training programme designed specifically to nurture philosopher and rulers. For some, the lasts for 50 years.

Division of labour

Another way of thinking about the principle of specialisation is as a division of labour. People unite to form a community because of mutual needs: food, dwelling, the growing of food, and so on. And since it is a given that *people are born with various talents, or abilities*, it follows that they should be assigned

various levels of employment in order to ensure the common good and to perfect the stability of the state: Some should be farmers, some carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, toolmakers, weavers, blacksmiths, manual labourers, and so on. Thus Plato proposes what is a division of labour.

Social contract

This agreement of fixing harmony-in-the-state is one of the earliest examples, if not the earliest, of what is called the **Social Contract Theory**; it is the theory advanced by philosophers in the Western world throughout its history. **Jean J. Rousseau**, in France, advances Plato's theory (*Du Contract Sociale*, 1762), and Plato's theory is reflected in **Thomas Jefferson's** *Declaration of Independence of the United States of America* (1776).

The Social contract is that individuals have consented, either explicitly or tacitly, to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler (or to the decision of a majority) in exchange for protection of their remaining rights.

Education and Programme of Studies

Plato was very critical of education in Athens during his time. He believed – as did the Spartans – that education should be the major responsibility of the state. In Athens, it had been left to individual caprice and to the individual's capacity to pay. It had allowed anyone to be teachers such as biological parents but especially sophists. Disregard of education, Plato believed, was primarily responsible for the anarchy of Athenian democracy.

For basic education, up to about 18 years of age, Plato includes most of the education many (upper class) boys in Athens of the time would have received. But now, *all* children – boys *and* girls – are to receive Plato's education.

The full education programme can last for 50 years. Those that last this long end up as philosophers and are suited to become rulers or what he calls *philosopher-kings*. Getting a very long education is the reason why Plato believed that philosophers are better rulers. Unlike everyone else, the strenuous formal education over all these years makes philosophers better leaders.

The whole purpose of Plato's education is to produce the future rulers/philosopher-kings. As they are made, not born, the education must ensure they can acquire the knowledge necessary for their function as decision-makers for the society as a whole.

Aims of Plato's education: Education is chiefly aimed at achieving four things:

1. All **personal interests must be suppressed**, the desire for wealth, family, bodily pleasures, and so on.
2. Citizens must be **physically fit**, and so they are to be brought up with a *Spartan* simplicity of diet and dress. Those who are to be soldiers as well as administrators must be inured to military discipline from earliest childhood.
3. To attain the rudiments of *mental discipline*.
4. To train the best individuals to become the future rulers/philosopher-kings.

Stages and programme of studies

Here are the five stages and the programme of studies for Plato's education.

Basic education

Stage 1: Up to age 17 or 18, the early training is in writing, literature (learning and reciting epic poems), music (lyre-playing and singing lyric poetry) and elementary mathematics (arithmetic and geometry). The learning is to take place with as little compulsion as possible. (ancient Greek lyre pictured.)



Stage 2: From age 17 or 18 to age 20, an intensive course in physical exercise and military training, which will leave no time for study. There was an obligation to maintain good health and not to become a burden to the state. Also, Plato also saw no real difference in the exercise required of children and of professional soldiers.

Higher education

At the age of 20, a first *selection* takes place for those who will go on to higher education in Stage 3. The real intellectual education begins at this stage. Then, a *further* selection takes place for those who are to go on to Stages 4 and 5.

Stage 3: From age 20 to 30, the select few will go do an advanced course in *mathematics and dialectic* with a view to grasping the connections between the several branches of mathematics and their relation to reality. At age 30, an examination is held in which the future philosophers (*philosopher-kings*) are selected. Those who fail to pass this examination will become the *auxiliaries/administrators* proper, and it will be their task to carry out the commands of the philosopher-kings such as in government administration and as soldiers.

Stage 4: From age 30 to 35, the few who still remain receive an education that will be wholly for *dialectic*, and to the principles of morality.

Stage 5: From age 35 to 50, the same selected few will have an apprenticeship to get practical experience of life by public service in subordinate posts. When they graduate at age 50, they are to become the future rulers and will then have a free hand to remould society and produce the ideal state.

Censorship

There is to be some censorship of education of features that will not help to produce the future guardians. Four examples:

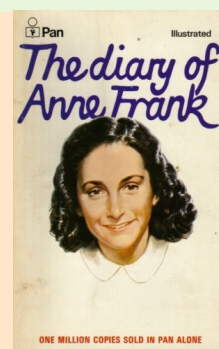
- **Fairy stories**, their songs and their dances – all are influences which can mould their character in a bad way, according to Plato – are censored and vetted.
- **Literature**: Most Greeks got their notions of the gods from the poets Homer and Hesiod, who attributed to the gods every sort of immorality. Hence their censorship! (In Plato's time however, the highly educated had ceased to believe in the existence of the gods, such as Zeus and Apollo.)
- **Music**: Plato approved of the old practice of writing lyric poetry only to be sung to music, and music only as an accompaniment to song. There was no harmony. The melody followed the words closely,

one note to each syllable. By Plato's time, the growing practice of using the poem as a libretto and distorting the words to suit the music (as we do today) was already popular and which he disapproved of.

- **Dangerous art:** Learners were not allowed to watch and listen to 'dangerous' art. Note though that these same children are to be encouraged to witness first-hand the violence of war! As Plato says: '... our children are to be taken to the wars on horseback [so they can escape easily if necessary] to watch the fighting, and, when it was safe, brought close up like young hounds to be given a taste of blood'. (I am not sure at what age this happens, but assume it is between 18 and 20 when they are doing physical/military training.) (Pictured is a depiction of ancient Greek soldier at war.)



Note: Plato's censorship of literature above might be in line with modern teachers and parents. I even note that *The Diary of Anne Frank* is banned in some schools (particularly in the US) not because students might get nightmares to read how the Frank family had to hide in an attic until they were dragged into Nazi death camps, but because at one brief point where 14-year-old Anne describes her maturing anatomy with comments on her private parts. The edition I have also seems to be a censored version as it does not have these bits!! (Pictured is the cover of the version I have.)



Comments on the selection of rulers

The education described above will be given to all boys and girls up to the age of 20. Then there are the tests to decide the few who will go to the higher training to become rulers whom the lower order of auxiliaries and craftsmen will obey. Most of the lowest citizens, who presumably fail this test, drop out of school at this stage and become the craftsmen/workers.

While Plato states at what age the selection tests will take place, he gives *no* details as to the content of the tests nor who, in the existing non-ideal condition of Athens, were to administer all this – did he even think about it?

The selection though, was to be based, *not* on birth or wealth, but on natural capacities and attainments; children born into *any* class can move up (or down) on their merits. Also most of the details of his education relate to those to be the rulers. He gives no details for the lowest class of craftsmen, for whom he did not have much time anyway – he was an aristocrat after all.

The perfect/ideal individual: three parts to the individual soul

For Plato, a just society and a just individual go together. When society is ordered into the three classes as described above, he claims there will be harmony and a just society for all. Justice in the individual mirrors political/societal justice.

But Plato goes further. Just as society will have three classes, so the individual (or the soul of the individual) must also consist of a three-part structure analogous to these three classes of a society. This

does seem to be very artificial but is a necessary part of this theory.

The three parts in the individual (soul) are:

- A **rational** part, which seeks after *truth*;
- A **spirited** part, which desires *honour* and is responsible for our feelings of anger and indignation; [Definition of sense of honour: *feeling about doing the right thing; sense of right and wrong; feeling of justice and good conduct*]
- An **appetitive** part, which *lusts after all sorts of things*, including food, drink, sex but money most of all (since money must/can be used to fulfil any other base desire).

These three parts of the individual soul correspond to the three classes in the just city. The appetite, or money-loving part, is the aspect of the soul most prominent among the **producing** class; the spirit or honour-loving part is most prominent among the **auxiliaries**; and reason, or the knowledge-loving part, is dominant in the **guardians**.

In a just person, the *rational* part of the soul rules the other parts, with the *spirited* part acting as helper to keep the *appetitive* in line. Compare this to the city where the truth-loving guardians rule, with the honour-loving auxiliaries acting as their helpers/administrators to keep the money-loving producers in line.

What it means for one part of the soul to 'rule' the others is for the entire soul to pursue the desires of that part.

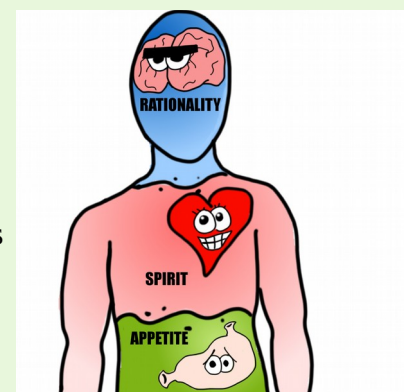
- In a soul ruled by *appetite*, the entire soul aims at fulfilling these appetites, whether these be for food, drink, sex, fine material goods, or hordes of wealth. Hence, this part tends to be dominant in the *producers*.
- In a soul ruled by *spirit*, the entire soul aims at achieving honour and so this is dominant in the auxiliaries/soldiers, who also seek honour in society and on the battlefield.
- In a soul ruled by a love of *truth*, the entire will *not* be in the grips of lust, greed, or desire for honour. This part of the soul will 'rule' over the 'lesser' parts and so is the dominant part in the *guardians/rulers*. Because of this, Plato claims, we can be confident that the ruler will never steal, betray friends or his city, commit adultery, disrespect his parents, violate an oath or agreement, neglect the gods, or commit any other acts commonly considered unjust. His strong love of truth weakens urges that might lead to vice.

The distinction here provides further rationale for the whole hierarchical arrangement of Plato's utopia into three classes, and the implication is unmistakable: only the philosopher-kings are truly just men fit to rule, with everyone else falling short, in varying degrees and must be subject to the (perfect!) wishes of the rulers. 'A multitude,' Plato asserts, 'cannot be philosophical,' a capacity reserved for a select few. And not just Plato! In Utopias after Plato's, the individual good is also subordinated to that of the State.

The three parts of the soul: The myth of creation

In a later work by Plato, the *Timaeus*, written in about 360 BC (twenty years after the *Republic*), he gives more details about the three parts of the soul using a myth known as the **myth of creation**. The three

parts of the soul (= three main functions of justice = deliberative and governing, executive, and productive) are kept distinct and lodged in different parts of the body: the head, chest and belly and organs of generation (as shown in the picture on the right).



The *reason*, which is dominant in the rulers, resides in the head. It alone is immortal and separable from the body on death.

The *spirited* part, which is dominant in the auxiliaries, is lodged in the chest (nearer to the head).

The lowest of the three forms, the *appetite*, is lodged in the belly and reproductive organs and is – perhaps unfortunately – dominant in the producers/craftsmen.

For more on the myth of creation, you will have to read the *Timaeus* – this article deals just with the *Republic*!

Methods used to rule/control the ideal society

In Plato's system, the three-class structure must be maintained and everybody must be kept in his proper place. Education is one way Plato uses to do this. Two other ways he proposes involve the use of (1) *deception*, and (2) a form of *communal living*.

1. The use of deception, or the 'noble lie'

Plato believes that thinking and directing life to reason are poison to the masses (the lowest classes in Plato's three-class structure). They will not be able to understand the *raison d'être* of the three-class state, and so it is useless to explain the truth to them. Among the methods necessary to controlling the masses is *deception*.

To do this, the masses need *not* the truth, but a *convenient falsehood* to keep them in their place and to perform their required tasks – for their own sakes. They must therefore be fed on political and religious stories, '**noble lies**' which appeal to their emotions and stimulate them to obey the law. That is the purpose of the falsehood; the [big political lie](#).

By the 'noble lie', Plato meant **propaganda**, the technique of a minority controlling the behaviour of the majority and controlled by the state. And just as children are told stories to prevent them from biting their nails or stealing or telling lies, so civilians must be fed on propaganda to prevent him from asserting any right to self-government. One such story Plato himself suggested to do this is the [allegory of the metals](#). Look back at this and see whether you think the masses would understand it – and believe it!

Rulers and governments ever since the time of Plato have used the 'noble lie' or propaganda for control, for purposes often more brutal than Plato ever suggested.

Do we need the 'noble lie' today?

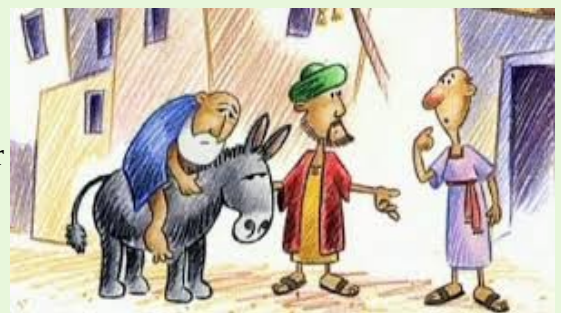
Some *contemporary* political theorists and politicians agree with Plato; on this view, mass deception is a necessary element of ruling the *modern* nation, especially as the ideals of freedom and democracy appear to be crumbling away today. They argue that like Plato, common people are not capable of understanding

the complex realities that make up our dangerous world. Ordinary people are concerned with ordinary things in their everyday lives. They have not the time, education, or attention to make informed analyses and take proper action. Therefore, deceptions/propaganda must be created to lead them to support the correct actions. For example, the general population is seldom willing to go to war. Thus, their emotions must be stirred and fears stoked until they stand united in full support of the actions of those who govern them and send out the armies of guardians to do the will of the state. We look at this again later in this article (page 59ff.).

It is not a 'lie'

The phrase 'noble lie' does *not* even occur in the text of Plato's *Republic*. It is an over-translation of the Greek phrase *gennaion ti hen*, meaning 'some one noble [thing]'. In the book by Cornford (the book I have), the term is translated as '*convenient fiction*'.

This phrase rendered by 'noble lie', is actually a self-contradictory expression (an *oxymoron*) no more applicable to Plato's harmless allegories than to a New Testament parable, and liable to suggest that Plato would countenance the lies, for the most part ignoble, which we now called propaganda. (The picture illustrates the New Testament parable of the 'Good Samaritan'. Do you know it?)



More on the 'noble lie'

Here are two links that you may find useful:

<http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/11/platos-noble-lie-christopher-morrissey.html>

<https://www.uncensoredjudaism.com/en/archives/1492>

Additional note: Do you know what an oxymoron is? It is the placing of two words together that have, or seem to have, opposite meanings. One I like is 'virtual reality' (reality = *real*; virtual = *not real*).

2. Communal living

Communal living seems to apply only to the upper classes of guardians and auxiliaries and not the lowest class of craftsmen, about whom Plato says very little about how they are to live.

As mentioned earlier, the guardians and auxiliaries are to *live with Spartan simplicity*. They are forbidden to own property; the absence of private property will remove the chief temptations to sacrifice the whole welfare of the state to personal interests. They will then *not* use their power, like the tyrants admired by Thrasymachus (remember him?), to get the best of everything for themselves. Instead, they are to live in barracks as do soldiers in their camps, separate from from the civilians.

Wives, children and families

Plato proposes that the traditional form of the family should be done away with. The wives and children of the *guardians and auxiliaries* should be in common. The ruling men and women should mate and reproduce on the city's orders, raising their children *communally* and to consider all guardians and auxiliaries as parents rather than attach themselves to a private family household. The presumed pleasures of family life,

Plato held, are among the benefits that the higher classes of a society must be prepared to forego. Men and women will breed and rear their children in common, according to theories of the eugenic methods employed in breeding domestic animals, such as dogs and horses!! This is not an exaggeration. Plato regarded people much the same as livestock: you breed the best ones and not the others. (For more of eugenics, go to page 62ff.)

The children will be taken right after birth and will be raised by the state. The genetic origin of the children is to be hidden from the Guardians/Auxiliaries. Even the mothers are not allowed to know who their children are. This way, the state will be father of the child and their peers will be their siblings.

These proposals also reflect life in Spartan society, which we saw Plato used as a model for his ideal society. In Sparta, men lived in barracks and male children were taken from their mothers at a young age to learn how to serve the state – meaning in Sparta the art of warfare. Unhealthy children were killed or left to die. Life had one purpose; To defend the state. It is not clear if Plato proposed ‘culling’ to weed out the inferior offspring; it is translated by Cornford ‘*hidden away in some appropriate manner that must be kept secret*’; Plato does not elaborate on this. Plato was certainly a ‘*positive eugenicist*’ in his promotion of the the use of breeding to produce the best guardians and auxiliaries, but was probably not a ‘*negative eugenicist*’, one who actually kills ‘undesirable’ folks. However, commentators differ on this.

But even here, the rulers have to use some deception. How are guardians and auxiliaries to be ‘encouraged’ not to have a free choice of partner? Sexual intercourse is to be more strictly controlled and limited by the rulers than it has ever been in civilised society – a point which has escaped many hasty readers of inaccurate translations of the *Republic*. Well, how then are the rulers to get the best unions possible? Plato promotes a kind of rigged lottery system, which the rulers will in fact secretly manipulate! However, Plato does not seem to have thought out very clearly the details of his marriage regulations.

Plato’s design for marriage and child-bearing only applies to the higher classes of society. We are left to assume, then, that the class in which he lumps the artisans, tradesmen, farmers, and others who must labour for a living will continue to follow the traditional system of marriage and family life.

Preventing incest

If nobody is to know who their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters are, how can incestuous relationships be avoided? Plato in the *Republic* is rather vague on this. One suggestion he made is that it is possible that the rulers should keep a register of the dates of birth of children, in which case incestuous unions might be avoided. However, it is believed that Plato himself did *not* seem to hold marriage of brothers and sisters as incestuous and that the rulers could sometimes knowingly arrange such marriages.

Cornford’s comments: If you can get hold of a copy of Cornford’s translation, turn to pages 158-159, where he includes extensive footnotes on how Plato might deal with these tricky problems.

The Theory of Forms/Knowledge

Plato’s Theory of Forms was introduced earlier (page 10ff.). We now discuss it in greater detail. To help in understanding his theory, he uses three analogies – **sun**, **(divided) line**, and **cave**.

The two worlds

As we saw on page 10, Plato explains that the world is divided into two realms, the **visible** world (which we grasp with our senses) and the **invisible** or 'intelligible' world (which we only grasp with our mind).

The *visible* world is the universe we see around us. The *invisible*, intelligible world is comprised of the **Forms**, which we saw were abstract, changeless concepts (such as the concept of a chair) that exist in the permanent invisible world. An apple is red and sweet, the theory goes, because it participates in the Forms/concepts of Redness and Sweetness.



According to Plato, only the Forms are objects of 'real' knowledge, because only they possess an eternal, unchanging truth that the mind and not the senses must understand. And, unfortunately, most of we poor folks cannot really understand the Forms. Only those whose minds are trained to grasp the Forms, namely, the philosophers, can know anything 'real' at all (and this, presumably only after 50 years of learning!).

The Form of the Good

One Form in particular, Plato states is above all the others and philosophers must know it in order to become able rulers. This is the Form of the **Good**, which Plato says is the source of all other Forms, and thus the source of 'real' knowledge. The highest goal in all of education, Plato believed, is obtaining a knowledge of the Good.

Unfortunately, Plato cannot describe this Form of the Good directly, though he does say that it is *not* what is commonly held to be good and that the knowledge of it usually comes to one in a kind of revelation after a long course of philosophical study. How long? Fifty years? That eliminates nearly all of us!

The best Plato can do is to give three **allegories** to try to help us understand it. These are the allegories of the **sun**, the **(divided) line** and the **cave**. In these (and especially the latter two), Plato paints evocative portraits of how a person must move through various stages of learning, starting with learning about actual objects in the visible world then moving to learning about abstract Forms in the invisible world until finally grasping the Form of the Good. Only those of us who can become philosophers will ever get to this point. Most of the rest of us do not even make it out of learning about objects in the visible world.

Allegory of the Sun



Visible world		Intelligible world
The Sun	≡	The Good
(makes all earthly things visible)		(the source of all other Forms, which make up real, eternal and unchanging knowledge/truth)

Plato claims that the Form of the Good in the invisible world is like the Sun in the visible realm. In the visible world, the Sun allows us to see objects, which we can then learn about and understand. (Blind people cannot see but use other senses, such as hearing and touch, to 'see' objects). In the invisible

world, the Good ‘illuminates’ the other Forms thus allowing us to ‘see’ and learn about everything that has value (*Republic* vi. 507a - 508e).

Allegory of the (Divided) Line

In this allegory, Plato paints an evocative portrait of a person moving through various stages of learning from the visible realm into the invisible/’intelligible’, until ultimately (hopefully!) grasping the Form of the Good. This, Plato says, is the ultimate aim of education.

The Divided Line

The basic idea of this allegory was introduced on pages 11 – 12. We saw that Plato *divides* the world into two worlds (or realms):

- 1) The **visible** world around us, which Plato calls the world of the ‘*sensible*’, that is, the physical objects, images/shadows of things that we detect/sense with our five senses (sight, sound, etc.).
- 2) An **invisible** world, which Plato calls the ‘*intelligible*’ world which he thinks is the real world – this is the ‘world’ we discover using our mental abilities solely without relying on our senses at all.

This simple division was shown earlier. To help the reader to understand Plato’s ideas more readily, I am building up the diagram of the divided line in a series of diagrams. As before, the *horizontal* line divides the the two worlds, hence the name of the allegory – ‘*divided* line’ – and the kinds of *objects* in each of these two worlds.

The first diagram shows the kinds of *objects* in each of the two worlds.

The worlds	Objects in the two worlds
Invisible/Intelligible World (Real)	The Forms (illuminated by the highest form – the <i>Good</i>)
Visible World/ World of our Senses	Visible Objects (illuminated by the <i>Sun</i>) i.e. perceived physical objects and images/shadows of things

Below is a second diagram of another divided line, a slightly more complex one. Instead of kinds of *objects*, it shows kinds of *knowledge* in each of these worlds; these are sub-divided into A, B, C and D.

The worlds	Knowledge in the two worlds
Invisible/Intelligible World (Real)	(Real) Knowledge (<i>episteme</i>) D Intelligence/Full understanding (<i>noésis</i>) C Thinking/Reasoning (<i>dianoia</i>)
Visible World/ World of our Senses	Opinion (<i>doxa</i>) B Belief (<i>pistis</i>) A Illusion / Imagination (<i>eikasia</i>)

A and B: This is the kind of knowledge we all get from the visible world around us. As Plato does not regard this visible world as real, the knowledge we get from it is also not real – he calls it *Opinion* instead. Level A is the lowest of this kind of knowledge, just *illusions* we may have and things we *imagine*. Level B is a bit ‘higher’ and which, according to Plato, are the *beliefs* we hold or our ordinary everyday common-sense view of the physical world. (The diagram also includes the Greek words for these two kinds of knowledge – *eikasia* and *pistis*.)

C and D: Here is what Plato regards as *real* knowledge, which is not gained by using our senses but by thinking/reasoning. And not just any kind of thinking. Level C (*dianoia*) is obtained by reasoning using just mathematics (groan!) and especially *geometry* as he believes this can help to separate us from the physical world around us and develop really abstract ideas. (Yes, mathematics is very abstract, which is why many of us find it difficult; if we can’t master mathematics, we will never make it any further, and so will never become one of Plato’s philosophers who are capable or being an ideal ruler). Level D is the peak of knowledge (*noésis*), obtaining a knowledge of the Forms and especially the Form of the Good, which will come, according to Plato, as a revelation after many years of study using *dialectic*. This is the kind of knowledge philosopher-kings would gain by the time they are about 50 years of age. But just as Plato refuses to give a definition of The Good, he also refuses to give a detailed account of this method.

[*Definition of dialectic* (modified from Wikipedia): **Dialectic**, also known as the *dialectical method* or *dialectic(al) reasoning*, is a discussion between two or more people holding different points of view to clarify or establish the truth of a statement through the use of reasoned arguments. The Socratic method is a particular form of dialectic which uses Question and Answer to do this. Dialectic may be contrasted with the *didactic method* where one person just teaches or lectures to the other(s).]

We can now put the two above diagrams together to give a complete diagram of the analogy of the Line to show Plato’s understanding of human knowledge as a line divided proportionately into **four** segments. (*Republic* vi. 509d). So, to get the four segments, we add a *vertical* line to the previous diagrams. When reading the text below the diagram, keep in mind my ladder analogy given earlier (page 12).

	Objects	Knowledge
Invisible/Intelligible World (Real) (‘seen’ by the mind) (World of the Forms)	<p style="text-align: center;">The Forms</p> The true Forms of reality (illuminated by the ‘Good’) Forms <i>not</i> yet known, especially in mathematics	<p style="text-align: center;">(Real) Knowledge (<i>episteme</i>)</p> D Intelligence/Full understanding (<i>noésis</i>) (with dialectical reasoning) C Thinking/Reasoning (<i>dianoia</i>) (especially with mathematics)
World of Appearances (i.e. visible/material world, seen by the eyes)	<p style="text-align: center;">Visible Objects</p> Actual <i>physical</i> objects (illuminated by the Sun) <i>Images/ Shadows</i> of things (e.g. in mind, drawings – not actual objects)	<p style="text-align: center;">Opinion (<i>doxa</i>)</p> B Belief (<i>pistis</i> part of opinion = our common- sense view of physical things we see) A Illusion / Imagination (<i>eikasia</i>) (lower part of opinion)

Levels A and B

These are *Opinion (doxa)*, which is divided into Belief (*pistis*) and Illusion or Imagination (*eikasia*).

Level A: Illusion and imagination (*eikasia*), the lowest forms of knowledge, are characterised in Plato's discussion by shadows and reflections of things in the physical world around us. These things, and our thoughts about them, are very changeable. But Plato means *more* than just *physical* shadows and reflections. He also means the sorts of second-hand, uninformed views that people hold, not finding out for themselves about the world, but just believing what they are told, for example, in the newspapers or on TV ('fake' news!); and in the last book of the *Republic*, Plato implies that art and poetry also fall under 'illusion' as well. It is less clear exactly what Plato means by imagination. But with imagination, a person considers images and reflections to be the most real things in the world.

Level B: One step up the ladder, 'belief' is our common-sense belief in the reality of ordinary physical objects in the visible world. Other matters, such as morality, also fall under 'belief', but these are beliefs we accept without any understanding. In another book (the *Timaeus*), Plato also includes the natural sciences under belief, since they deal with the changeable, physical world. Unlike 'illusion', belief involves a direct study/learning of the world (for example, through books/school/experiments). But as it still involves the physical world as reality, it isn't yet 'true' knowledge.

Levels C and D

We are now at the levels of (real) knowledge. There are again two divisions: The lower level C, *dianoia*, which we can translate (in this context) as 'thinking/reasoning', and the higher level D *noésis*, which we can translate as 'intelligence' or 'full understanding'. Both relate to the Forms, but *dianoia* relies on assumptions and imagination (images learnt from the realm of the sensible/visible world) while *noésis* does not. According to Plato, a good example of *dianoia* is geometry. In studying triangles, such as in proving that the three internal angles add up to 180°, students of geometry don't study the actual, imperfect triangles they draw; they create proofs using the idea (that is, the Form) of a triangle, which they create in their minds. This higher education, first in mathematics and then in moral philosophy, allows us to escape from the visible world, which is a 'prison' of appearances.

Level C: The lower section (*dianoia*) involves the study of the mathematical sciences. Two characteristics of mathematics are studied:

- 1) The use of visible diagrams and models as imperfect illustrations of the objects and truths of *pure* Forms the mind will eventually get. These are a sort of bridge carrying the mind across from the world of visible things to the intelligible reality, which we must learn to distinguish.
- 2) Each branch of mathematics starts from *axioms* (unquestioned assumptions/hypotheses), which we reason from deductively to reach conclusions. However, whether or not we get the correct conclusions depends on the correctness of the axioms. The level of thinking here involving mathematics and deductions, still falls short of perfect knowledge. (A simple example of an axiom in geometry: 'The shortest distance between two points is a straight line'.)

This leads the learner to a knowledge of relatively *simple* Forms of mathematical concepts, such as numbers and shapes.

Level D: This is the highest level of knowledge and learning resulting in a full understanding (*noésis*) of the most important Forms, such as justice, truth, equality and of course the ‘highest’ form, which is the Form of the Good itself. The method of learning used involves *only* dialectic/dialectical reasoning, that is, pure discussion; there is *no* reliance on any visible diagrams that were used in Level C. In these discussions, the movement at *first* is not downward (deductive, as in Level C) but *upward* (inductive), examining the axioms themselves and seeking the ultimate principle on which they all depend (i.e. the Good). Remember too, that Plato believes knowledge of the Forms actually involves some sort of revelation, so dialectic will only take the learner so far. If the mind could ever grasp the supreme Form (the Form of the Good), it might then *descend* by a definition confirming the whole structure of mathematical knowledge studied in Level C. The level of understanding reached is now fully detached from the world of appearances/visible world and is called *intelligence* and is knowledge in the full sense.

More on the Divided Line

All this discussion can be difficult to comprehend – and Plato knew it! I too think the allegory of the Line is the most difficult of all Plato’s allegories to understand. Reading other sources with different ways of expressing things can help. Here is one link that the reader may find useful:

http://www.informationphilosopher.com/knowledge/divided_line.html

Allegory of the Cave

The allegory of the cave is widely regarded as the most beautiful and famous allegory in Western philosophy.

Plato recognised that the picture of the Divided Line may be difficult for many of us to understand. So, he offered a simpler (perhaps!) story in which each of the same parts in the line appear in a way that we can all comprehend (again, hopefully!). This is the Allegory of the **Cave**.

This allegory is meant to illustrate how *education* moves a person from the lowest state of knowledge (Level A in the line allegory) to a knowledge of the Good (Level D). The picture (right) illustrates the allegory of the cave.

The Levels A to D below correspond to the four levels in the Divided Line allegory.



Level A: In the allegory, there is a group of human beings who have lived their entire lives since birth trapped in a subterranean cave never seeing the light of day. The cave is lit only by a large fire behind them. Chained in place, these cave-dwellers can see nothing but shadows (of their own bodies and of other things) cast on a flat wall in front of them produced by objects carried by people who walk across a roadway in front of the fire. These objects often tell stories. The prisoners watch the stories that the shadows play out, and because these shadows are all they ever get to see, they believe them to be the most real things in the world. The prisoners are able to talk to each other but when they talk, for example,

about ‘men’, ‘women’, ‘trees’, or ‘houses’, they are referring to these shadows. In the allegory, the cave represents the physical/visible world in which we live. The prisoners in the cave represent us when we are at the lowest stage on the Line – Level A – **illusion/imagination**. (Look back at Level A in the diagram of the Line above.)

Level B: A prisoner (one of us!) is freed from his bonds, and is turned around and forced to look at the fire and at the objects themselves. After an initial period of pain and confusion because of direct exposure of his eyes to the light of the fire, the prisoner realises that *what he sees now are things more real than the shadows* he has always taken to be reality. He grasps how the fire and the objects moved along the roadway together cause the shadows, which are just copies of these more real things. He now accepts the objects and fire as the most real things in the world. This stage in the cave represents **belief**. He has made contact with real things – the physical objects – but he is still not aware that there are things of greater reality – a world beyond his cave.

Level C: Next, this prisoner is dragged out of the cave into the sunlight. With eyes still accustomed only to the dim light of the cave, this individual will *at first* be so dazzled by the light outside that he can only look at shadows, then at reflections before finally being able to gaze at the real physical objects – real trees, flowers, houses and so on. He now understands that *these are more real than the object in the cave were*. He has now reached Level C. Plato says it is the 10 years of education in mathematics (from age 20 to 30, remember!) that drags the prisoner out of the darkness to the point where he can look at the shadows and reflections of real things, but not yet at the things themselves. The prisoner is now able to do abstract thinking. But though he *might* have caught his first glimpse of the most real things, that is, the Forms, he is not yet ready to grasp them.

Level D: When the released prisoner’s eyes have fully adjusted to the brightness, he can lift his sight toward the heavens and looks at the **sun**. He now understands that the sun is the cause of everything he sees around him – the light, his capacity for sight, the existence of flowers, trees, houses and other objects. The sun represents the Form of the Good, and the former prisoner has reached the stage of ‘real’ knowledge/full understanding and is now a philosopher who is fit to rule society and the people in it.

Return to the cave

Once a person has obtained the highest level knowledge of the Forms and become a philosopher, Plato says he cannot just remain contemplating the Form of the Good forever. He *must return into the cave, to the world of shadows, and rule there* in order to help other prisoners. There, he must tell its inhabitants that there is another, better, more real world than the one in which they have so long been content to dwell. Plato noted that the prisoners are unlikely to be impressed by the pleas of this extraordinary individual, especially since *having travelled to the bright surface world, he may now be inept and clumsy in the dim realm of the cave*. Nevertheless, it would be in the best interest of these residents of the cave to entrust their lives to the one enlightened member of their company, whose acquaintance with other things is a unique qualification for genuine knowledge.

The cave and the three classes in the state/society/city

Plato points out that the philosopher-kings are only able to enjoy the freedom above ground that they do

because they were enabled by the education the city afforded them. They were moulded to become the highest class in society, that of **philosopher-kings/rulers** so that they could return to the cave (that is, the world where everyone else lives) and rule. Further, he adds that the philosophers will actually *want* to rule because they will know that the city would be less just if they refrained from rule.

Plato seriously intended the cave to be an allegory representing the state of our ordinary human existence in the visible/physical world, that is Level A, the lowest level in the divided line analogy. For us, real objects are just like the shadows on the wall of the cave. We, like these prisoners in the cave, are trapped in a world of change and impermanence, the realm of visible objects. Captivated by the experiences these things provide, we are unlikely to appreciate the declarations of philosophers, the few among us who, like the escapee from the cave, that there is another real world in which there is eternal, permanent knowledge, that is, the Forms, which is at Level D of the divided line. Moving out of the cave is like moving through the stages on the divided line, which ultimately leads to the Form of the Good.

However, not everyone can make it all the way out. Those people that remain in the cave are the **producers**. Those that make it out but do not end up as rulers become the **auxiliaries/warriors**.

It is education that drags people *as far out of the cave as possible*. Education should *not* aim at putting knowledge into the soul/head, but at turning the soul/mind toward real knowledge. Plato means to depict not only four ways of thinking, but four ways of life.

Or, putting it in slightly different words, in the diagram of the Divided Line (in the preceding analysis) and in the Allegory of the Cave, the developing thinker moves from the level of imagining (Level A), upward to common-sense belief (Level B), thence to thinking (Level C) and finally to the summit of dialectic, also termed intelligence or ‘real’ knowledge.

Below is a comparison of some aspects of the cave and the divided line.

	Allegory of the Cave	Meaning
Inside the cave	The cave	= the visible/physical world
	The fire and people on the road	= the (physical) sun (what enables us to sense things)
	Images/Shadows on the wall	= Illusion (<i>eikasia</i>) – Level A of the Line
	Seeing the fire and the objects moving along the roadway	= Belief (<i>pistis</i>) – Level B of the Line
	Those who never escape	= producers, the lowest class of citizens
Outside the cave		= Plato’s real/intelligible world
	The prisoner dragged outside	= the person who may become a philosopher/ruler
	Objects outside the cave	= the Forms
	Looking at <i>reflections of objects</i> outside the cave	= reasoning (<i>dianoia</i>) – Level C of the Line
	Looking at <i>actual objects</i> outside the cave	= intelligence (<i>noesis</i>) = Level D of the Line
	The Sun	= The Form of the Good
	The prisoner returning to the cave	= The philosopher who will rule the state/city

The allegory of the cave then is about gaining knowledge. But it is also the beginning of Plato's argument that only philosopher-kings should rule. Plato uses the analogy to argue that for society to be a just society, the rulers must be philosopher-kings, who have acquired knowledge of the Forms and especially the Form of the Good, but then they must be forced 'back down' into the cave, to rule and not just dwell in their academic world which would be more pleasant. This fact also explains why philosophers, having achieved knowledge of the Forms, will *not* want to be rulers; and why people (the prisoners) would not welcome philosophers or recognise that what they say is true and may even want to kill them but cannot as they are held in place by chains.

Meanwhile, people who can only see the images and shadows cast on the wall by the fire will believe that those images and shadows are reality, and dismiss claims about a 'world outside the cave' as madness. Since the philosopher-king, on re-entering the cave, has difficult seeing, they will also argue that 'the visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not even worth attempting' (*Republic* vii. 517).

The Decline and Fall of the Ideal State

In the *Republic*, we are now up to Book IX, the next to last book. Plato has already laid out the structure of his ideal state, consisting of three classes, in which the citizens in each do their proper, *assigned* work, resulting in happiness and justice for all to flourish. This ideal state is ruled by the ideal man – the philosopher-king (or sometimes just referred to as the philosopher) – who lords it over the lower classes of auxiliaries and producers.

As well as the state having three levels or parts, so does the human soul – the rational, the honour (or spirited) and the appetite. The philosophic ruler is the ideal man because the three parts are ordered on an analogous pattern to the ideal state, with the rational part ruling over the lower parts of honour/spirit and appetite.

Plato then describe the *opposites* of the ideal state and individual – the perfectly *evil* society and thoroughly *evil* individual soul. In the perfectly evil, the basest elements of human nature have set up an absolute despotism of '**tyranny**' over the higher, the very negation of that principle of justice whereby each element, by doing its proper work, contributes to the well-being of the whole. Because of this, Plato *imagines* (note: just imagines!) a gradual decline of the ideal state through the following *intermediate forms* of unjust states and individuals:

Ideal state → Timocracy → Oligarchy → Democracy → Despotism (Tyranny)

Plato says that timocracy is the closest to the ideal state that we have thus far experienced; the others descend in value as they are listed. Plato does *not* mean here that these are the only types, or that each state would necessarily fall in the same sequence that he describes. Plato's point is that, once a given *state* or a given *man* begins to decline morally, his fall will become somehow inexorable and the plummet to ruin will be inevitable.

Timocracy and the timocratic man

In the *Republic*, Plato does think at one stage that the ideal state may never have existed and may never do so (vi. 499). But even if it did, nothing in this world can last for ever and it will decline

Plato's explanation of the decline is highly speculative as he himself admits. (The rise and fall of actual empires/cultures throughout history still has also to be adequately explained.) The decline of society, he suggests, will set in with the outbreak of dissension within the ruling order. (This, he claims, is at all times the cause of revolution.)

The first degenerate and 'unjust' form of regime is called ***Timocracy***, a state in which the ambitious man's desire for property and love of honour (*timo-* = honour + *-ocracy* = rule, hence *timocracy* = rule by honour), the motive of the 'spirited' part, usurps the rule of reason. For Plato, timocracy is a form of government limited to citizens who possess valuable properties or an abundant amount of money and who are motivated by honour, power and military glory. Not exactly the motives the philosopher-king rulers of his ideal state! In a timocracy, the guardians and auxiliaries include persons of an inferior nature (the persons with souls made of iron or bronze, as opposed to the ideal guardians and auxiliaries, who have souls made of gold and silver). A timocracy, in choosing its leaders, also tends to choose those better suited for war.

Plato says this happened in Sparta from which he had borrowed several features for his ideal society. At Sparta, private property had nourished the secret growth of greed, intellect was distrusted and an exaggerated cult of military efficiency aimed at holding down a population of *helots* (serfs or partially free peasants who were owned by the state and primarily worked in agriculture to support the Spartan citizens).

A timocracy might emerge if Plato's auxiliaries should begin to oust the philosophic rulers from supreme control. The character of the timocratic individual would closely reflect those of the timocratic state.

Oligarchy (Plutocracy) and the oligarchic man

In a *Timocracy*, the illegitimate institution of private property for the guardians stimulated ambition, under cover of which the still lower passion for wealth was released from the control of reason. The love of money is the most characteristic motive of the third and lowest element in the human soul, the group of appetites for the satisfactions, necessary or unnecessary, which money can buy. ***Oligarchy***, (*oligos-* = few) the 'government of the few' or as Xenophon (c. 430 – 354 BC) who, along with Plato, was a student of Socrates calls it, *Plutocracy* (rule of the wealthy), results when power passes into the hands of men for whom money is the end of life.

The state now suffers a further loss of unity by the outbreak of class war of rich against poor which Plato sought to avert by denying private power to the ruling order and limiting the acquisition of wealth by tradesmen and farmers. The oligarch (plutocrat), as a mere consumer of goods, is compared to the drone; and when he has squandered his money he sinks into the dangerous class of paupers and criminals. In the oligarchic/plutocratic individual, the drone-like *appetites* have gained some ground against reason; but they are still held in check by the dominant passion for wealth, which calls for an outward respectability.

Democracy and the democratic man

The type of democracy in Athens of Plato's time was not the same as is today. It was *not* the rule of the majority through elected representatives, but was based on the idea that every adult male citizen had an equal right to take a personal part in the government through the Athenian Assembly and the law-courts and was capable of holding any office. (It must be remembered that more than half the population of Athens were either slaves or resident aliens, with no civic rights.) The Assembly was appointed by drawing lots (such as a pebble, stick, ball drawn from a container and so determined by chance) from among the candidates who presented themselves. The Assembly was nominally the whole body of citizens over 18, a quorum of 6000 being required for certain purposes.

The ideals of the Athenian democracy were set down in the Funeral Speech of [Pericles](#) (page 4). In Plato's view, however, the direct *rule of the many* violated the principle of justice, that men, being born with different capacities, should do *only* the work for which they are fitted. Fitness to govern is, he argued, is the highest achievement of the human nature.

According to Plato, an oligarchy (plutocracy), by making wealth the end of life and failing to check the accumulation of property in a few hands and the ravages of usury, so weakens itself that the poor see their opportunity to wrest power from the degenerate rich. The democratic principle of freedom and equal rights for all is applied to the whole mob of appetites in the lowest part of the soul. The democratic man gives himself up to the pleasures of the moment.

[In a later dialogue, the *Statesman*, Plato regards the more lawless type of democracy as superior to oligarchy, though not to timocracy.]

Despotism and the despotic man

The Greeks called an absolute, unconstitutional ruler a '**tyrant**', but the word did not have the sinister associations for the modern equivalent, who is a ruler with unlimited power over other people, and uses it unfairly and cruelly [source: Cambridge English dictionary]. In ancient Greek times, a tyrant might be a relatively benevolent champion of the common people against the oppression of a landed aristocracy. However, then as now '*all power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely*' (quotation of the 19th century British politician Lord Acton. He borrowed the idea from several other writers who had previously expressed the same thought in different words).

Little as Plato valued what he called democracy, he really hated **despotism**, which is the triumph of injustice and the very negation of the liberty he did believe in. Democratic anarchy, carried to the extreme, divides society into three classes: a growing number of ruined spendthrifts and desperadoes; the capitalists, quietly amassing wealth; and the mass of country people, working their own small farms and uninterested in politics. The most unscrupulous 'drones' lead an attack upon property, which drives the capitalists in self-defence to form a reactionary party. The people then put forward a champion who, having tasted blood, is fated to become a human wolf, the enemy of mankind – the **despot**. Threatened by assassination, he successfully demands a bodyguard or private army, seizes absolute power, and makes the people his slaves.

In Athens for example, the 'tyranny' of one ruler broke the power of the landed nobility and prepared the way for democracy (the reverse to the direction above). On the other hand *democracy sometimes passed into the despotism*, as at Syracuse in Plato's time (same sequence as above).

The despot often murders his opponents and possible rivals, till he is left with only scoundrels for company. He is loathed by the people when they realise how they have been enslaved.

Plato now turns from despotism in the *state* to despotism in the *individual*. Here, despotism means the rule of one among the unlawful *appetites*. The democratic man allowed equal rights to all his desires; but this balance is easily destroyed by the growth of a master passion, which will gradually enslave every other part of the soul resulting in the despotic individual and the perfectly unjust man. This contrasts with the perfectly just soul philosopher-king, for whom the reason part of the soul rules the individual.

Do societies actually decline in this way?

In imagining the decline of states, *Plato knows what he is talking about: He witnessed it in his own day*. He saw *timocracies* in Crete and Sparta; he lived through the *oligarchy* of his beloved Athens; he saw the *democrats* kill Socrates; he barely escaped with his life the *tyranny/despotism* of Syracuse.

Plato also suggested that the decline of the ideal state did *not* necessarily follow the above sequence *exactly*. But Cornford, in his translation of the *Republic* that I read, adds a footnote (page 258) that the communes of medieval Europe *did* exactly follow Plato's sequence: the oligarchical commune either succumbed before the democratic people, or admitted it to a share in the government; and in either case a division of classes still survived, bad enough to paralyse the state and ultimately introduce a tyranny, open or concealed.

Nevertheless, the *Republic* stands today as Plato's fearless rebuke of his own times and perhaps of ours! His criticism of the states he saw about him is simply that they are ruled by unjust men practising injustice upon their citizenry.

Had Plato lived to read the books "*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*", or "*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*", he would not have been surprised at the inexorable direction either of these tyrannies took in visiting its evils upon the citizens of the world.



Communes and Despots in Medieval and Renaissance Italy

Here is a link to a very detailed review of a book which discusses this subject. It does *not* agree that the decline is in the order Plato imagines, but actually moved to and fro between different forms. All the forms of government except timocracy occurred in these medieval communes. In the review, the name of Plato is not mentioned. *Caveat*: This review is hard going and may only be for the most enthusiastic reader.

<https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1089>

Did Plato predict Trump?

2400 years ago, Plato saw that democracy would give rise to a tyrannical leader filled with 'false and braggart words'. Sound like anyone you know? To read more on how Plato might have predicted Donald

Trump, go to:

<https://qz.com/1293998/2400-years-ago-plato-saw-democracy-would-give-rise-to-a-tyrannical-leader-filled-with-false-and-braggart-words/>



More on Plato's five regimes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_five_regimes

<http://factmyth.com/platos-five-regimes/>

And one just on timocracy

<https://www.lifepersona.com/what-is-the-timocracy-characteristics-and-conceptions-about-property>

Immortality and the Myth of Er

Book X is the very last book of the *Republic*. Prior to this, Plato had focused entirely to the question of justice and its rewards in *this life*. Now, he discusses rewards and punishments which may await the soul in the unseen world *after death*, the notion of the immortality of the soul, reincarnation and other lives on earth.

All these are pictured in his **Myth of Er**. In it, Plato imagines that justice will be rewarded throughout a steady progression in a series of lives hereafter. The soul is immortal, cannot be destroyed and is reincarnated over and over forever. The story greatly influenced religious, philosophical, and scientific thought for many centuries.

Immortality: In Plato's Greece, very few people held to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. A popular belief at the time was that the soul escapes the body and dissolves like smoke. Some of the Pythagoreans (the followers of Pythagoras mentioned earlier), did theorise that the soul separates from the body at death and is probably therefore immortal. Plato was familiar with their arguments and they influenced his doctrine of immortality.

Myth of Er

In the myth, Er is a soldier who was brought to the afterlife after dying in battle but was returned to his current life on Earth as a soldier. He tells his comrades that after being slain in battle, he woke to find himself in a great valley being filled with souls coming from either heaven or hell [Note: dualism again!] All the just souls had been rewarded for their past lives with 1000 years in heaven, while the unjust ones had been punished for their past lives with the same amount of time in hell.

The souls from heaven floated down from a giant hole in the sky and comfortably made their way through the valley. At the entrance from hell (a great hole in the ground) there were guards. The souls coming up from hell were of the worst kind in their past life: murderers, tyrants, etc. All the souls that were allowed through gathered there, talking, sharing their experiences of the afterlife.

After several days, the souls had to travel very far. All the souls – except for Er, since he was to continue in his former life – were then to choose their next life. On arrival, they came upon the '*Spindle of Necessity*'. 'Necessity' (also called by the Greek word *Ananke*) was a Greek goddess who was the

'mother of Fates'. Sitting beneath her were her three daughters – *the Fates*. There, the souls were given a lottery number, and based on that, each was told to choose what their next lives should be.

The picture (right) is a depiction of Necessity/Anake holding a spindle, with her three daughters beneath her. Note the chair that Necessity is sitting on; it is the same kind as those shown earlier (page 10).

Er then relates that the first soul to choose had led his previous life virtuously 'by habit, without philosophy' (x. 619d). This soul, choosing rather carelessly, chose the life of a powerful dictator/despot without considering the terrible fate that would be his in that life. The last soul to choose was Odysseus (hero in the Greek victory in the Trojan War) and yet he chooses very carefully even from his somewhat limited options. He seems to understand the importance of choosing a future life as a private man who can pursue philosophy.



Souls came and went, some pondering their decision more than others. Once all the souls had chosen their lives, their fates were sealed. The souls were then brought through a hot, dry, barren place called the *Plain of Forgetfulness*. There they came upon the *River of Forgetfulness* (or *River of Unheeding* or *Unmindfulness*), where each soul, again excepting Er, drank from the river, forgot everything, and went to sleep. At midnight the sleeping souls were carried away 'like shooting stars' (x. 620) to the birth of their new lives on Earth. When Er woke up, however, he found himself on a pier with *full* remembrance of everything he had seen.

Note: If – when – you read the *Republic*, you will see that the above description just gives the key ideas about the Myth of Er. There are a lot more details, especially relating to the *Spindle of Necessity*, and the drawing of lots (see pages x. 615 – x. 620, which is the last page of the *Republic*).

The importance of this myth lies with the choices made by the souls who are to be reincarnated. Although each soul chooses his next life, his decision is limited. The first soul to choose has the largest variety to choose from, yet he chooses carelessly in wanting to be a dictator. His careless choice exemplifies the importance of *knowing* how to choose. In his previous life, if the man had studied philosophy and had known true justice, then he would have recognised that the tyrannical life of a dictator was not just, and so he would not have chosen it. He would have considered the consequences of living a tyrannical life and seen his terrible fate. While the soul of the just man had been rewarded for 1000 years in heaven for having lived a good life, he lacks the knowledge necessary to choose a better life in his next life on Earth. Odysseus, on the other hand, knows how to see; he understands that we are responsible for pursuing knowledge in order to be eternally rewarded. Odysseus chooses the life of a philosopher in hopes of being able to remain *eternally* rewarded in the afterlife once he pursues knowledge as fully as possible in his next embodied life.

The Myth of Er then exemplifies how, in Plato's view, knowledge is essential for being prosperous in the cycles of life and death. For many, these reincarnation cycles may last forever. However, those who have duly purified themselves with *philosophy* will receive a *final* deliverance and be released from this cycle

and live henceforth eternally without the body, in ‘mansions fairer still’.

My Question: There is a lot of talk here about ‘knowledge’. What sort of knowledge? Knowledge of the Forms? If so, only the philosophers who have reached Level D of the Divided Line will get this knowledge and presumably will be the only ones to receive a final deliverance and dwell in paradise forever. However, all we other poor souls *may* have a chance if we choose wisely before we return to Earth for the next life.

More about the Myth of Er

The following link gives some more on the myth and on Necessity and includes the picture above:

https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/The_Myths/Myth_of_Er/myth_of_er.html

A near-death experience?

While most scholars tend to interpret Er’s experience as only an allegory, others claim it offers striking parallels to modern near-death experience accounts that have been reported by thousands of people. What do you think? Here is one link which discusses this:

<http://cosmiccradle.com/plato/>

The Influence of Plato's *Republic* over the Centuries

We must remember that Plato was writing in Greece at a time of major political decay and that his interest in writing the *Republic* was in restoring the political health of his community and that of other Greek cities of his time. His *Republic* was almost a practical guide for Greek cities and is not necessarily a practical guide for a modern state today.

Nevertheless, the *Republic* compels us not only to question our own values and our own definitions of ethical terms but to consider how we might envision an ideal society in the context of our own place in history. Plato has given us a superb model to follow. It has also been used over the centuries for less lofty purposes.

Here are three examples that we will look at, which illustrate how the *Republic* has resonated through the ages:

- Plato and rulers over the centuries
- Plato and his effect on Christianity
- Is Plato's ideal state totalitarian?

Plato and rulers over the centuries

The philosopher-king, an idea according to which the best form of government is that in which philosophers rule. The ideal of a philosopher king was born in Plato's dialogue *Republic* as part of the vision of a just city. It was influential in the Roman Empire and was revived in European political thought in the age of *absolutist* monarchs. Here will look at some of these rulers.

Here are a few rulers from across the centuries who *may* make it onto the list of platonic philosopher-kings.

Ancient Rome – the five good emperors

From 96 AD to 180 AD, the ancient Roman empire was ruled by five successive emperors known as the '*Five Good Emperors*' who presided over the most majestic days of the Roman Empire. They were Nerva (reigned 96 – 98 AD), Trajan (reigned 98 – 117 AD), Hadrian (reigned 117 – 138 AD), Antoninus Pius (reigned 138 – 161 AD), and Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161 – 180 AD). Each was only distantly related to his predecessor if at all. We will talk about just one – Marcus Aurelius.



The painting (right) is a depiction of Marcus Aurelius (lived from 121 – 180 AD).

Marcus Aurelius, Plato's philosopher-king

Aurelius was born in Spain in 121 AD to an aristocratic Roman family which was politically connected. (Similar to Plato!) His life comes through as a close approximation to Plato's concept of the philosopher-king articulated in Book V of the *Republic*. Plato writes: '*Unless either philosophers become kings in their countries, or those who are now called kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a genuine desire for wisdom; unless, that is to say, political power and philosophy meet together ... there*

can be no rest from troubles'. (*Republic* v. 473d)

Aurelius saw himself as a *student* of philosophy rather than a philosopher, and as a man struggling to fulfil his obligations to the people who had faith in him, rather than as an 'emperor'. It is precisely his humble view of himself which makes him the ideal candidate as the philosopher-king. Plato's concept stipulates that it is precisely the man who loves wisdom more than power who is best suited to rule.

In his '*Meditations*', Aurelius returns constantly to the theme of the importance of living a true, honest life in an attempt to find inner peace rather than pay attention to the trappings of power and the kind of responsibilities inherent in ruling an empire. He took his responsibilities seriously, even if he did not always care for them (somewhat like Plato's ideal rulers returning to the 'cave' even if they did not care to do so), and devoted all his energies to making sure his decisions were just.

During the rule of Aurelius, Christianity was still a new sect which continually disturbed the peace. Aurelius was *forced* to engage in persecutions of this religious faction to restore order between c. 162 – 166 AD even though he was reluctant to have to do so.

Throughout his life, Aurelius embodied the earlier concept of Plato's philosopher-king, the man who rules, not for himself, but for the greater good of his people.

The five good emperors

Here are a few of the many sites on the Internet about the five good emperors:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerva%E2%80%93Antonine_dynasty#Nerva%E2%80%93Trajan_dynasty

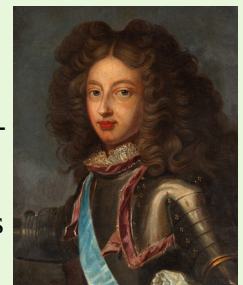
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Five-Good-Emperors>

Marcus Aurelius, Plato's philosopher-king:

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/174/marcus-aurelius-platos-philosopher-king/>

The grandson of Louis XIV

Louis, Duke of Burgundy (1682 - 1712), was the grandson of King Louis XIV of France (known as the *Sun King*). A Roman Catholic archbishop was charged with his moral education. The crucial issue in this education was that kings should possess self-restraint and selfless devotion to duty, rather than that they should possess knowledge and power, much in line with Plato's idea of the philosopher-king. However, this Louis never became king of France so we don't know how he might have ruled.



Frederick the Great and Catherine II the Great

Frederick II the Great of Prussia (1712 – 1786; King from 1740), and Catherine II the Great of Russia (1729 – 1796; Queen from 1762), would pride themselves on being philosopher-kings and philosopher-queens.

Frederick the Great

Frederick II (depicted in the painting below) was King of Prussia from 1740 until 1786. He had many ancient role models and aspired to be a Platonic philosopher-king like his hero, Marcus Aurelius. He even had many statues of Marcus placed throughout his summer residence. (In truth, most of Frederick's

ancient role models were not philosophers at all but warriors. Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were the men he most wanted to emulate.) Still, Frederick argued that a prince should not be motivated by just power interests, but by a deep concern for the well-being of his subjects.

During the mid-18th century, Frederick established in the minds of educated Europeans a notion of what ‘enlightened despotism’ should be. Like Plato, he considered the nobility the most important class in Prussian society. From it were drawn the majority of the army officers and virtually all the higher-ranking ones. It also produced the majority of his officials. In Frederick’s eyes, the nobility alone of all the social groups had a sense of personal honour and responsibility. The continued existence of the state depended on it, and the regime could not function without its cooperation. Very Platonic!



Frederick the Great accomplished much as a ruler, thus his title, ‘*The Great*’. His actual achievements, however, while numerous and which we will not go into here, were sometimes less celebrated than they appeared on the surface.

More on Frederick the Great

A link you may like to look at:

<https://modernstoicism.com/frederick-the-great-a-stoic-on-the-throne-by-kevin-kennedy/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_the_Great

Catherine the Great

Catherine II of Russia (1729 – 1796) was Empress of Russia from 1762 until 1796. She was probably one ruler who may deserve the title ‘*The Great*’. She was an able ruler and introduced a number of educational and administrative reforms which had a lasting impact on her nation.



Education: She founded the first educational establishment for women in Russia (Plato, who treated women and men equally, would have liked that). She also established a network of primary and secondary schools which were free of charge, co-educational and open to all of the *free* classes. However, they were not to *serfs*, the lowest class. (In those times, the serfs were barely distinguishable from slaves. Many serfs were formally enslaved and served Russian masters. Russian serfdom was finally abolished in 1861.) This is like Plato, whose education programme was open to all, though also not for slaves. Remember that Plato lived in Athens where slaves were non-people with with no civic rights. So perhaps Catherine was no different than Plato in this respect! (Thought: Did she get the idea from Plato?)

Catherine also established a number of foundling hospitals, or boarding schools for orphaned and abandoned children. The picture (right) is a 2007 photo of the Moscow Orphanage or Foundling Home established by Catherine.



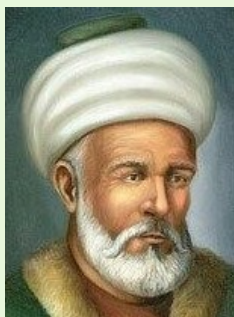
Medical: The medical scourge of the age was smallpox. Catherine heard of the new inoculation treatment in England by Edward Jenner (1749 – 1825). Dr. Thomas Dinsdale of Scotland was also a pioneer. In 1768, Catherine paid Dinsdale to come to Russia and inoculate her and her son – and later her grandson. This caught the world’s attention. By 1780, more than 20 000 Russians had been inoculated. By 1800, more than 2 million Russians had been inoculated along with millions of other Europeans in countries that followed her example. For this one very public and courageous act, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people lived who would otherwise have died or been badly scarred by smallpox. As a result of what Catherine did, the people of Russia loved her and she became one of the greatest *benevolent* despots ever known, but a despot nevertheless. (Despot = a ruler with absolute, unlimited power; autocrat, who *sometimes* used it unfairly and cruelly.)

The Hermitage: Catherine built the Hermitage (founded 1764) – an attempt (by Catherine) to recreate the monumental styles of the past and harken back to the ‘pure’ days of Plato and Socrates, scholars whose work had been recently rediscovered and examined as part of the Renaissance and later, the Enlightenment. Royalty, such as Catherine, were drawn to this new style, because it highlighted their connection (however imagined) to the original European Empire (Greece followed by Rome) and depicted their dedication to the ideas and values that emerged during the Enlightenment. The picture shows the Hermitage as it is now.

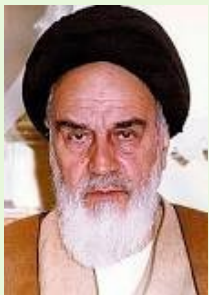


More on Catherine the Great
 Some links you may like to look at:
<http://www.heathervanmouwerik.com/tag/catherine-ii/>
<https://learnodo-newtonic.com/catherine-the-great-accomplishments>

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī



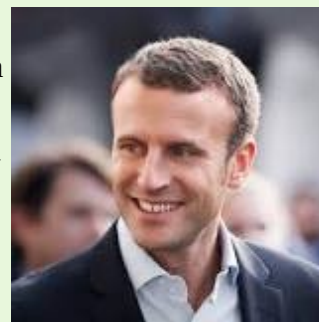
In the Islamic world of medieval times, philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (c. 872 – 850 AD, pictured left), had championed the notion of a religiously devout philosopher-king. More than 1000 years later, the notion of such a figure acting as the interpreter of law inspired the Ayatollah Khomeini (1902 – 1989, pictured right) and the revolutionary state that he shaped in Iran, though whether he lived up to the ideals of a philosopher-king is another matter.



President Macron of France

Paul Ricœur (1913 – 2005) was a French philosopher known for his dialectic outlook (that is – remember? – the exchange of opposing ideas to try and get the truth, a correct answer or a satisfactory conclusion). Rather than setting out one fixed opinion, Ricœur tended to acknowledge two contradictory viewpoints and attempt to reconcile them.

Before Macron (1977 – , pictured right) became a politician, he spent two years working with Ricœur, and the philosopher’s thinking is apparent in how Macron conducts politics (or tries to!). The French president is strikingly pragmatic, and doesn’t hold tight to any one political ideology. Macron appears perfectly happy to consider ideas from both the right and left – which makes it hard to predict how he’ll react to unfolding events.



Plato would be happy!

Why *I* am not on the list of platonic philosophers

Have a look at the following link:

<https://www.stephenhicks.org/2013/02/22/why-i-am-not-a-platonic-philosopher/>

In it, the author lists points needed to be a philosopher-king and why he will not be on the list!

Could *you* ever be on this list?

Plato’s dualism and the development of Christianity

Greek thought in general, and Plato in particular, have influenced Christian thought. The first generations of Christians were primarily Jews, but they lived amidst a world shaped by Greek culture. As a result, Christian thought was influenced from the very beginning by Greek philosophy.

One major influence on Christianity was Greek *dualism*. Plato believed that the self has a dual nature, being divided into two parts, **body** and **soul**, with the soul more closely related to **goodness** and truth. This was incorporated into early Christianity’s soul-body division.

Greek dualism has continued to plague (yes that is the word that has been used!) Christianity ever since. From Calvinism to Puritanism to realist evangelicals (especially in the US) and others who support a sacred versus secular *two-kingdom* theology.

The beginnings of Christianity

Christianity emerged from a *two-fold* ancestry: *Israel* and *Greece*. In the time of Jesus, his disciples and St Paul, Christianity was mainly based on Jewish and Old Testament thought. In the Old Testament, the Hebrews (that is, Jewish people, especially of ancient Israel) viewed God as the creator of the world, **one** world, and that the world is good. Evil is not found in the world of matter, the material, but rather in human sin, in our rebellion against God.

For the Hebrews, the body and soul were absolutely *inseparable*; they were one (**monism**, not dualism). Also, the focus of the Hebrews was on *this* world and making ‘*on earth as it is in heaven*’ (Lord’s prayer, Matthew 6:10) which is actually the central message of Jesus and the New Testament until Greek ideas interfered.



What changed?

One person who introduced Greek ideas into Christianity actually lived during the time of Jesus. This was Philo of Alexandria (a city in Egypt) (c. 25 BC – 47 AD, depicted below), a Hellenized Jew, who began a Christian tradition when he attempted to explain Jewish religion in Platonist dualism terms, the

separation of body and soul. Not all agreed. Later, Tertullian (c. 55 – 222 AD), opposed the intrusion of Platonism into Christianity.



Plato placed greater value on the soul, which he says exists beyond this life (Myth of Er). Christianity followed this and introduced the idea of *escaping the world* and going to a heaven beyond this life. So Christianity began to separate life into ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ or heaven-hell, soul-body, spiritual-secular. As in Plato’s thought, the soul is eternal, immortal and divine. The body (or the flesh) is bad, perishable and not eternal.

The goal of life, for Plato, was to die, to rid the soul of the imperfection of the body and of the material world altogether. Plato’s two worlds/realms were the visible, which is changeable and can be destroyed, and the invisible, which is perfect, unchangeable and eternal. In Platonic Christianity, Plato’s world of the Forms (or Ideas, which are perfect and eternal) becomes the *sacred* realm while the world of matter becomes the *secular* world. As with Plato, the secular world is less valuable than the sacred world. Death releases the soul from the body.

Later developments

St. Augustine (354 – 430 AD, depicted right), considered to be the most influential of early Christian thinkers, attempted to further synthesise Greek thought with Christianity arguing that Christianity came to complete Greek philosophy, not destroy it. However, he modified Platonism to accommodate Christian doctrine. For example, unlike the Platonists, the Christian belief is that the *whole* body is immortal – that the body will rise again when it is resurrected – and Augustine insisted on this belief.



Many of the early Church Fathers attempted to rid pagan (especially Greek) elements from Christian theology. However, these scholars were themselves educated in Greek philosophy and had come to absorb the Greek way of thought. Consequently, their attempts to remove Greek thinking from their thoughts on Christianity often failed.

The Roman Catholic church, Protestant Church and Martin Luther, also tended to blend Christianity with Greek thought.

Reincarnation

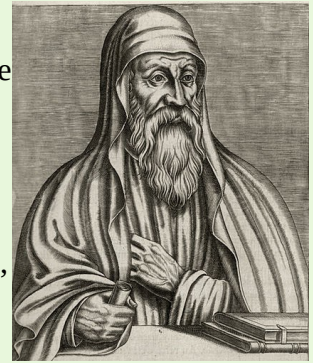
Plato believed in immortality and *repeated* reincarnation (the Myth of Er again). Christianity once had similar ideas. In early Christianity, it seems to have been common to believe that one does not come to Earth just once but various times, though this does not seem to be in the New Testament. The idea seems to have been ‘hidden’ but was revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls (written between 170 BC and 50 AD).

The first of the two pictures on the right shows the caves in the Dead Sea regions of the Judean desert in the West Bank of Israel, from where the scrolls were unearthed between 1947 and 1956. The other



picture shows one of the scrolls.

According to the first important father of the early Orthodox Church, Origen (185 – 254 AD, depicted in an imaginative portrayal, right), the soul exists before birth. He suggested that pre-existence was found in the Hebrew scriptures and that in the teachings of Jesus, the doctrines of pre-existence and reincarnation only existed as Jesus’ *secret* teachings. However, two centuries later, in 553 AD, this information was declared heresy and no more was heard about it. Nowadays, some churches say that it is possible that reincarnation exists. However, the belief in reincarnation is still more applicable to Buddhism or even New Age followers than to Christianity.



Resurrection and Reincarnation in Early Christianity

For more on this. Take a look at the following website:

<https://www.ancient-origins.net/history/hidden-beliefs-covered-church-resurrection-and-reincarnation-early-christianity-006320>

Reform

Today, there are some who say there is a need to strive to rid Christianity of Greek dualism and to eliminate the spiritual-secular divide that has plagued Christianity from the beginning.

The physical dichotomy in Greek dualism is not consistent with the teachings of Scripture and those of Jesus, who was deeply involved in the affairs of the world (which, of course, eventually led to his death). Too many modern Christians separate spiritual life from public life. Rather than integrating their faith with *all* aspects of life, they often reduce it to getting to a ticket out of hell and an escape from this evil world and avoid eternal punishment.

For Jesus, heaven is now, a present reality, and he tried to transform *this* world to get a heaven here on Earth. So too should modern Christians. So, instead of devaluing our physical world, they need to embrace it and engage more in the concerns of this world. This would include putting more effort, for example, into saving the human race and the planet from destruction, such as working to prevent global warming (see later, page 56ff.). This would be a genuine biblical *alternative* to Greek dualism and the sacred-secular divide.

Is Plato’s Ideal State a Totalitarian State?

Some background first: Authoritarian forms of governments

In order to determine whether or not Plato’s ideal state is totalitarian, it is necessary to appreciate that there are different forms of authoritarian government, which range from ones with less control, to others with *absolute* control. These lie on a continuum of forms of government from authoritarianism to fascism:

authoritarianism ————— totalitarianism —————> fascism

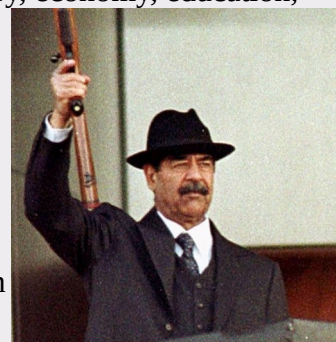
All authoritarian forms of government are controlled by a single person or a small, elite group. However,

because of the continuum, it is not always easy to label any specific regime. Let us look at the three forms.

Authoritarianism: This is strict control by a single person or small group over the lives of citizens, but allows some civil and political freedom and less influence on personal beliefs and preferences of citizens. Freedoms are limited in areas related to the political process, freedom of speech, and public policy. Examples are Singapore (a symbol of Singapore, the *Merlion*, pictured right), Cuba, modern Turkey. (We might also include most workplaces – the boss tells us what to do, or else! Most families also have an authoritarian streak, as do schools.)



Totalitarianism: As the name implies, totalitarianism exerts *total, virtually unlimited* control by a single party, over the public and private lives of citizens, including their personal matters, personal beliefs and preferences. *Characteristics:* Censorship is common, total control of the military, economy, education, religion, communication (newspapers, TV, propaganda, etc...), police control with the use of terror as a control tactic, and even morality and reproductive rights. Because of the difficulty of controlling large populations minutely, no pure form of totalitarian government has ever existed. Examples are Maoist China, Iraq under Saddam Hussein (right), Libya under Colonel *Gaddafi*, USSR, North Korea. *Modern China* may also be totalitarian though less so than under Mao (at least for now!).



Fascism: This is extreme totalitarianism and considered to be at the far-right end of the political continuum above. It is characterised by the imposition of dictatorial power, absolute government control of industry and commerce, and the forcible, often brutal, suppression of opposition, often at the hands of the military or a secret police force. The primary function of fascist regimes has been to maintain the nation in a constant state of readiness for war. Fascism was first seen in Italy during World War I, later spreading to Nazi Germany. The photo shows the two World War II fascist leaders – Mussolini of Italy (left) and Hitler of Germany (right).



Today, few (none?) governments publicly described themselves as fascist. Instead, the term is more often used in a negative way by those critical of particular governments or leaders. The term ‘neo-fascist’ is often used to describe governments or individuals espousing radical, far right political ideologies similar to those of the World War II fascist states.

Links to authoritarian forms of governments

Much of the above information was obtained from the following links:

<https://study.com/academy/answer/difference-between-authoritarian-and-totalitarian.html>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/totalitarianism-definition-characteristics-examples.html>

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-differences-between-authoritarianism-totalitarianism-and-fascism>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/totalitarianism-authoritarianism-fascism-4147699>

Plato's Ideal State

Plato's ideal state/society, despite his claim of providing justice and the good of all, has been criticised as anti-democratic and totalitarian. However, we must remember that Plato was writing in Greece at a time of major political decay and that his interest in justice was connected to his interest in restoring the political health of his community. Thus his *Republic* was almost a practical guide for Greek cities of his time and is not necessarily a practical guide for us. (But that has not stopped people from using Plato's ideas.)

Plato equates *injustice* with dissension, quarrels and factions, and that justice must be the *opposite* of such a divisive force. Justice must be unity, harmony, complete agreement among the parts, whether of society or of the individual (soul) in society.

So, how to get unity and thus justice? For Plato, justice is very narrowly defined, and is achieved by a strict adherence to the three-class organisation, in which justice occurs when the citizens in each class perform their allocated task or function (and no other), that is, when society is divided according to a '*natural division of labour*' (i. 353a).

As this class system is very rigid and inflexible, it is difficult to ignore the extremist overtones of the *Republic*. Plato does admit '*that the rule of wisdom is tyrannical, and that it cannot tolerate words or deeds, laws or traditional institutions*' and so envisions his ideal state as a closed one in which the Ruler/Philosopher-king has a *lot of control of society*. While Plato's state may be just, it may just be too strict to be adopted by (most) human beings.

Plato may or may *not* have believed that his ideal state would work in practice. But he was extremely dissatisfied with the city-states of his day, and was *proposing* an alternative.

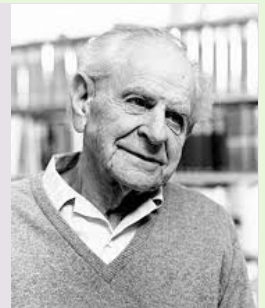
A totalitarian state?

Many people have commented on this question. There tends to be agreement that it *was* totalitarian but there are differences of opinion as to how far along the continuum above it went.

One view: It is extremely totalitarian

The discussion here includes mainly the very strong views of Sir Karl Popper, who among others, regarded Plato's ideal state as extremely totalitarian.

Note on Sir Karl Popper (1902 – 1994): One of the 20th century's greatest philosophers of *science*. Popper is known for his view that in science, nothing can ever be *proven*, but can be shown to be *false* by means of decisive experiments. (Einstein had a similar view: "*You can do a thousand experiments and not prove me right; you can do one experiment and prove me wrong*".) While at Stanford, I studied Popper's philosophy of science (but not his views on Plato) and was very impressed.



If you want details about Popper's views on the *Republic* specifically, go to this link:

https://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/pdf_files/2008_Essays/Plato%20s%20Republic-Just%20Society%20or%20Totalitarian%20State.pdf

According to Popper, Plato's idea of justice was used in order to prevent *any* change in society by the maintenance of a rigid class division to ensure class rule and class privilege of the guardians. The three-tiered system illustrates Plato's hostility towards the principle of *equalitarianism* for all citizens (even though equalitarian had been espoused by Pericles and others before Plato). Plato's justice equated to unity *imposed* on the parts that make up society, primarily the lowest class.

Popper says that Plato advocated a government composed *only* of a distinct hereditary ruling class, with the working class – whom Popper argues Plato regarded as '*human cattle*' – given no role in decision any making. Probably correct!

For Popper, in Plato's ideal state, total control is in the hands of the rulers, little freedom of expression is allowed and there is a perverse commitment to, and control of, a Spartan-like regimentation of social life. That is, the state has almost complete control and so is totalitarian. Everything that furthers the state is good and just; everything that threatens it is bad and unjust. In Plato's ideal city, even lying is good if it provides for the unity of the state (the 'noble lie').

By Popper's standards, Plato's ideal society does indeed resemble a *modern* totalitarian state in that he places all political power in the hands of a *single* ruler, asserts that each person has a proper function to fill in society, and places prime importance on the well-being of society over that of the individual, a well-being that relies on each performing his function in service of the state even if against his will.

Life in Plato's ideal state does have affinities with life under a totalitarian government. The laws which Plato suggests are repressive. People are allowed to have only one occupation – namely that for which they are best suited by nature. Except for the guardians, everyone else in Plato's utopia is to be forced by the philosopher-king(s) to live their lives in a fundamentally unfree (non self-determining) way. The individual must submit to the rule of the few superior beings capable of determining his social destiny for him.

Another view: Yes, totalitarian but ...!

It is hard to avoid that Plato's ideal state is totalitarian. But where is it on the spectrum/continuum of authoritarian rule? It may be more towards the *less* extreme. Others take this view and consider Plato's *motivations* in setting up this state, his *background* and *what he lived through*.

Plato had first-hand experience with the political evils of his time which he discusses in Book VIII of the *Republic* (viii. 543 to viii. 569), which looks at timocracy, oligarchy and democracy. But, in contrast to the oligarchic and *bad democratic* governments that Plato had experienced first hand, the rulers in his state were to be, unlike tyrants and dictators, *benevolent and truly concerned* with the overall welfare of the state. Popper does *not* give credit to Plato for this.

Plato lived in an Athens that was in danger of losing its cultural and military pre-eminence, and was succumbing to disintegrating influences from abroad and from within. He had lived through the terrible times of the Peloponnesian War with Sparta and the Thirty Tyrants, and therefore had intimate experience of the horrors of anarchy, which he wanted to avoid at all costs.

To fix all this, Plato emphasised order and homogeneity, and believed that to do this, the claims of the

state held precedence over the claims of the individual. He also believed that in a just state full of just individuals, the laws of the state would harmonise with the desires of the individuals.

So, Plato wanted the wisest and most noble people to rule, and believed that if they could be found, a just and ideal state could be established. His contention that a wise, just and good leader is really possible would preclude rule by incompetent or immoral leaders. We also need to keep this in mind when judging him. For Plato, the best leader had to be either *authoritarian or aristocratic*, or *both*. Yes, Plato *did* select the guardian caste to rule, a class he believed was the only one capable of producing individuals who possess the innate qualities necessary for selection for leadership. Hence (very) authoritarian!

We have already said earlier that Plato was an aristocrat and *no democrat!* But, for Plato, democracy was *not* as we understand it today but synonymous with ‘chaotic mob rule’. What is important was *not that Plato opposed democracy per se* but that he argued for **natural law** (that is, some kind of morality inside us that comes from nature/God/wherever and not from external laws of the state) and this is what differentiates him from a totalitarian.

Modern totalitarianism condemns the idea of natural law, replacing its authority with the arbitrary will of a dictator. Thus, whereas a modern totalitarian state would be characterised by ‘maniacal tyrants’ such as Hitler and Stalin, Plato’s ideal society would reflect the beneficent rule of its philosopher-king, ‘*by definition a lover and implementer of the good*’.

Others however even see evidence of *democracy* in Plato’s description of his ideal state, for instance in the egalitarianism that characterises certain aspects of his educational programme that is for all – men and women (but not slaves).

Still, as already mentioned (several times!), Plato’s *Republic* was rooted in Plato’s Greece, in Greek politics and is almost a practical guide for Greek cities and colonies of the time to adopt, if not our own today.

Would the population in Plato’s totalitarian state revolt? Would the state collapse?

Plato, of course, would say ‘No’ as all citizens are happy and there is harmony in the state. Others disagree, claiming that totalitarian regimes throughout history, as well as modern one-party states, share a few basic traits. Power is held by one person or a very small number of individuals. To maintain their power, those individuals repress dissent and rule by intimidation. Citizens are denied true freedom and harsh laws are promulgated. Any society/state that does not allow freedom among its participants is inherently unstable, having the potential for rebellion built into it. Many such states/societies throughout history have collapsed.

So, would Plato’s ‘totalitarian’ utopia make dissatisfaction inevitable, especially among the lowest class of producers, and would they have a desperate desire to rebel and break free? Holders of this view claim that Plato’s utopia would indeed collapse just as other states/societies throughout history have.

My question: But these states/societies throughout history that collapsed were not built on the lines of Plato’s ideal state/society. If they were, would they still have collapsed? Unfortunately we don’t know, and Plato’s ideal state gives no clues as it was never constructed and tested.

China 2018

Under Mao Zedong, China was a very totalitarian state. But then, for 35 years or so, from the time Mao died in 1976, his successor Deng Xiaoping (pictured, right) launched reforms that lasted until President Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012. Under Deng, China became what scholars have called an ‘*adaptive authoritarian*’ regime rather than a totalitarian one.



No longer!

President Xi has become an absolute, omnipotent leader, and no dissent is allowed even in the government. The state is now very totalitarian. Bureaucrats (and citizens) live in fear; they flatter their president and never disagree. Consequently, the president is increasingly cut off from reality and the rest of the world. Observers warn that the Chinese state may collapse – a typical occurrence among similar totalitarian dictatorships when faced with economic shocks, external threats (especially a defeat in war), or popular unrest.



For more on this, go to the following link:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/15/chinas-great-leap-backward-xi-jinping/>

Totalitarian companies 2018?

Companies, including Disney and Amazon, have installed electronic tracking systems that monitor every aspect of their workers’ performance in real time. The companies have total control over these workers. And it doesn’t look good. For more on this, visit the website:



<https://www.fastcompany.com/90260703/the-dark-side-of-gamifying-work?>

Was Plato right or wrong?

Where Plato was *right* was that the interests of both the individual and the community must coincide and that there is happiness in both the individual and the community/state when harmony exists in both. Where he went *wrong* was in failing to understand that such harmony will only occur once the individual has (i) freedom, and (ii) is appreciated by others, something we today would regard as important pre-requisites for justice to exist. The individuals in Plato’s state did *not* have these pre-requisites.

Further, although Plato *did* value freedom, he did so much less than we moderns do. Whatever similarities there may be between Plato’s idea of justice and our own, they are still fundamentally different, since his world view is diametrically opposed to ours. We, at least in modern *fully* democratic nations (where there is little authoritarianism), conceive of justice as oriented around ideas of individual

freedom and the priority of the individual over the community, and we consider it sometimes not only permissible but even meritorious to disobey the state's laws if they violate certain intuitions about individual rights. Plato's concept of justice is instead inspired by his conviction that the collective takes ethical precedence over the individual, and that there is an order into which each person is supposed to fit, and that is far more important than rights.

Should we modify Plato?

So whose concept of justice (or more fundamentally, which world view) is better or 'right', Plato's or ours? Probably neither Plato's nor our own is totally satisfactory, but each has its strengths that could be combined, selecting the strengths from each. This would emphasise both the importance of the community *and* the importance of the individual, while succumbing neither to the potential totalitarianism of the *Republic*, nor to the excessive individualism that is present in modern culture (and particularly so in the United States – which means Americans care more about themselves and their own interests and less about the mutual benefits of larger groups in the community).

So, if anyone today wants to establish an ideal state (or even a non-ideal one), they could perhaps do as Marx did, at least in theory (even if in practice his 'followers' deviated far from his ideals), and adopt the liberal features of Plato's notion of social justice while casting off its totalitarian undertones. If they did so, life might become a little better than it is now, in our increasingly confused and divided world.

Plato and Issues Today

Why should people in the modern world bother to read what Plato had to say? Does it make sense to go to a Greek thinker of 2400 years ago for advice on the problems of an age so different from his own? But the problems facing Plato's world *do* bear striking parallels to ours today, so who better to turn to than Plato, perhaps the most objective observer of the failures of Greek society.

Here we look at the following issues that are relevant today in the light of Plato's thought:

- Global warming
- Is democracy making way for oligarchy?
- Noble lies and wars
- Genetic engineering, CRISPR and eugenics
- Is philosophy for everyone?
- The world of insects

[Note: There is overlap in this section with that of the previous section on the influence of Plato's *Republic* over the centuries, so from time to time you may like to refer back to the earlier topics.]

Plato's warning: Global warming will not be stopped

You might think it strange to include this, but Plato's philosophy does have implications for global warming (and many other issues), even though of course, he never mentioned it himself.

Plato was deeply pessimistic about the ability of the human race to govern itself. In the *Republic* he has Socrates say:

“Unless either philosophers rule in our cities or those whom now we call rulers and potentates engage genuinely and adequately in philosophy, and political power and philosophy coincide, there is no end, my dear Glaucon, to troubles in our cities, nor I think for the human race.” [v. 473c-d]

By ‘troubles in our cities’, Plato was thinking about what he had lived through. By ‘troubles ... for the human race’, which is what we are interested in here, he means that there would be no end of trouble or threat for societies if they sought *democratically* to decide what is the best thing to do. Global warming is one such ‘trouble’/threat for the human race.

This was, as we know well by now, because Plato believed democracy to be inherently flawed. To show why, he gives us an allegory of a **ship** at sea and also the allegory of **beasts**. (Refresh yourselves, if necessary, on the meanings of these allegories.)

In the allegory of the **beasts**, the handlers/keepers of the beast do what is necessary to keep the beast happy and not aggressive. In a *democracy*, the people/voters are like the beast. The handlers/keepers of the beast are the government leaders/politicians, who do what is necessary to placate the people in order to be re-elected.



There is, as we shall see, a connection between this image of democratic politicians as panderers and the phenomenon of global warming, which likewise threatens no end of trouble for the human race.

In 2017, Donald Trump withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement, the international effort to address dangerous global warming. But he was not the first. In 2001, President George W. Bush announced the US would not implement the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which was aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions and countering global warming. They knew the American people would not let anyone elected to lead them implement the impositions these agreements would have required, which would have meant, among other things, very high taxes on petrol and other fossil fuels and tolls on the highways. The presidents heard the growl of the American beast (the people), or at least understood, and backed off, and returned their attention to its moods and wants.

The UK *did* sign but won't act. There are no plans to stop the constant rise in UK traffic volumes or reduce the construction of motorways. The politicians too, had sensed the anger of the beast, caged in a car, and shied away from a sustainable development, which could include, for example, a reduction in the number of cars in order to match the already-available road capacity.

This is not a trivial matter. It is about how to keep the planet cool enough to live on. Despite their good intentions, those we call our rulers have failed to find answers. Perhaps we wouldn't be facing this danger if, as Plato wanted, our rulers had 'engaged genuinely and adequately in *philosophy*'. Had they done so, they might have found out why their efforts to stabilise the climate have achieved so little.

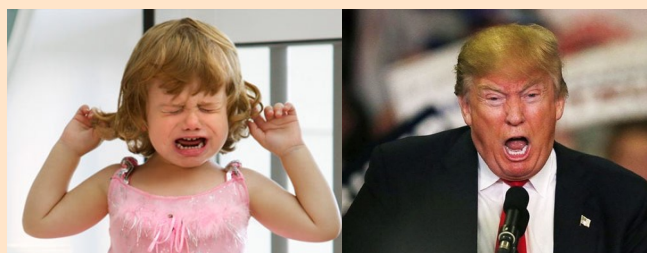
The pictures below show some of the effects of global warming (there are many more available on the Internet).



It is equally implausible to believe that any successful democratic politician (the beast's keeper) would put his popularity at risk by upsetting the voters who gave him power by giving priority to voters yet unborn, those who will suffer because of present-day inaction. The people's refusal to let their elected leaders deal adequately with the crisis of global warming may be the ultimate justification of Plato's pessimism about democratic government. No doubt Plato would tell us, "*You can keep democracy, or you can keep Earth cool enough to live on, but not both.*"

Other examples

Of course, it is not only in politics where the allegory of the beast applies. It can even occur in families, especially those parents who 'give in' to a child (the 'beast') who throws tantrums. Perhaps it applies also to presidents! (Maybe a little out of place, and nothing to do with global warming, but perhaps Plato might have predicted it.)



Can you give other examples?

Is Democracy making way for Oligarchy?

Look back at Plato's discussion on the decline of the ideal state (page 36ff.). He suggests that the ideal state slides into an oligarchy and then into a democracy. Here we consider the reverse, though Plato was not rigid in the order he give. Again remember that for Plato, democracy was synonymous with corruption and often mob rule and anarchy, which is why he placed it 'lower' than oligarchy. Today, we don't (perhaps) view democracy this way and would regard oligarchy (the rule of a few, often the wealthy or nobility) as worse.

We look at democracies in general and the United States, where the problem is more acute.

In the modern world of technological advancements, democratic oversight and political authority is often weak, as recent events with Facebook, Google and other tech giants have shown. But oversight is more important than ever. And yet, that is precisely where democracies are failing.



Also, in today's globalised economy, individual governments have have often lost control of economic management to others such as through international trade agreements, for example, NAFTA, TPP, something that President Trump in the US has been trying to reverse. This loss of control has been blamed on the loss of jobs and the disappearance of the middle class in advanced democratic countries as well as a re-distribution of wealth that favours 'the top 1%'.

But wealth doesn't just get distributed upwards by accident: somewhere along the line, decisions have been made to do that, though by and large, those decisions are hidden from us.

As the middle class disappears – because the jobs that support it disappear – a massive, government mandated redistribution of wealth is needed. But tell that to the 1%. Not only does their wealth insulate them from the vagaries of the world economy, it allows them to 'buy' political influence and thus engineer outcomes that favour them (especially in the US – see below). Equitable societies are built by nations committed to that goal: they don't just emerge from the random operation of markets.



So what is it to be? An oligarchy where the majority live on the scraps tossed out the window by a passing billionaire, or an *actual* democracy? If you don't think you get to choose, then the oligarchy is already here.

A US oligarchy

A 2014 study showed that majority-rule *democracy exists only in theory in the United States*, and not so much in practice. The government caters to the affluent few and organised interest groups, while the average citizen's influence on policy is 'near zero'.

The findings of the study strongly suggest that America is now an oligarchy. Economic elites and interest groups, especially those representing business, have a substantial degree of influence over what their government does, while ordinary citizens have virtually no influence. This ability to shape outcomes is

restricted to people at the top of the income distribution (the top 1%) and to organised groups that represent primarily – although not exclusively – business. And over time, responsiveness to elites by the government has grown.

Some examples of policy preferences that the *majority* holds that the government is *not* responsive to are a higher minimum wage, health care, more support for the unemployed and for education spending.

Although ordinary voters elect their leaders, politicians, while in office need money to obtain and retain office. So they need to balance the activities that will benefit them in terms of money with the activities that'll benefit them in terms of votes.

Two crucial factors cause this in the US.

The first and central factor is the *role of money* in the political system, and the overwhelming role that that affluent individuals and organised interests (the top 1%) play, in campaign finance and in lobbying. Another study has showed, so pervasive is the power of money in US politics, America is no longer a democracy but an oligarchy in the hands of the few at the 'top', saying: "... *rich, well-connected individuals on the political scene now steer the direction of the country, regardless of, or even against the will of, the majority of voters*".

The second crucial factor, the study suggests, is the lack of organisations that represent and facilitate the voice of ordinary citizens. Part of that would be the decline of unions in the country which has been quite dramatic over the last 30 or 40 years. And part of it is the lack of a socialist or a worker's party.

The middle class has *not* done well over the last three and a half decades, and certainly has not done well during and since the 2008 great recession, because the political system responded to the crisis in a way that led to a pretty nice recovery for just the economic elites and corporations.

Articles on democracy and oligarchy

Article outlining the 2014 study, which I used for comments:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qhQT05LGJlhbNQk4UgUG5wKKHcRuCzTf>

Democracy Index by country (2017), which categorises each as full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian. The US is in the flawed democracy category.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index

'Noble lies' and wars in the 20th Century

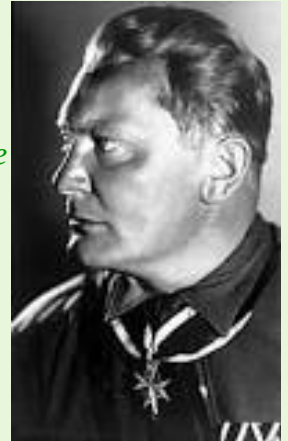
By the 'noble lie' (a mistranslation of Plato's term, remember), as already mentioned, Plato meant propaganda, the technique of controlling the behaviour of the stupid majority. This way of thinking remains alive in the world today especially regarding wars. Two examples are discussed here.

Goering and 'noble lies' in World War II

Hermann Goering (1893 – 1946) was chief of the Nazi Air Force in World War II. He gave reasons for war which are similar to Plato's noble lie. He said that because people do not want war, the leaders are compelled to create illusions in order to build the support needed carry out wars as deemed necessary by them (the leaders).

Here are quotes from an interview at the Nuremberg trials that followed the war:

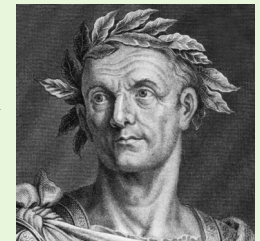
“Of course the people don’t want war. But after all, it’s the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it’s always a simple matter to drag the people along whether it’s a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to greater danger.”



Later in the interview: “... it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.”

The interviewer pointed out that there is one difference in a democracy where the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and that in the United States only Congress can declare wars. Goering replied: *“Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”*

His statement is also in the vein of the warning by Julius Caesar (100 BC – 44 BC), depicted right, about political leaders who (he may or may not have said) can all too easily send the citizenry marching eagerly off to war by manufacturing crises that purportedly threaten national security and making popular appeals to patriotism.



‘Noble lies’ and the ‘neocons’ and the Iraq War

[*neo-* = new; *-cons* = conservatives]

Yes, Plato also has something to say about the US-led Iraq war of 2003!

In the US, the so-called neocons were a group of very conservative (far-right?) members of the George W Bush administration, who were responsible for the lies and propaganda used for invading Iraq.



The use of deception and manipulation in the Bush US policy flowed directly from the doctrines of the political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899 – 1973), pictured right. His disciples included Paul Wolfowitz and other neoconservatives who drove much of the political agenda of the Bush administration. Strauss was a great believer in the efficacy and usefulness of lies in politics. Public support for the Iraq war rested on lies about Iraq posing an imminent threat to the United States, lies about Saddam Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction, and about a fictitious alliance between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime.



Plato was one of the ancient philosophers whom Strauss most cherished, and believed, as Plato did, that

the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty. Plato and others of his time denied that there is any *natural right* to liberty. Human beings are born neither free nor equal. The natural human condition, they held, is not one of freedom, but of *subordination* and in the opinion of Strauss they were right in thinking so.

Strauss shared the insights of Plato (using *Thrasymachus* as his mouthpiece in the *Republic* – remember him?) that justice is merely the *interest of the stronger*; that those in power make the rules in their own interests and call it justice.

A second fundamental belief of Strauss's Plato has to do with his insistence on the need for secrecy and the necessity of 'lies'. The rulers must conceal their views for two reasons: (1) to spare the people's feelings, and (2) to protect themselves from possible reprisals. Strauss goes so far as to say that deception and a culture of lies are the peculiar *justice of the wise*!

Strauss justifies his position by an appeal to Plato's concept of the 'noble lie'. But in truth, Strauss has a very impoverished conception of Plato's 'noble lie'. As we saw earlier (pages 26-27), the 'noble lie' is a *story* whose details are fictitious; but at the heart of it is a *profound truth*. Nor – remember? – did Plato actually use the term 'lie' itself, noble or otherwise. Plato had wondered whether it was possible for good rulers/politicians to be truthful and still govern to maintain a stable society – hence the use of the 'noble lie' is necessary in securing public acquiescence. Strauss endorsed this concept: the myths politicians need to use in maintaining a cohesive society, but embraced the outright use of lies.

Consider two of Plato's allegories – *stories* that the masses of his time would (might?) accept.

In his allegory of the **metals**, Plato says some people have golden souls meaning that they are more capable of resisting the temptations of power. And these morally trustworthy types are the ones who are most fit to rule. The details in the allegory are fictitious, but the moral of the story is that not all human beings are morally equal. Plato believed that the producers, the lowest class in his ideal state would accept the 'truth' in such stories.

Now to Plato's allegory of the **cave**. Strauss's reading of Plato entails that the philosophers should return to the cave and *manipulate* the images (in the form of media, magazines, newspapers). The philosophers know full well that the line they espouse is not true, but they are convinced that theirs are 'noble lies'. Of course, this is *not* the interpretation of the allegory we have discussed (page 33 ff.).

'Noble lies' and modern China (2018)

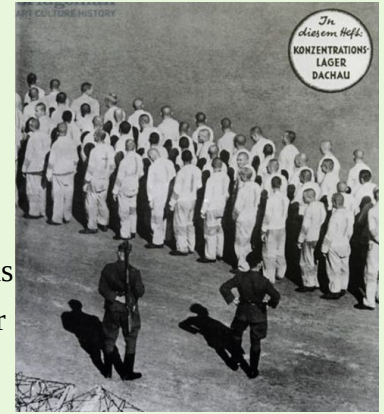
Beijing is using the Nazi propaganda playbook to justify its concentration camps in Xinjiang to the world. China recently admitted that these camps exist. However, it now tries to present a propaganda picture of benign 'vocational training centres', rolled out to deal with people who pose a threat to social order. The pictures (right) are part of this, showing 'happy' Xinjiang Uighurs being educated.

The photo on the next page is perhaps closer to the





truth. It is of detainees at a prison camp. This photo was originally published by the Chinese authorities themselves, but like many other pieces of evidence, has been removed from internet.



We need to remember that both the Nazis and the Soviets also tried to present their horrific concentration camps to the world in very similar terms – as benign and necessary. The photo (right) is of a camp scene used in a 1938 Nazi propaganda publication.

For more on this issue, go to:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=18kjFeqfytb_ppXMaNWP6vMgqIPtWztc

Or to the original site:

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/10/27/beijing-using-nazi-propaganda-playbook-justify-concentration-camps-world/>

Questions to think about

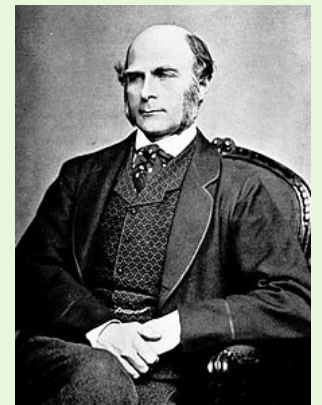
Do the claims of Straussian thought still wield a crucial influence on people of power in the contemporary United States (or other countries)? Do the leaders still use lies that they believe the people will accept as truth? Can you think of any examples?

Plato and genetic engineering, CRISPR and eugenics

In his *Republic*, Plato suggests that people should only be allowed to marry and reproduce under controlled circumstances. Plato, you see, regarded people much the same as livestock: you breed the best ones and not the others. The rulers select men and women likely to produce the best children and hopefully good future rulers. However, this breeding programme only applied to the guardian classes.

That is, Plato believed in *eugenics* and would practise it in his ideal state!

The term 'eugenics' was coined in 1883 by the British polymath Francis Galton (1822 – 1911), pictured right. The word comes from the Greek *eugenes*, meaning 'well born' or 'good breeding'.



Galton was a half-cousin of Charles Darwin. Whereas Darwin applied the principles of plant and animal breeding to nature – hence *natural* selection – Galton applied them to *people* to try to produce the best individuals possible.

Although eugenics later became racial in its most extreme form under the Nazis, Galton's idea of eugenics was as more about class than race. For Galton, eugenics was an alternative to simply letting the poor, the infirm, the diseased and the bottom strata of British society just starve and live on the streets. In his mind, eugenics was a humanitarian effort. He believed that if you simply explained to people why this was in their best interest, then society's *best* members would have as many children as they could and society's *worst* members, the lower classes, would voluntarily restrict their reproduction. Unfortunately for Galton,

this approach did not catch on.

But eugenics didn't end with Galton. Across the Atlantic, in late 19th and early 20th century America, the idea of human hereditary advantage gained a *different kind* of traction. This was a time of great racial tension in the United States, and so whereas in Britain, society's worst members were considered to be the lower classes, in the United States the 'worst' members of society were blacks and immigrants. This was used in the US to bolster arguments *against* interracial marriage.

In early 20th century America, however, eugenics shifted towards biological *engineering* with the advent of enforced sterilisation for those regarded as 'feeble-minded' (a policy later ruled unconstitutional). Sterilisation was promoted as being in the state's interest (another example of a 'noble lie' perhaps?).

In the 1930s, tens of thousands of people in the United States were sterilised under these laws. Enforced sterilisation of vulnerable groups continued in the United States until well after WWII.

Francis Galton saw eugenics as the *voluntary* restriction of marriage and procreation for an implied social good. In the United States, hereditary human improvement *enforced* through the medical control of reproduction (more totalitarian?).

Eugenics in Germany

Eugenics research in Germany before and during the Nazi period was similar to that in the United States (particularly California), by which it had been partly inspired. However, its prominence rose sharply under Adolf Hitler's leadership. The development of Nazi Germany's mass sterilisation programme was also influenced by US laws. Hitler and Mengele and a number of the top brass in the German army were well read in American eugenics and took that as a model and used knowledge of the California sterilisation law in drafting the sterilisation law of the Nazi regime.

One early method used in Germany was to transport victims by buses in which the engine exhaust gases were passed into the interior of the buses, so killing the passengers. The picture (right) shows one such bus.



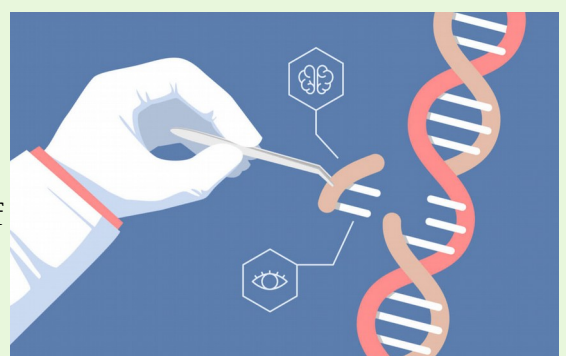
For more eugenics in Germany, go to:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_eugenics

CRISPR

Today, biological technologies hold the promise of reshaping hereditary improvement through personalised gene editing. One of the most promising of these new technologies is called *clustered regularly-spaced short palindromic repeats*, or **CRISPR**. the 'editing out' of genetic diseases and 'editing in' of desirable features such as height or strength.

There is concern about whether gene editing constitutes a new



form of eugenics. Also, there is concern about the possibility of intolerance towards children with Down's syndrome or other severe disabilities. Such disabilities might become socially unacceptable in a world where you can just 'fix it' using CRISPR. This is already being used in a number of countries to 'weed out' children with Downs Syndrome (refer to the data in the picture on the right).



Eugenics and the eugenic movement

For more on this, go to:

Eugenics and Down syndrome

<https://www.fflnwo.org/eugenics.html>

21 Historical Figures You Didn't Know Supported The Eugenics Movement

(including Margaret Sanger, the founder of 'Planned Parenthood', pictured, right):

<https://allthatsinteresting.com/eugenics-movement#22>



Plato and plumbers, or, are Plato and philosophy for everyone?

This is related to the issue today of the emphasis in education on the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Many people question this emphasis and say that education should also include the liberal arts, such as philosophy, especially for students who will not go into the professions but who will do more manual work.

Why, in short, should plumbers study Plato?

Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) was an American essayist, poet, philosopher, abolitionist and historian who wrote *“We seem to have forgotten that the expression ‘a liberal education’ originally meant among the Romans one worthy of free men; while the learning of trades and professions by which to get your livelihood merely, was considered worthy of slaves only.”*



This is still as relevant as ever.

Traditionally, the liberal arts have been the privilege of an upper class so that this upper class all too often can separate themselves from those who must work in order to make *their* wealth possible. The *elite* sometimes also speak of an education's value for the *less* privileged in terms of preparation for employment. Worse, the *elite* often support learning systems designed to produce 'good employees', that is, compliant labourers.

From the author's experience (see box below), there are among future plumbers as many devotees of Plato as among the future wizards of Silicon Valley, and that there are among nurses' aides and soldiers as many important voices for our democracy as among doctors and business moguls.

Why I teach Plato to plumbers

The comments above come from an article by a teacher of philosophy at a community college in the US. The link to the website is:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/plato-to-plumbers/361373/>

Plato's ideal state and the world of insects

[This is, perhaps, not exactly an issue, but it is still something being discussed today, including its connection with Plato and the *Republic*.]

Plato's *Republic* lays out the structure of what Plato believed to be the perfect state. The state is *hierarchically* ordered, with a three-tiered arrangement composed of philosopher-rulers at the top, then the auxiliaries, and under them a much larger producer class which contains artisans, farmers and the like.

For the auxiliaries, reproduction is strictly controlled. There is to be no *individual* selection of mate; mates are chosen based on social rules and regulations for breeding the healthiest offspring – not on the individual's choice of or ability to win a mate (see eugenics again). The children are separated at birth so that the auxiliaries will show no particular favour to their own offspring. It is clear that the survival/propagation of the guardians is the main purpose of Plato's arrangement.

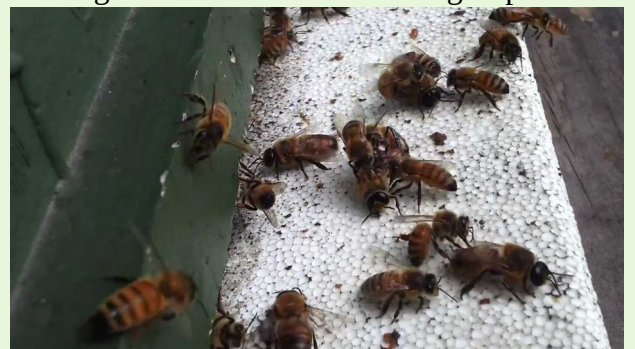
Private property among the auxiliaries is also eliminated, again, so this class is discouraged from following individualistic ends. Everything is ordered and controlled for good of the state as a whole and not for the individuals. Plato has placed the conflict between the individual and the group at the heart of his ideal society.

Like insect colonies

In addition to human beings, there is a small group of insects whose societies are organised in the way Plato's ideal society is. These are the so-called **eusocial** insects, primarily ants, termites, bees and wasps. These insects live in colonies which have a hierarchy – the *queen* at the top, then the *warriors*, with the *workers* at the bottom. The picture (right) shows workers – the lowest class – in a beehive surrounding the queen – the ruler.



The queen is protected and provided for by the warrior and worker insects. The vast majority of their colonies' populations foregoes any sort of reproduction at all. Instead, individuals devote themselves to the good of the colony as a whole, even to the extent of sacrificing themselves for the whole group. The male insects in a hive are called *drones*. They contribute nothing to the hives' overall well-being, except to eat and to mate with the queen. If there are too many drones, the workers, who are all females, kick them out of the hive where they are left to die. The second picture shows drones being evicted from a hive by worker bees and left to die.



Plato's colonies

In Plato's state, the extremely cohesive eusocial class of guardians/auxiliaries sits on top of a much larger producer class, much like the queen sits atop an insect colony. As mentioned, the survival/propagation of the guardians is the main purpose of Plato's social arrangement, just as the insect queen is protected and

provided for by warrior and worker insects.

While it is unclear what are the exact arrangement for the producing class, Plato achieves almost perfect eusociality for his Guardian/Auxiliary class.

In the *Republic*, Plato also explicitly refers to bees and drones. Plato severely limits the size of his ideal state, which leads one to wonder what will happen if the producer class grows too large, as it seems that their reproduction is not regulated by the guardians? The idea of the danger of ‘drones’ is *also* found throughout the *Republic* – indeed Plato characterises the disintegration of the non-ideal state as a growth in the population of human drones. We get an idea of what Plato’s guardians/auxiliaries will do with these human drones who get too numerous, fail to produce, or engage in criminal behaviour/rebellion: “*Hence the lawgiver, as a good physician of the body politic, should take measures in advance, no less than the prudent bee-keeper who tries to forestall the appearance of drones, or, failing that, cuts them out, cells and all, as quickly as he can*” (*Republic* viii. 564, when discussing democratic breakdown/anarchy) and again “*... and the State-physician, or legislator, must get rid of them, just as the bee-master keeps the drones out of the hive*” (*Republic*, vi. 507).

This *may* mean that when the producers get too numerous, or when some producers refuse to work or rebel, they will be expelled from the ideal state, and one can expect that if for some reason they can’t be expelled they would likely face an even worse fate.

Reincarnation and bees

In another book of Plato’s books – the *Phaedo* – he discusses reincarnation. This discussion occurs on the eve of Socrates’ execution by the Athenian democracy. Socrates (the real one!) is trying to argue that where the soul of an individual finds itself in the next life is directly tied to its virtue, or lack of virtue, practised in its prior life. The happiest people, Socrates says, will probably pass into some kind of social and disciplined creature *like bees, wasps, and ants* (and not what we would consider a more noble animal – say lions, or wolves); or even back into the human race again, becoming decent citizens.

Did Plato believe this?

But did Plato *really* believe that human societies are like these insect colonies? Certainly, societies with ordered hierarchies work better and are easier for their rulers to manage than unorganised groups. But has Plato just found an example in the insect world of a perfectly hierarchical and harmonious society he *wishes* human beings lived in, and in the process imagined us to be more like insects than is actually the case? We don’t know, but given his explicit reference to insects in the *Republic*, it is possible.

Republic of insects

For more on this topic, go to:

<https://utopiaordystopia.com/2012/07/28/republic-of-insects/>

A final thought

I hope that you find it as remarkable as I do that the *Republic*, a text written more about 2400 years ago, continues to have intense relevance today. A.N. Whitehead (Alfred North Whitehead) was a widely influential 20th century philosopher and mathematician. In 1979, he made the following celebrated quote about Plato's enduring influence (which I have modified slightly): "*All of philosophy is but a footnote to Plato*". By this he meant that *all* philosophers since Plato's time have been affected by his ideas and his way of thinking about fundamental questions. As well as philosophers, we could add rulers, politicians and perhaps you and me. And even though Plato may have been wrong or off course in many things he wrote, we still keep thinking about many of the same questions he and his followers were pondering while walking the streets of Athens and in the Academy. It really does matter that we think about the ideas he promoted and how we answer the questions he raised.

This is a key reason why I prepared this article.

Summary: Main Points

A summary is included as it can be difficult to recall accurately the main points when there is so much information – and that includes me too, and I wrote the article!

Background to Greece and the Times

- The *Republic* is set in the times of ancient Greece. The two most well known city-states during this period were Athens and Sparta.
- Plato's times were preceded by the 'Age of Pericles'.
- Key events that affected Plato were the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta (431 – 405 BC) and the oligarchic and democratic coups and counter-coups that followed it (411 – 403 BC).

Plato the Man and his Life

- Plato was born in Athens in 428/7 BC and died in 348/7 BC. Ancient sources claim that Plato's family descended from key figures of ancient Greece, viz. King Codrus and King Solon.
- Plato became a follower of the philosopher Socrates who influenced Plato's thoughts on how society could be shaped. This is the main theme of the *Republic*.
- Because of the execution of Socrates in 399 BC, Plato abandoned any thought of a political career and turned to philosophy. In 387 BC, he founded the Academy. While there, in c. 380 BC, he wrote the *Republic*.
- Plato made three unsuccessful trips to Syracuse (in Sicily) to persuade the ruler to set up the ideal state outlined in the *Republic*.

Emergence of Philosophy

- Philosophy emerged in the 6th century BC. The Peloponnesian War and the emergence of sophists had an important effect of the development of Greek philosophy.
- Many sophists believed that justice was the '*interest of the stronger*'. And justice is a major theme of the *Republic*.

Platonic philosophy: Dualism and the Theory of Forms

- Plato's dualism divides the cosmos/universe into two worlds: the visible and the invisible. The invisible world consists of Forms (concepts).
- Plato's also has a dualistic view of man, the body and the soul/mind. The body decays; the soul is eternal and immortal.
- Plato also has a dualism of knowledge; 'real' knowledge (*epistémé*), part of the invisible world, and not real (*doxa*), which is the everyday knowledge we have in our visible world. Plato uses the allegory of the divided line to explain how we ascend from the lower form of knowledge (world of the senses around us) to the higher form of knowledge (Forms).

Introduction to the book itself – the 'Republic'

- Originally written on papyrus rolls. Modern 'book' versions use the Stephanus system of numbering.
- The *Republic* uses dialogues (conversations) with Socrates being the central figure. These use the Socratic/Dialectic Method of Question and Answer.

The use of Allegories and Myths

- Plato uses allegories and myths to help readers understand ideas he is trying to get across.
- There are six allegories – metals, ship at sea, beast, sun, (divided) line and cave, and one myth – the myth of Er.
- Plato uses the allegories of the ship at sea allegory and the (savage) beast to explain the strife and trouble caused by Athenian democracy of his time.
- Plato believed that an ideal society was neither an oligarchy nor a democracy but one ruled by a philosopher-king.

Why did Plato write the Republic?

- Plato had lived through a prolonged period of civil strife. Most Athenian governments were either oligarchies or democracies, and Plato believed both to be inherently flawed. Being an aristocrat, he believed that only the gentry could rule; only they could become philosopher-kings who were capable of ruling justly. To show how this might be done, he wrote the *Republic*.

The Republic of Plato

- The two related themes in the *Republic* are (i) justice and (ii) the ideal state/society.
- In the *Republic*, Plato first discusses societal justice (the just state) then individual justice.
- Near at the end of the *Republic*, Plato concludes that on the whole, honesty is a good policy.
- Right at the end, Plato moves from justice in this life to justice and rewards and punishments after death. He introduces the myth of Er to explain this.
- Plato does not actually give a *formal* definition of justice but it is based on his tree-class division of society.
- Plato's based his ideal state on the the Spartan model of society but to be a benevolent rather than the tyrannical Spartan state.
- Plato's ideal society consists of three classes of people: guardians, auxiliaries and producers. Women and men are equal.
- The allegory of the metals is used to explain the division of society into three classes.
- Education was for all and was the responsibility of the state. Basic education was up to age 17 or 18, followed by two years of intense physical exercise and military training. There is to be some censorship of material studied.
- At age 20, a selection then takes place for those who will receive higher education. From age 20 to 30, the select few will study mathematics and dialectic. Then another selection.
- For this group, from 30 to 35, education is wholly for the study of dialectic. From 35 to 50, there is practical experience of public life. At age 50, the few are to be the future rulers of the state – the philosopher-kings.

The perfect/ideal individual: three parts to the individual soul

- For Plato, a just/ideal society and a just individual go together.
- The three class of society are mirrored by three parts of the individual soul: a rational, a spirited and an appetite part. The rational part is dominant in the guardians/rulers.

Methods used to rule/control the ideal society

- As well as through education, use is made of (i) the 'noble lie' and (ii) communal living.
- The 'noble lie' is not a lie but a 'convenient fiction/story'.
- Wives and children of the *guardians* and *auxiliaries* are to be in common. Breeding the best children is paramount.

The Theory of Forms/Knowledge

- The invisible, intelligible world is comprised of the Forms. The Form of the Good is the highest Form.
- The allegories of the sun, the (divided) line and the cave are used to help explain the Form of the Good.
- To further explain the allegory of the line, the allegory of the cave is used especially as to how the philosopher-king is made (not born!).

The Decline and Fall of the Ideal State

- Plato suggests the following changes: Ideal state (most just) → Timocracy → Oligarchy → Democracy → Despotism (Tyranny) (most unjust).
- A timocracy is a state ruled by an ambitious man with a desire for property and love of honour; the 'spirited' part of his soul usurps the rule of reason.
- An oligarchy is the rule of the few (especially the wealthy) where the appetites have gained some ground against reason.
- A weakened oligarchy leads to democracy, which Plato equates to mob rule, which was characteristic of Athenian democracy in those times.
- With despotism, a ruler has absolute power and injustice rules.

Immortality and the Myth of Er

- This myth discusses what happens after death where there is reincarnation with souls choosing what they want to be in their next lives. Cycles of life and death continue until a soul is purified with philosophy.

The Influence of Plato's Republic over the Centuries

- There are rulers over the centuries who may make it onto the list of platonic philosopher-kings. This may include the Roman Emperor Aurelius, Catherine the Great of Russia, and perhaps even President Macron of France.

Plato's dualism and the development of Christianity

- Christianity has been influenced by Greek dualism by the incorporation of an emphasis on a body-soul distinction, where the body decays and is 'bad'; while the soul is eternal and is 'good'. Reincarnation was once accepted, but only for a while.

Is Plato's Ideal State a Totalitarian State?

- Mainly, but more benevolent and truly concerned with the overall welfare of the state than most other totalitarian states.
- Plato argued for natural law, which differentiates his state from a truly totalitarian state. Modern totalitarianism condemns the idea of natural law, replacing its authority with the arbitrary will of a dictator, such as modern China.
- Some commentators even see evidence of democracy in Plato's ideal state.

Plato and Issues Today

- The problems facing Plato's world bear striking parallels to ours today.
- Plato was pessimistic about the ability of the human race to govern itself. In the *Republic*, he refers to 'troubles in our cities' if they sought *democratically* to decide what is the best thing to do. Global warming is one such 'trouble'/threat for the human race that is discussed. The ship and beast allegories are used in this discussion.
- Based on Plato's idea of the decline of an ideal state, the change from a democracy into an oligarchy is discussed, especially in the US.
- The idea of the 'noble lie' is discussed. Examples include their use in WWII, by the 'neocons' in the US-led Iraq war of 2003 and by the current regime in China.
- Plato's promotion of breeding is an example of eugenics. Modern-day examples of the use of eugenics in England, the United States, Germany are discussed.
- The idea that Plato should be studied by those who do manual work, such as plumbers, is discussed.
- In the *Republic*, Plato comments on bee-keepers and drones, so Plato's ideal society and bee colonies are compared.

Website References

The following is a list of websites that I referred to for ideas, text, diagrams or all of these in the preparation of this article. Some of the websites are very good, others marginally so. Some of the websites are not too difficult to understand; others are very difficult. There are millions of other websites available on the Internet for most of the topics discussed in the article, but while some of these may be very good and have been missed, it is just too time consuming to have to search through so many.

Some links go directly links to websites on the Internet. Others are *not* directly to websites. Rather, I downloaded the original websites, highlighted key parts of the texts, then uploaded these files to my cloud storage. This should make it easier to identify the important parts in each file. But at the top of most files, the original link is given.

The files are only approximately in the same sequence as in the article as most contain material that is used in more than one section of the article. Some of the links are repeated under different headings. Links included within the text of the article are also repeated here.

Note: Some files are long and include many topics. In these cases, you may want to do a word search to find a particular topic rather than reading from the start of the file.

Background to Greece and the Times

Some history of Athens (you may read from the start)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

Democracy and Greece's Golden Age

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bV0o9kbg_hGkg_rCbbT6LmcXQwHFgCdz

The Golden Age of Greece (Athens & Sparta, Solon, Age of Pericles, Peloponnesian war, the 'Thirty')

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FI36cv3TjsOGKRLhU549WMys-kk83Ivi>

Greek calendars (website link)

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/833/the-athenian-calendar/>

Plato the Man and his Life

Plato the Man

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

Plato (his two worlds, dialogue format, the Forms)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=15zBv7vkqfY-SB7g3J4T37JEZznkh9Wa->

Plato's three visits to Syracuse (websites only)

<http://www.bestofsicily.com/mag/art407.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh_Letter

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

Plato's Academy (search for word 'Academy')

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ZpZvoaZRVq-shw0dJ4XM1IKuEG2yvjjY>

Platonic philosophy: Dualism and the Theory of Forms

Plato and the Theory of Forms

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1RJOTOwTvn3vyrPNE-saT55vydjRj3acW>

The Form of the Good (plus the allegory of the Sun)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dzE4B5Hp4hdD5mW7NW8IY3e9HiAsNRbS>

Or, to download a PowerPoint version directly:

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=21&ved=2ahUKEwjlxJot-qDeAhUG87wKHRbhA5sQFjAUegQICRAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.routledge.com%2Ftextbooks%2Falevelphilosophy%2Fdata%2FAS%2FWhyShouldIbeMoral%2FPlatoKnowledgeVirtue.ppt&usq=A0vVaw2qkBrrqHWGX5Ldk6JEYhWW>

Substance Dualism (plus combined with Christian doctrine)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1c_6CGamTvs3PjKbQTZUNE6H7D6ybX1eh

The use of dialogue in the *Republic*

https://drive.google.com/open?id=152F7_sca-oyJlj0VAiUqtczKAXZtxRHu

Allegories and myths

The allegory of the metals (page 20)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

The allegory of the metals (page 1)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1wjP-GH8cDpQewKpPnHT3R_ADB8IaUT_u

The allegory of the beast (linked with global warming)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=11Y4rOjpfWpXbEdQFMysl8ChRbHM6jdRa>

The allegory of the ship

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

The allegory of the sun

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dzE4B5Hp4hdD5mW7NW8IY3e9HiAsNRbS>

The allegory of the divided line and/or the cave

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1BsZ2E641K4e_EM7NFelgTxTBsvmEtsXm

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_wJ8mkXeDjjJP4WPApMrhCAlr3e4n69M

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1WoNUP20WWyKKMXHipxt0Vulyfhu9TLwH>

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_wJ8mkXeDjjJP4WPApMrhCAlr3e4n69M

The myth of Er

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LQDuyy70jqNevUaVXlbWefmgNwTeCioX>

Why did Plato write the *Republic*?

Plato and Democracy:

The Ship of Fools (Plato's allegory)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LmuknKYmpSHFAxtZGjDmXVOkhB-DjiFe>

Plato's Ideal Ruler Today

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ROOtP2p4ZJJU9OKivvdBrkwhGVwNasQL>

Democracy Is Sick

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uvYnjbeDn2wHQmVo7AArscBVypMUqyZ6>

Justice and the ideal society

Justice (plus education and the cave)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_wJ8mkXeDjjJP4WPAPMrhCAIr3e4n69M

Plato and justice

[quora.com/What-is-Platos-theory-of-justice](https://www.quora.com/What-is-Platos-theory-of-justice)

An appraisal of justice in Pakistan from the prism of platonic justice [Abstract only; the complete file will have to be downloaded]

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322266749>

Justice in the *Republic* (plus Goering the ‘noble lie’)

oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Plato/plato_justice.html

Plato’s ideal/just state, definition of justice (plus Popper)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Gtf1AdhPjjlp8lr8Nr3qSgdOKY0xEoCN>

What is Plato's theory of justice?

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1WgDqxxUqvKkKjPg0Q1bhYsImJLhHyREg>

From Rule of Law to Rule of Love: towards Plato’s Ideal State - the City of God (Nigeria) [Abstract only; the complete file will have to be downloaded]

<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/afrev/article/view/83593>

Plato and Education (plus many other topics – a good site)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_wJ8mkXeDjjJP4WPAPMrhCAIr3e4n69M

Music education in ancient Greece

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1EJKDuKNUx6gw5gU-XYh4IJJSbMieZ8Rv>

Philosopher-kings (plus allegory of metals)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1wjP-GH8cDpQewKPpnHT3R_ADB8IaUT_u

How to become a philosopher

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1vBKKdh0dYUSdVNDMdiI2xOnHo40-uDax>

Methods used to rule/control the ideal society

The Truth about Plato’s ‘Noble Lie’

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mnm1aOmQp73Qdyeup0jn_rKVm-5zCCjh

More on the ‘noble lie’: scholars need to lie (website only)

<https://www.uncensoredjudaism.com/en/archives/1492>

The Decline and Fall of the Ideal State

Plato’s five regimes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_five_regimes

<http://factmyth.com/platos-five-regimes/>

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_wJ8mkXeDjjJP4WPAPMrhCAIr3e4n69M

Timocracy

<https://www.lifepersona.com/what-is-the-timocracy-characteristics-and-conceptions-about-property>

Communes and Despots in Medieval and Renaissance Italy

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oryEayKvFNnGDJCG0ZbOAlCxivim6TO4o>

https://anarchyinaction.org/index.php?title=Medieval_commune

Is democracy making way for oligarchy in the US?

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1NHSuuiivEjKHf_kgX2ybTAPbZ-Vbs9PKd

US Oligarchy

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qhQT05LGJlhbNQk4UgUG5wKKHcRuCzTf>

Democracy, communism and fascism (plus the noble lie)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1I2cM2ZKID9v-8UIhVTXShwBjAlNrFt9F>

Immortality and the Myth of Er

The myth of Er and the Spindle of Necessity

https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/The_Myths/Myth_of_Er/myth_of_er.html

The myth of Er and the near-death experience

<http://cosmiccradle.com/plato/>

The Influence of Plato's Republic over the Centuries

Philosopher-kings over the centuries (Aurelius, Frederick II, Catherine of Russia)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1RdjVp0SvFwwaubnXvUiGS0JccEibBRrc>

The five good emperors

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerva%E2%80%93Antonine_dynasty#Nerva%E2%80%93Trajan_dynasty

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Five-Good-Emperors>

Marcus Aurelius, Plato's philosopher-king

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/174/marcus-aurelius-platos-philosopher-king/>

Frederick the Great

<https://modernstoicism.com/frederick-the-great-a-stoic-on-the-throne-by-kevin-kennedy/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_the_Great

Catherine the Great

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_the_Great

<http://www.heathervanmouwerik.com/tag/catherine-ii/>

<https://learnodo-newtonic.com/catherine-the-great-accomplishments>

The five philosophers who will shape global politics in 2018

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1M32mufzkn13q_6pKY4n9lPHzGu7BJVpO

Why I am not a Platonic philosopher

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1cN5HrGnNCpR1Gzxh4-FzOxMJVhFqqfj>

Plato's dualism and the development of Christianity

Plato and Christianity

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ZpZvoaZRVq-shw0dJ4XM1IKuEG2yvjjY>

Impact of Greek Philosophical Thought on Christian Thought. (This is an MA thesis on the topic and is very long.) It also includes dualism, the Forms and the allegories of the line and cave.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1WoNUP20WWyKKMXHipxt0Vulyfhu9TLwH>

Is Your Christianity Shaped by Plato or the Bible?

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-XHGS5mbzDrwkwOLOsvUzLO8easoZ_B

Comparing Plato and Augustine (plus Platonism and the Myth of Er)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LQDuyy70jqNevUaVXlbWefmgNwTeCIoX>

Free Will in the Christian Cosmology Comparing Paul and Augustine

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Mzp14DnoE82OZ9yEiNJqeO-cfzdHwieR>

Take It from the Church Fathers: You Should Read Plato

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1asN1DcM8d0choQITUg7SUZcgeMJdxewG>

Resurrection and Reincarnation in Early Christianity

<https://www.ancient-origins.net/history/hidden-beliefs-covered-church-resurrection-and-reincarnation-early-christianity-006320>

Is Plato's Ideal State a Totalitarian State?

Authoritarian forms of governments

<https://study.com/academy/answer/difference-between-authoritarian-and-totalitarian.html>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/totalitarianism-definition-characteristics-examples.html>

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-differences-between-authoritarianism-totalitarianism-and-fascism>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/totalitarianism-authoritarianism-fascism-4147699>

Plato's Republic: Just Society or Totalitarian State? Karl Popper says the *Republic* is very totalitarian

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1jF3DyvStI35sAEXcNEOF5R4jniSVcMna>

Plato, Democracy, Totalitarianism (Plato = father of totalitarianism; aristocracy vs democracy)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=17NlALBAgfmrXi7X1QN7FIifajErBOIF3>

China 2018

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/15/chinas-great-leap-backward-xi-jinping/>

Disney and Amazon total control

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90260703/the-dark-side-of-gamifying-work?>

Plato and Issues Today

Plato's Warning (Global Warming plus allegories of the ship and the beast)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=11Y4rOjpfWpXbEdQFMysl8ChRbHM6jdRa>

Articles on democracy and oligarchy (re. 2014 study)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qhQT05LGJlhbNQk4UgUG5wKKHcRuCzTf>

Democracy Index by country (2017)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index

Hermann Goering: War Games

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1TIFMn4Ldu0oksmYIPXKPrhrC4ZxItn0d>

More on Goering and the political lie (plus equal ability of women to rule and justice)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1xprEuBmvMwoYl7wzp9_aeSBRtzm8_F61

Noble lies and perpetual war: Leo Strauss, the neocons, and Iraq

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oqlZP77SyDy99oN6Ni1_5fnWlEURKvsh

Noble lies and China

https://drive.google.com/open?id=18kjFeqfyttb_ppXMaNWP6vMgqIPtWzte

Or to the original site:

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/10/27/beijing-using-nazi-propaganda-playbook-justify-concentration-camps-world/>

Plato, Nazism, CRISPR: The long shadow of eugenics

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1yzJw4c9A2FRzyMETBsdpIrZrStoVy6v>

Eugenics in Germany

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_eugenics

Eugenics and Down syndrome

<https://www.fflnwo.org/eugenics.html>

Historical Figures You Didn't Know Supported The Eugenics Movement:

<https://allthatsinteresting.com/eugenics-movement#22>

Why I Teach Plato to Plumbers

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1YodGGq959YZ7ETJJzUhW3kZq7ExTVXZe>

Republic of Insects

https://drive.google.com/open?id=17aaQAzBuLks_VM48EMLk_7wFn-MmajuC

Good overviews

Crossman's PLATO TODAY Chapter IV (A good overview already referred to above several times – Plato and Paul, history of Athens, Socrates, Plato's visits to Syracuse, the Academy, the perfect state, the three classes, kings must become philosophers or vice versa, Plato's education, propaganda)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1y9W3L_SVJql3PWGlxeLVstncUtMTVHI5

The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor': The Utopian as Sadist (plus ideal state, justice, Plato's three classes, totalitarianism, democracy)

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1nm54SubxK3GvxwmxsZMfMEQxIw12578s>

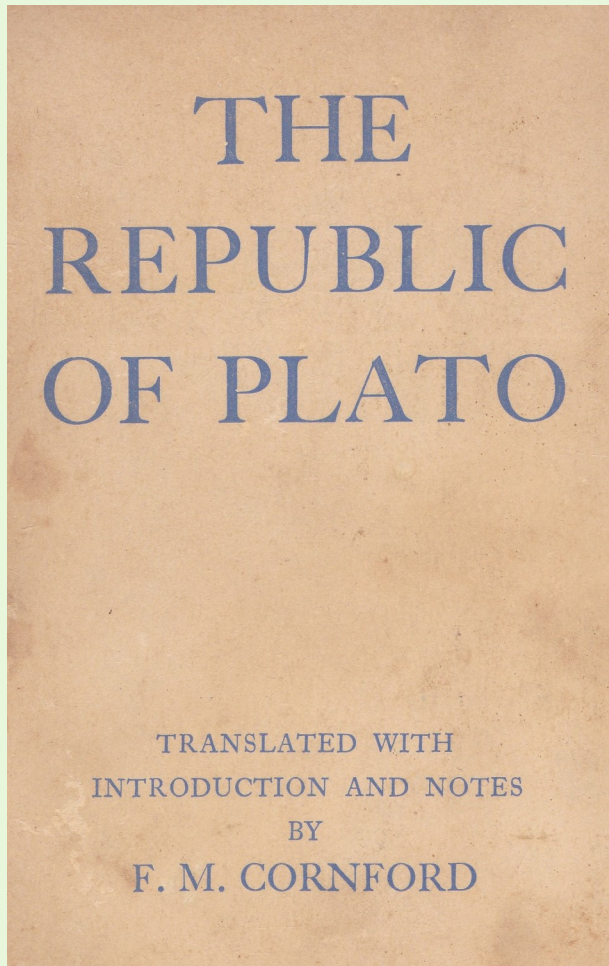
Why every government should keep an empty seat for a philosopher king

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1DPG3k99K23TDFxRmJ-d_QtCpVlrCl3Re

Plato Education and the Value of Justice (A very good overview; covers equality of men and women, philosopher-kings, the Form of the Good, justice, justice is better than injustice, education, allegories of the line and cave, the four defective kinds of states)

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-5MaL1SkKHEyDHdr9fy01_ZL8EcKkKeP

Appendix: The Republic of Plato (Cornford's translation): Contents



CONTENTS		Page
INTRODUCTION		xiii
PART I (Book I). SOME CURRENT VIEWS OF JUSTICE		
CHAP. I (i. 327-331 D). Cephalus. Justice as Honesty in word and deed		2
II (331 E-336 A). Polemarchus. Justice as Giving every man his due		7
III (336 B-347 E). Thrasymachus. Justice as the Interest of the Stronger		14
IV (347 E-354 C). Thrasymachus. Is Injustice more profitable than Justice?		29
PART II (Books II-IV, 445 B). JUSTICE IN THE STATE AND IN THE INDIVIDUAL		
V (ii. 357 A-367 E). The Problem stated		40
VI (367 E-372 A). The Rudiments of Social Organization		52
VII (372 A-374 E). The Luxurious State		58
VIII (375 A-376 E). The Guardian's Temperament		61
IX (376 E-iii. 412 B). Primary Education of the Guardians		65
§ 1 (376 E-iii. 392 C). Censorship of Literature for School Use		65
§ 2 (392 C-398 B). The Influence of Dramatic Recitation		78
§ 3 (398 C-400 C). Musical Accompaniment and Metre		83
§ 4 (400 C-403 C). The Aim of Education in Poetry and Music		86
§ 5 (403 C-412 B). Physical Training. Physicians and Judges		90
X (412 B-iv. 421 C). Selection of Rulers: The Guardians' Manner of Living		100
XI (421 C-427 C). The Guardians' Duties		109

CONTENTS		xi
XII (427 C-434 D). The Virtues in the State		116
XIII (434 D-441 C). The Three Parts of the Soul		126
XIV (441 C-445 B). The Virtues in the Individual		136
PART II, APPENDIX (Books IV, 445 B-V, 471 C). THE POSITION OF WOMEN AND THE USAGES OF WAR		
XV (445 B-V. 457 B). The Equality of Women		141
XVI (457 B-466 D). Abolition of the Family for the Guardians		152
XVII (466 D-471 C). Usages of War		165
PART III (Books V, 471 C-VII). THE PHILOSOPHER KING		
XVIII (471 C-474 B). The Paradox: Philosophers must be Kings		171
XIX (474 B-480). Definition of the Philosopher. The Two Worlds		175
XX (vi. 484 A-487 A). The Philosopher's Fitness to Rule		185
XXI (487 B-497 A). Why the Philosophic Nature is useless or corrupted in existing Society		188
XXII (497 A-502 C). A Philosophic Ruler is not an Impossibility		200
XXIII (502 C-509 C). The Good as the Highest Object of Knowledge		206
XXIV (509 D-511 E). Four Stages of Cognition. The Line		216
XXV (vii. 514 A-521 B). The Allegory of the Cave		222
XXVI (521 C-531 C). Higher Education. Mathematics		230
§ 1 (524 D-526 C). Arithmetic		235
§ 2 (526 C-527 C). Geometry		237
§ 3 (527 D-528 E). Solid Geometry		239
§ 4 (528 E-530 C). Astronomy		241
§ 5 (530 C-531 C). Harmonics		243

CONTENTS		xii
XXVII (531 C-535 A). Dialectic		245
XXVIII (535 A-541 B). Programme of Studies		250
PART IV (Books VIII-IX). THE DECLINE OF SOCIETY AND OF THE SOUL. COMPARISON OF THE JUST AND UNJUST LIVES		
XXIX (viii. 543 A-550 C). The Fall of the Ideal State. Timocracy and the Timocratic Man		259
XXX (550 C-555 B). Oligarchy (Plutocracy) and the Oligarchic Man		267
XXXI (555 B-562 A). Democracy and the Democratic Man		273
XXXII (562 A-ix. 576 B). Despotism and the Despotical Man		280
XXXIII (576 B-588 A). The Just and Unjust Lives compared in respect of Happiness		294
XXXIV (588 B-592 B). Justice, not Injustice, is profitable		308
PART V (Book X, 595 A-608 B). THE QUARREL BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY		
XXXV (x. 595 A-602 B). How Representation in Art is related to Truth		314
XXXVI (602 C-605 C). Dramatic Poetry appeals to the Emotions, not to the Reason		326
XXXVII (605 C-608 B). The Effect of Dramatic Poetry on Character		329
PART VI (Book X, 608 C-END). IMMORTALITY AND THE REWARDS OF JUSTICE		
XXXVIII (608 C-612 A). A Proof of Immortality		333
XXXIX (612 A-613 E). The Rewards of Justice in this Life		338
XL (613 E-END). The Rewards of Justice after Death. The Myth of Er		340
INDEX		351