

Hauptli's Class Supplement on Plato's *Republic* Part B [449-592b]

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[BOOK V]

9. Role of Women, and the Lives of Rulers [449-471e]:

In this section of the text Plato's Socrates first discusses the **status of women** in his ideal state. He utilizes the guard dog metaphor to address the question "What role should women play?" In addressing this, he also asks what sorts of differences are relevant in establishing whether individuals should have different social roles. Thus, **in addition to addressing the question of the status of women, he is clarifying what sense it is in which individuals differ so greatly that they are to be assigned differing social roles** (and in what sense they are said to be deserving of different jobs).

451d-e The *guard dog metaphor* and the role of women [451d-456c]:

-for both the males and females: same role, therefore, same upbringing and education.

-453b-c Plato's Socrates has an imaginary questioner ask: "But don't men and women have different natures? And, if they do, doesn't that mean, give the principle of the division of labor, that they should have different roles?"

-The key here is to note that we must ask: "**Which differences are relevant when we consider what individuals' roles should be?**"

--453e-454a Socrates points out that they have agreed that different natures should have different pursuits and that the natures of men and women are different, but that they now appear to be arguing that men and women should have the same pursuits. He says: "What a grand thing...is the power of the art of contradiction [disputation].

Because...many appear to me to fall into it against their wills, and to suppose that they are not wrangling but arguing owing to their inability to apply the proper divisions and distinctions to the subject under consideration. They pursue verbal oppositions practicing *eristic*,^[1] not dialectic on one another.

--454b-c Bald men and long-haired men? Do such differences require different occupations?

--454d But the [male] physician and [male] carpenter are different.

--454d-456b Is there a special occupation which would preclude women? Several occupations are considered, but Plato's Socrates concludes that there is no significant difference in roles for men and women as guardians.^[2] Some women, like some men, will be guardians and rulers, while some will be workers.

--This passage, of course, should be contrasted with, 431c-d where Plato's Socrates talks about the "...kinds of diverse desires, pleasures, and pains, **mostly in children, women, household slaves**, and in those of the inferior majority who are called free;" 457d where he speaks of the "**women belonging in common to all the men;**" and 469d-e where he asks: "Don't you think it is slavish and money-loving to strip a corpse? For isn't it **small-minded and womanish** to regard the body as your enemy, when the enemy himself has flitted away, leaving behind only the instrument with which he fought? Or do you think such behavior any different from that of dogs who get angry with the stone that hits them and leave the thrower of the stone alone?; and other similar passages.

C.D.C. Reeve has an excellent treatment of the issues here.^[3]

-Plato's Socrates continues [456c-471c] by discussing the nature of the family relationships amongst the guardians. Most of this passage is of little relevance to the central issues of the *Republic*, and the passage does not bear close scrutiny or reading. We learn that:

--457d the wives and children shall be :common to all the men," and the parents shall not be aware of who their children are,

---**Note:** this passage is relevant as we consider the issue of his treatment of women! If women are in the class or rulers and guardians, it would seem as if this passage should read that the wives, husbands, and children shall be "common to all."

--458d they will have houses and meals in common, and have no private possessions,

--458e disorder and promiscuity in their sexual unions, or in anything else would be an unhallowed thing, and will not be suffered by the rulers,

--459d that the" **...rulers will have to make considerable use of falsehood and deception for the benefit of those they rule. And we said that all such falsehoods are useful as a form of drug,**" [Cf., 378e and 389b]

---**Note:** this discussion should be read in conjunction with the "noble fiction" passage [415].

--459e the rulers will control the size of the population, and the “marriages “ of the guardians to produce the best “herd of guardians,” and

--460c that the offspring who are not of sufficient quality will be turned over to nurses who will “properly dispose of” them.

-461e-462 Plato’s Socrates now turns to the question of whether these family arrangements are consistent with the account of the rest of the ideal state and whether they are “for the best.”

---462 The greatest good for the constitution of the state, and the proper aim of the law-giver is to preserve its *harmony and unity*: “Do we know of any greater evil for a state than the thing that distracts it and makes it many instead of one, or a greater good than that which binds it together and makes it one?”

---462c Harmony and unity will be encouraged where there is little disagreement over possessions,

--462-464 there will be bonds of kinship between the guardians,

---464d the prescriptions upon their lifestyle “tend to make them more truly guardians and prevent them from distracting the city....”

--465b-d they will encourage the young guardians to respect for parents and the elderly, make them immune to the flatterings of the rich and the embarrassments of the poor, and free them from the necessities of household management.

--466 Plato’s Socrates recalls the discussion of Adeimantus’ objection [419] and reiterates his claim that the sort of life which the guardians live will be the one which gives them true happiness. Cf., 420b-421c and 519d-e.

---466e-471 They will be able, courageous, and skilled in war and in protecting the state.

10. “Is this “Ideal State” Merely “Ideal?”: The “Ideality” of the Ideal State and the Role of Philosophy [472-475e]:

While this discussion could continue indefinitely, Glaucon asks Plato’s Socrates to turn from concerns about the role of women and the family relationships of the guardians back to the more central issues and take up the question “**Is this “ideal state” merely “ideal?”** [471c-473c]. To fully address this question, however, he must begin to discuss the role of philosophy in the ideal state. This, in turn, will lead him to discuss the *sort of knowledge* which the philosopher rulers must have” that discussion will continue through the next two sections, and is of key importance. **If this requisite sort of knowledge is beyond human ken, then the ideal state (and individual) are impossible!**

472b-d “Then it was in order to have a model that we were trying to discover what justice itself is like and what the completely just man would be like, if he came into being, and what kind of man he’d be if he did, and likewise with regard to injustice and the most unjust man. We thought that, by looking at how their relationship to happiness and its opposite seemed to us, we’d also be compelled to agree about ourselves as well, that the one who was most like them would have a portion of happiness most like theirs. But we weren’t trying to discover these things in order to prove that is possible for them to come into being.”

-**Note:** this passage is relevant to the issue of the “aristocratic” vs. “democratic” readings of the text. Is his concern with the state, the individual, both, or....

-472d “Do you think that someone is a worse painter if, having painted a model of what the finest and most beautiful human being would be like and having rendered every detail of his picture adequately, he could not prove that such a man could come into being?”

-472e “Then what about our own case? Didn’t we say that we were making a theoretical model of a good city....Is it possible to do anything in practice the same as in theory?”

-473a “Then don’t compel me to show that what we’ve described in theory can come into being exactly as we’ve described it....Rather, if we’re able to discover how a city could come to be governed in a way that most closely approximates our description....”

-**Critical Note:** In his *The Honey and the Hemlock*, Eli Sagan maintains that: “there is no important human ideal that is incapable of corruption. By that strange and perverse psychic alchemy wherein great ideas corrupt the world, the marvelous conception that human society is capable of significant reform became perverted into the beginnings of totalitarian thought. Ideology is the perversion of wisdom. No sooner had the ideal of a new man appeared on the scene than the perverted conception of a controlled society quickly followed. *Totalitarianism* is

really too modern a word to describe accurately what was being proposed. *Paranoid society engineering* is much closer to the truth....Society and the human beings who composed it were to be treated like some piece of complex machinery that could be regulated by proper mechanical technique, to proceed in the direction of “greater justice.”^[4]

The paranoid dream of a perfect society turns out to be one of the most dangerous weapons ever invented by human beings. No claim is being made here that Plato was even close to being a tyrant capable of horrible acts, but it is important to emphasize the cast of mind that proposes that, in the interests of justice, all those over ten years of age should be transported to the country....The *Republic* is both a utopia and an anti-utopia, a place of perfect justice and of no freedom.”^[5]

--**Critical Note:** Popper’s *Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945) develops a critique of Plato’s *Republic*, and a defense of his idea of an “open society,” or liberal democracy. As noted in *Wikipedia*’s “The Open Society and Its Enemies”: “the subtitle of his first volume, “The Spell of Plato,” makes clear Popper’s central premise “namely, that most Plato interpreters through the ages have been seduced by his greatness.” In so doing, Popper argues, “they have taken his political philosophy as a benign idyll, without taking into account its dangerous tendencies toward totalitarian ideology”

Contrary to major Plato scholars of his day, Popper divorced Plato’s ideas from those of Socrates, claiming that the former in his later years expressed none of the humanitarian and democratic tendencies of his teacher. In particular, he accuses Plato of betraying Socrates in the *Republic*, wherein Plato portrays Socrates sympathizing with totalitarianism.

Popper extols Plato’s analysis of social change and discontent, naming him as a great sociologist, yet rejects his [political] solutions. This is dependent on Popper’s reading of the emerging humanitarian ideals of Athenian democracy as the birth pangs of his coveted “open society.” In his view, Plato’s ideas are driven by a fear of the change that comes with such a liberal worldview. Popper also suggests that Plato was the victim of his own vanity, and had designs to become the supreme Philosopher King of his vision.

The last chapter of the first volume bears the same title as the book, and conveys Popper’s own philosophical explorations on the necessity of liberal democracy as the only form of government allowing institutional improvements without violence and bloodshed.”^[6]

11. Knowledge and the forms [476-480b]:

In this section Plato’s Socrates clarifies the sort of knowledge that the rulers (or philosopher-kings) must have if they are to successfully rule (either the ideal states or their own souls). To clarify the sort of knowledge, he must clarify the *object* of knowledge here, and it becomes clear that what must be known are the *forms* (or the essential and eternal characteristics of things). He recognizes that it will be difficult to explain the forms: “it would be by no means easy to explain it to another....”

476b “*The lovers of sounds and sights...delight in beautiful tones and colors....but their thought is incapable of apprehending and taking delight in the nature of the beautiful itself.*

476c **Someone who thinks that *beauty itself* does not exist, but only beautiful things, is like someone who is in a dream.** Here the distinction between *knowledge* and *opinion* arises (the individual who can not make the distinction has mere opinion).

-476d On the other hand, the individual who recognizes beauty itself (and who does not mistake the “participants”^[7] for it, or it for the “participants”) leads a waking life. And “could we not rightly, then, call the mental state of the one as knowing, knowledge, and that of the other as opining, opinion?”

-476e”...**does the man who has knowledge know something [that is, something *real*] or nothing?”**

-477a”...that which entirely *is* is entirely knowable, and that which in no way *is* is in every way unknowable....if a thing...is so conditioned as to be and not to be, would it not lie between that which absolutely and unqualifiedly is and that which in no way is?....since knowledge pertains to that which is and ignorance of necessity to that which is not, for that which lies between we must seek for something between nescience^[8] and science.” And, of course, that is opinion.

--the *object of opinion or belief* is **between what is real and what is unreal.**

-477c-478 A response to individuals who deny that knowledge and opinion are different:

- knowledge is an infallible power,
- opinion is a fallible power,
- "how could a person with any understanding think that a fallible power is the same as an infallible one?"
- 478a-479 **The object of opinion is something between being and nonbeing** [or “not being”]:
- 478a-b Since knowledge and opinion are different powers, they are “set over” different things (that is, their *objects* are different from each other): (478a)”...each of them is by nature set over something different...” (478b)”...if a different power is set over something different, and opinion and knowledge are different powers, the knowable and the opinable cannot be the same.”
- 478e”...it only remains for us to find what participates in both being and not being and cannot correctly be called purely one or the other, in order that, if there is such a thing, we can rightly call it opinable, thereby setting the extremes over the extremes and the intermediate over the intermediate.”
- In summary, then, we have a distinction between triangularity (the unchanging and eternal form which can be known infallibly as a closed three-sided figure which have exactly 180°), triangular objects in the world (particular things which change and about which we can have fallible opinions by, for example, measuring the number of degrees with a protractor), and nonexistent “things” (like round squares things which can not be and about which neither knowledge nor opinion can be had):

	Knowledge	Belief	Ignorance
Object:	What is real, e.g. triangularity.	What is between, e.g. triangular earrings.	What is unreal, e.g. "round squares."
Mental State:	Infallibility.	Fallibility.	Recognition of Contradiction.

Effectively, then, the Forms are: objective, unchanging, real [in the *greatest* sense], true, and they are what is truly valuable.

479 In response to those who deny the forms:

- each beautiful thing appears ugly from some perspective; each just thing appears unjust from some perspective; each double appears not doubled from some perspective, etc.
- Are we to say that each of these things “is...more than it is not” that it has contradictory properties and both is what it is and is not?
- 479d No! So, the appearances must be **between being and nonbeing** [or “not being”].
- 479e Those who don’t know about the forms’ existence will not understand what knowledge they lack: “...those who study the many beautiful things but do not see the beautiful itself and are incapable of following another who leads them to it, who see many just things but not the just itself, and so with everything these people, we shall say, opine everything but have no knowledge of anything they opine.”
- Note that here the distinction between the “aristocratic” and the “democratic” readings of the text is again important (*cf.*, 431c, 494a, and 518c). Each reading will need to address such passages as this as it tries to explain what seem to be inconsistencies between various passages in the text. The “aristocratic” reading has the least trouble with this passage, of course. This is also the case for the ensuing discussion!

[BOOK VI]
12. The Parable of the Navigator and How Potential Philosopher Kings Are Mis-Understood and Mis-Educated by Existing States [484-502c]:

In this section Plato’s Socrates clarifies what the many think of the sort of knowledge the philosopher-kings would have, and how individuals with the relevant sort of potential are educated in current states. He characterizes the philosophers as “lovers of knowledge” who (485c) “**must be without falsehood” they must refuse to accept what is false, hate it, and have a love for the truth.**” This, of course, raises a question as to whether they should perpetuate the lies and noble fiction which they are supposed to perpetuate (*cf.*, 389b, 415, and 459d).

488b-490b Plato’s Socrates tells a parable about a ship where the “special” knowledge of the navigator is not valued but, instead, the sailors (and the owner) “don’t believe there is any craft that would enable him to determine where he should steer the ship to, independently of whether the others want to go there or not, or any possibility of mastering this alleged craft or of practicing it at the same time as the craft of navigation.” They will see the true navigator (or

philosopher) as a “stargazer.”

489b-c “It isn’t natural for the captain to beg the sailors to be ruled by him nor for the wise to knock at the door of the rich. The natural thing is for the sick person, rich or poor, to knock at the doctor’s door, and for anyone who needs to be ruled to knock at the door of the one who can rule him.

-Renford Bambrough maintains that: “Plato takes the crucial step in the wrong direction when he draws a parallel between a governor’s choice of a policy and a navigator’s setting of a course, and the move is all the more dangerous because it is so tempting. The true analogy is between the choice of a policy by a politician and the choice of a destination by the owner or passengers of a ship. The point can be put in the familiar terms of ends and means. Plato represents a question about what is to be done (as an end) as if it were very like a question about what is to be done (as a means) in order to achieve some given or agreed end. He obscures the fact that, in politics as well as at sea, the theoretical knowledge and the practical ability of the navigator do not come into play until the destination has been decided upon; and although navigators may have their own preferences for particular destinations, these preferences have no special status, and are neither better nor worse than those of their masters.”^[9]

490b Plato’s Socrates maintains that “it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is [the forms], not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he gasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it.” A similar passage occurs at 499b-c. Note that this passage should be contrasted with the description of the tyrant at 579b-c as an individual who is “filled with erotic loves.”

The discussion from **490c-505e** clarifies how Plato’s Socrates believes extant states mis-educate and under-appreciate potential philosophical kings. It can be read with less care.

-492-494b The “private teachers,” “sophists,” and others generally in power will not teach anything “worthwhile,” since they do not have such knowledge. Clearly one sort of “erotic love” is good, and the other bad!

--493a “Not one of those paid private teachers, whom the people call sophists and consider to be their rivals in craft, teaches anything other than the convictions that the majority express when they are gathered together. Indeed, these are precisely what the sophists call wisdom.”

--493e-494a Plato’s Socrates claims that the majority cannot “accept” the forms, “they can’t philosophize. This passage is relevant when one considers the “democratic” and “aristocratic” readings of the text. Cf., 431c-d, 479d, and 518c.

-494b-502c **Those in control [in current states] will want to train the individual who has the “talent” and “potential” to become a philosopher-king so that she or he can be useful to them** they will endeavor to use such individuals for their own advantage. They will “pay court” to him, flatter him, and they will not force such an individual to work too hard at acquiring abstract knowledge. Indeed, if the individual showed the interest in pursuing such, they would do all they could to redirect her or his attention and interests. Those who are not suited to the activity, on the other hand, will make a mess of it, and others who don’t recognize their inabilities will think they are the true practitioners of a (largely worthless craft). Only an extraordinarily lucky individual like Socrates might emerge to properly pursue philosophy.

--499b The only ways either good cities or good individuals will come about, then, is if either “some chance event compels those few philosophers *who aren’t vicious*” to take “charge of a city or [for] a god to “inspire the present rulers and kings” with *a true erotic love for true philosophy*.”

---Note that at this point Plato’s Socrates draws our attention to the importance of **“social concern” (in addition to knowledge)** as he noted in his first use of the guard dog metaphor (cf., 412c-427), we want to select as rulers those who constantly show social concern rather than viciousness.

13. An Analogy, The Divided Line, and the Allegory of the Cave--"suggestions" or "insights" into philosophic knowledge [502c-521b]:

In this section Plato’s Socrates uses three **analogies** and **allegories** to further clarify the sort of knowledge which the true philosophical rulers would have. Note that given what Plato has said about the importance of rational knowledge, and of knowledge of the forms, it seems inappropriate for him to resort to analogies and metaphors at this point “surely, one could say, he should provide further dialectical clarity regarding the forms and regarding the forms in general (and regarding the particular form of Justice) here. Why, then, does he do this?

503 b “let us now dare to say that those who are to be made our guardians in the most exact sense must be philosophers.”

505-506 “...you’ve often heard it said that **the form of the good** is the most important thing to learn about and that it’s by their relation to it that just things and the others become useful and beneficial. You know very well that...we have no adequate knowledge of it [and]....if we don’t know it, even the fullest possible knowledge of other things is of no benefit to us, any more than if we acquire any possession without the good of it.”

-506b Plato’s Socrates is asked whether pleasure or knowledge (or some other thing) is “good.” He doesn’t take this up directly, but we are meant to see here and in what follows that knowledge is far more like the good than is pleasure! This topic is too “big” for the discussion, and they turn to the smaller topic of “justice.”

-506c”...opinions without knowledge are shameful and ugly things....The best of them are blind....”

507b **There is a single form behind the multiplicity of particulars.**

- The forms are *intelligible* and *not visible*.
- 508b-509d **The analogy of the sun** “in addition to the eyes and the objects of sight, we need the light of the sun in order to see. Thus belief requires the organ, the object, and a medium. In the case of rational understanding we will require the object of knowledge (the form), the organ (reason or dialectic) and the “form of the good” to play the role of the sun for vision/belief.
- 508d”....when [the soul] focuses on something illuminated by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and apparently possesses understanding, but when it focuses on what is mixed with obscurity, on what comes to be and passes away, it opines and is dimmed, changes its opinions this way and that, and seems bereft of understanding.”
- 509b the sun [the form of the good] not only makes things visible [intelligible], but it is ultimately the source of their existence!

509d-511d **The divided line passage:**

In this passage Plato clarifies the different “cognitive stages” on the road to understanding or wisdom. Of some importance (especially when this passage is combined with the Analogy of the Sun and the Allegory of the Cave, which bracket it) is the fact that he suggests that the final stage in the process is one which involves “grasping” (or “insight”) [511b] rather than reasoning (or the use of “hypotheses”). The visual metaphor of the sun suggests that the final stage (*noesis*) involves an “intellectual vision” which consists of a direct and immediate embracing the truth (though it may have to be preceded by a long process of dialectical study).

509d “Understand, then, that, as we said, there are these two things, one sovereign of the intelligible kind and place, the other of the visible....you have two kinds of thing, visible and intelligible.”

-The “divided line” distinguishes the two stages of the “visible” (*pistis* [or opinion] and *eikasia* [imagination]) from the two stages of the intelligible (*dianoia* [or reasoning] and *noesis* [or understanding]).

-510b-511e This long passage needs to be read carefully—it distinguishes between the two stages of the intelligible and helps clarify the sort on knowledge the philosopher-kings are supposed to have.

	Cognitive State:	Object of the Cognitive State:	<i>A semi-plausible comparison to early Platonic views regarding Socratic Knowledge</i>
Intelligible Realm	<i>Noesis</i> (understanding)	Forms	<i>Integrated knowledge of the forms</i>
Intelligible Realm	<i>Dianoia</i> (reasoning/ thought)	Mathematical and scientific objects/laws	Similar to the dialectical search for knowledge.

Visible Realm	<i>Pistis</i> (opinion/belief)	Sensible objects	Similar to the state of those who <i>could</i> reach <i>aporia</i> (the recognition of ignorance)
Visible Realm	<i>Eikasia</i> (imagination)	Images, reflections, and works of art	<i>Similar to the state of ignorance of Euthyphro and others</i>

We’ll have to read and discuss 510b-511e carefully as we try to understand the differences between the top two stages!

-Cf., 519a-b and 533a-e.

[BOOK VII]

514-520 **The allegory of the cave:**

Plato’s Socrates next has us imagine individuals living in a deep cave and chained so that they can only view shadows on the wall and hear echoes in the cave. Their “knowledge” is only at the lowest level on the divided line (*eikasia* [imagination])—they see only images! Were someone able to free him or herself, and look at the fire in the cave which makes the images possible, pain would immediately be experienced. In time, however, the individual could see things (albeit rather darkly) rather than shadows, and would now be at the next higher level (*pistis* [opinion]). If this person tried to tell the others about the illusory character of their “knowledge,” they would hate him or her.

Were she or he now to move out of the cave and into the sunlight, again the first experience would be of pain, but in time things would be seen far better than before—the individual would have moved up one more level and would now be in the intelligible realm (*dianoia* [reasoning]). Finally, if the individual looked directly at the sun....

518c”...the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul and...the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkens to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely the one we call the [form of the] good.”

-**Note:** as indicated above, this passage suggests what I call the “democratic” reading of the *Republic*. It seems to indicate that all individuals are capable of becoming philosophers. Cf., 527e: “in every soul there is an instrument that is purified and rekindled by such subjects [mathematics, geometry, astronomy, harmonics] when it has been blinded and destroyed by other ways of life, an instrument that is more important to preserve than ten thousand eyes.”

-If this represents his view, of course, the passages about the “inferior many” will need to be “explained away.” Cf., 431b, 479d, 494a, and 518c.

519d-521b It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they’ve made it and looked sufficiently, we mustn’t allow them to do what they’re allowed to do today.

—To stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or greater.

Then are we to do them an injustice by making them live a worse life when they could live a better one? You are forgetting again that it isn’t the law’s concern to make any one class in the city outstandingly happy but to contrive to spread happiness throughout the city by bringing the citizen into harmony with each other through persuasion or compulsion and by making them share with each other the benefits that each class can confer on the community.

Plato’s Socrates indicates that individuals who have the requisite knowledge must be compelled to rule. They are to take ruling up as a duty, and he believes this is for the best for all. They will accept this lot in life because, he contends, (520e)”...we’ll be giving just orders to just people.” He also contends that (521a)”...if beggars hungry for

private goods go into public life, thinking that the good is there for the seizing, then the well-governed city is impossible.”

14. Higher Education of the Rulers: Mathematics and Dialectic [521b-541b]:

In this section Plato's Socrates discusses in greater detail the higher education of the rulers or philosopher-kings. **This section of the text can be read with less care than the other sections of the text as it does not give the reader much of a clue as to how these individuals are to actually acquire the knowledge which he believes is so important.**

-521d He contends that the students who would gain wisdom need to study "...subjects which are to draw the psyche from the *realm of becoming* to the *realm of what is*" [that is, the unchanging forms].

527 d-e Interestingly, he says here that: ...in every soul there is an instrument that is purified and rekindled by such subject when it has been blinded and destroyed by other ways of life, an instrument that is more important to preserve than ten thousand eyes, since only with it can the truth be seen." Here again we need to contrast this passage with those like 431c-d.

While the passages in this section do not actually tell us how to engage in dialectic, it does give us a fuller picture of the training which the philosopher-kings will receive. :

532a **Dialectic** is discussed: "...whenever one tries through dialectic, and without any help from the senses but by means of reason, to set out to find each true reality and does not give up before apprehending the Good itself with reason alone, one reaches the final goal of the intelligible as the prisoner escaping from the cave reached the final goal of the visible."

-The word *dialegesthai* normally means "to converse." The *Socratic method* of question-and-answer, proceeding step by step with each step being based on mutual agreement, is exemplified in the First Book (e.g. 348 a-b). *Plato's dialectic* has acquired for him a deeper significance. It is meant to provide *a purely abstract recognition of the sort of understanding of the Forms, and ultimately The Form of the Good, attained when one reaches the highest section of the Divided Line.*

-533b-d Dialectic further characterized: **proceeding to first principles without using hypotheses.** Cf., 511 and 519a-b.

-540 At age 50, having completed a long course of (largely mathematical) studies, they will be "compelled to lift up the eyes of their soul" to the form of the good.

--**Criticism:** in his *To Explain The World: The Discovery of Modern Science*, Steven Weinberg maintains that: "though a great intellectual achievement in itself, the development of mathematics by Euclid and the Pythagoreans was a mixed blessing for natural science. For one thing the *deductive* style of mathematical writing, enshrined in Euclid's *Elements* was endlessly imitated by workers in the natural sciences, where it is *not so appropriate*."^[10]

"More important than the question of style, though related to it, is *a false goal inspired by mathematics: to reach certain truth by the unaided intellect.* In his discussion of the education of philosopher kings in the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates argue that astronomy should be done in the same way as geometry. According to Socrates, looking at the sky may be helpful as a spur to the intellect, in the same way that looking at a geometric diagram

may be helpful in mathematics, but in both cases real knowledge comes solely through thought [529e]."^[11]

[BOOK VIII]

15. The Comparison of the Just and Unjust States and Individuals and the Tyrannical Life [543-576b]:

In these pages, Plato's Socrates turns to an extended discussion of various "less than ideal" states and individuals offering the same sort of discussion as he offered regarding the aristocratic ideal state and individual. That is, he discusses **what happens when the "other" parts of the soul rule a state or individual.** This discussion is intended to set up a critical comparison-and-contrast of the just state or individual sketched above and the unjust states or individuals. Plato's Socrates presents his comparison and contrast in terms of an imagined degeneration of the state (or individual) from the just one discussed thus far through a series of "intermediate" cases:

a "**timocracy**"^[12] which is **ruled by the emotion of civic courage;**

an "**oligarchy**" which is **ruled the desire for wealth (one of the necessary appetites);**

a "**democracy**" which **treats everything as equally valuable** (in a democracy, unlike the other states discussed, there is equality, and this means that all the various parts of the soul are given equal valuation—that is, reason, the emotions, the necessary appetites, and the unnecessary appetites are all valued equally), and, finally,

a “**tyranny**” which is rule by the unnecessary appetites.

In his discussion, Plato’s Socrates is not trying to sketch an actual “devolution” (of either the individual or the state); instead, he discusses the various “logical” types of states and individuals. His goal is to set up the critical comparison and contrast argument which follows:

544e”...there are of necessity as many ways of life for men as there are types of cities...” and the Aristocracy has been defined and discussed already.

Plato’s Socrates indicates *why there is change in the world*:

-546 All that comes into being must decay.

-Both “sensory knowledge” and a mixing of the classes through bad births and educational mistakes will lead to decay. The devolution or decay he discusses runs through four types of state and individual (or soul).

Timocracy:

Plato’s Socrates begins by discussing what he calls a **timocracy** “a state ruled by the auxiliaries without the leadership and guidance of the philosopher kings.

-547-549 As individuals think too lightly of the cultivation of the minds of the young and as they become afraid to admit the intellectuals to office, we will find that soldiers will take over and that they will have WAR as their constant preoccupation and occupation.

-Character of the timocracy: it honors fighters.

-549c-550 Individual timocrat: obstinate and uncultured; lover of physical training rather than of wisdom:

--The young timocrat’s father tends the growth of reason in his soul, while the rest of the world is fostering the other two elements, ambition and appetite. The child listens to his father and to the rest of the city:”...he is pulled both ways....he is not a bad man by nature but keeps bad company, pulled both ways he has settled in the middle and has surrendered the rule over himself to the middle part, the victory-loving and spirited part, and becomes a proud and ambitions man.”

Oligarchy:

Here arises what Plato’s Socrates refers to as an **oligarchy** “the state will come to be ruled by those primarily motivated by the appetite for **wealth**. It is important to note that this sort of state and the corresponding individual will lead a tightly-controlled life seeking wealth alone (and this is to be considered **one of the necessary appetites**). Recall the discussion with Cephalus (331d) regarding the relation of justice and wealth “he is right about wealth being a virtue, but wrong about it being justice (or highly conducive to it); right about giving people their “due, but wrong about what people are due.

-550d Constitution is based upon income.

-550e The oligarchy and the oligarchs value money more than virtue.

--551c would anyone wish to choose a ship captain this way?

--551d The state loses its unity and becomes two states (the rich and the poor).

---what of the Aristocracy and its *three* classes/states?

--551e oligarchs can not count on the multitude to defend the state.

--552c mere spenders of money and consumers of goods”the drone metaphor.

--such creatures become a detriment to society (a burden).

-553d The individual oligarch:

--attaches the greatest importance to money;

--thrifty and a hard worker;

--makes a profit from everything;

--honors possessions;

--“*The reasonable and spirited parts he makes to sit upon the ground beneath the king, one on either side, reducing them to slaves, the first he will not allow to reason about or examine anything else than how little money can be made into much; while he does not allow the other part to honor or admire anything but wealth and wealthy men, or to have any other ambition than the acquisition of wealth or of anything which may*

contribute to this.”

---But what of Aristocracy: tyranny of reason, self-mastery?

--554”...he is thrifty and a worker, satisfying only his necessary appetites, and makes no other expenditures, but he enslaves his other desires as vain.”

--554b pays little attention to education;

--554c”...dronish appetites exist in him because of his lack of education: some are beggarly, others are evil, but they are forcibly held in check by his other preoccupation.”

--554e such a man will be torn in two by internal conflict.

-555c Oligarchs will encourage the appetites and bring about their own downfall!

The vast majority of people holding antidemocratic views are driven by intolerance. Prejudice may vary enormously in its intensity.”[13]

Democracy:

This will, then, lead to the next stage of devolution: the emergence of a **democracy**”which he characterizes as:

-557b In a democracy individuals are free.

--557c a greater variety of individuals than in any other constitution.

--so free it contains an example of every kind.

-558d The necessary vs. the unnecessary appetites:

--561b *The democrat places all the pleasures on an equal footing!*

--cf., 571!

-Once democracy has been institutionalized within society, anti-democratic thought is overwhelmingly the product of prejudice against poor people. A small minority may reason their way, the sub-classes in the democracy (rulers, wealthy, and general citizens) war with one-another “usually the rulers and general citizens try to prey on the wealthy. The classes here are not in harmony and, thus, the state (and the individual’s correspondingly ill soul) is unstable and ill. This leads to the need for a strong leader: [565d] “and is it not always the way of a demos to put forward one man as its special champion and protector and cherish and magnify him?” According to Plato’s Socrates, this leader initially appears to be everyone’s friend, but works to divide and conquer becoming, in time, a **tyrant**.

Tyranny:

564 The desire for freedom and liberty is the downfall of the democracy.

564d A democracy has three parts:

-drones an idle class

-564e the rich

-565 the workers

--565c The latter look for a champion and, thus, tyranny arises.

The character of the individual tyrant:

-promises much at first,

-quietly destroys his enemies,

-declares war to keep things in line,

-eliminates the opposition,

-must keep constant watch over others and must turn on everyone.

-569 “dictator is a parricide...and a cruel nurse to old age....” [parricide=one who murders parents]

[BOOK IX]

To understand this individual (and the tyranny), we must pay attention to Plato’s characterization of the **unnecessary appetites**: [571]”...some of our unnecessary pleasures and desires seem to me lawless. They are probably present in everyone, but they are held in check by the laws and by the better desires with the help of reason....Those that are aroused during sleep....”

-[572d] The character of the dictatorial man:

--573b" ...purged him[self] of moderation and filled him[self] with imported madness."

--573c-d "Then a man becomes tyrannical in the precise sense of the term when either his nature or his way of life or both of them together make him drunk, filled with erotic desires, and mad....

...many terrible desires grow up day and night besides the tyrannical one, needing many things to satisfy them....

--574a-575a The tyrant will try to "outdo" his parents, and will sacrifice and harm them, and" ...**erotic love** lives like a tyrant within him, in complete anarchy and lawlessness as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for himself and the unruly mob around it (some of whose members have come in from the outside as a result of his keeping bad company, while others have come from within, freed and let loose by his own bad habits)." [14] Here Plato describes the tyrant as someone fully characterized by *pleonexia*."

16. Which Life is the Better One? [576c-592b]:

In this section Plato's Socrates offers three proofs that the just life is the better life, that the values he recommends are, indeed, better than those recommended by Thrasymachus. Here, then, he is finally providing his response to the challenges offered by Glaucon and Adeimantus at the beginning of Book II:

First proof: comparison/contrast of aristocracy and tyranny [576d-580d]:

-576d tyranny and aristocracy are direct opposites,

-there is no more miserable state than the tyranny,

-there is no happier state than the aristocracy,

-577c the state under a dictator is enslaved,

-the best elements in the tyranny are without civic rights.

577d As with the state, so with the individual:

-the souls of tyrants are full of servitude,

-best elements are enslaved,

-soul is not free.

--**Critical comment:** now, really, is Plato a "fan" of *freedom*? Is there freedom in an aristocracy?

-577e-578b The tyrannical city (and soul) is poor, full of fear, and wretched.

-578d-579a **Consider the individual who owns many slaves.** Does this person fear the slaves? No! Why not?

Because the whole state would come to the rescue if the slaves revolted. Now consider what would happen if the individual and the slaves were all moved away from the protection afforded by the city. The slave owner would be (rightly) frightened and would turn into a flatterer of servants/slaves!

-579b-c ...he'd be surrounded by nothing but vigilant enemies.

And isn't this the kind of prison in which the tyrant is held "the one...**filled with fears and erotic loves of all kinds**...he's the only one in the whole city who can't travel abroad or see the sights that other free people want to see. Instead, he lives like a woman, mostly confined to his own house, and envying any other citizen who happens to travel abroad and see something worthwhile."

....He's just like an exhausted body without any self-control, which, instead of living privately, is compelled to compete and fight with other bodies all its life."

--**Note that this passage should be contrasted with one at 499b: "the *Philosopher is filled with a true erotic love for true philosophy*."** There he contends that the only way either good cities or good individuals will come about, then, is if either "â€|some chance event compels those few philosophers *who aren't vicious*â€|to take charge of a cityâ€|or [for]â€|a godâ€|[to inspire] the present rulers and kingsâ€|with *a true erotic love for true philosophy*."

In the context of a "comparison and contrast" between the sort of "erotic love" of the tyrant and that of the philosopher, I should perhaps revisit my earlier remarks upon Plato's view of love. In discussing the family relationships of the rulers and auxiliaries, I noted that he would take the children away from the parents and would not allow the ruling males and females to form "husband and wife" relationships. The claim there was that "erotic love" would not foster

the requisite character for ruling (they would care more for *specific individuals* rather than for the whole state if they were allowed to cultivate this trait, or have such parent-child, husband-wife relationships). In short, I said, Plato seems to be no fan of **love**. This is only partially true however. In his *Symposium* (many consider this to be Plato's "second-greatest" dialogue after the *Republic*), Plato offers a number of speeches given at a supper party regarding the nature of love. Of course, Socrates' speech (199c-212c) is said to be the highlight of the dialogue. Within this speech Plato's Socrates imagines Diotima [a wise woman of Mantinea who "instructs him" regarding true love much as the "laws" instruct him in the *Crito*]. The speech from 210a-212c sketches **an "assent" from love of transient individuals to love of the transcendent form of the Beautiful itself** and clearly indicates that Plato feels there is a "good" form of erotic attachment (though it is to what is eternal rather than what is changing, and it is the sort of love which many can share in). The famous passage is too long to replicate here, but one portion of it goes as follows:

and so, when his prescribed devotion to boyish beauties has carried our candidate so far that the universal beauty dawns upon his inward sight, he is almost within reach of the final revelation. And this is the way, the only way, he must approaching, or be led toward the sanctuary of Love. Starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder, stepping from rung to rung—that is, from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning, and from learning in general to the special love that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself—until at last he comes to know what beauty is.

And if, my dear Socrates, Diotima went on, man's life is ever worth living, it is when he has attained this vision of the very soul of beauty. And once you have seen it, you will never be seduced again by the charm of gold, of dress, of comely boys, or lads just ripening to manhood; you will care nothing for the beauties that used to take your breath away and kindle such a longing in you, and many others like you, Socrates, to be always at the side of the beloved and feasting your eyes upon him, so that you would be content, if it were possible to deny yourself the grosser necessities of meat and drink, so long as you were with him.

But if it were given to man to gaze on beauty's very self—unsullied, unalloyed, and freed from the mortal taint that haunts the frailer loveliness of flesh and blood—if, I say, it were given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face, would you call *his*, she asked me, an unenviable life, whose eyes had been opened to the vision, and who had gazed upon it in true contemplation until it had become his own forever?[\[15\]](#)

Of course, many may feel that the sort of love Plato commends here is not what they take to be intrinsically valuable—it may seem "Platonic" rather than "real" love.[\[16\]](#)

580b-c Which individual, then, (the aristocrat, timocrat, oligarch, democrat, or tyrant) is first in happiness? That is an easy question once one has set the comparison and contrast. "And shall I add to the announcement that it holds, whether these things remain hidden from every god and human being or not?"

Several Critical Comments:

1. Plato's "first argument" contends that the good for human beings is to have a tightly-ordered soul governed by philosophical reason and live in a civil society which is similarly controlled by reason. Pleasures, loves, freedoms, choices, and any other goods are to be rigidly controlled by the "higher" parts. In his *Reasons and Persons*, Derek Parfit suggests that:

we might claim that what is best for people is a composite. It is not just their being in the conscious states [e.g., pleasure and pain] that they want to be in. Nor is it just their having knowledge, engaging in rational activity, being aware of true beauty, and the like. What is good for someone is neither what Hedonists claim, nor just what is claimed by Objective List Theorists. We might believe that if we had *either* of these, *without the other*, what we had would have little or no value. We might claim, for example, that what is good or bad for someone is to have knowledge, to be engaged in rational activity, to experience mutual love, and to be aware of beauty, while strongly wanting just these things. On this view, each side in this disagreement [hedonists and list theorists] saw only half of the truth. Each put forward as sufficient something that was only necessary.[\[17\]](#)

We could build on Parfit's suggestion developing a view (or, even, perhaps, an alternative reading of Plato's view) which stresses that the good for human beings is multi-faceted; and insists on a *balance* between love of knowledge, love of others, civic concern, pleasurable fulfillment, love of beauty, and a host of other intrinsically valuable ends. While a life which includes the sort of philosophical knowledge Plato recommends may be "good," such a view insists

that if it is devoid of the other aspects, it is not a “good life.” This view would accept the Socratic claim that “the unexamined life is unworthy living,” without adhering to the Platonic exclusivity which turns this into the only important aspect of the good life. If we look back at Plato’s beginning points in the *Republic*, and pick up on his emphasis upon justice as a *harmony of the parts*, and also note that the development of his overall argument emphasizes *both* philosophical knowledge and civic concern, then we might have some support for an interpretation which would emphasize a *harmony of various goods*. Of course promoting *control* **and** promoting *harmony* can be very different; and the interpretation of Plato I have emphasized has been one which talks more of the former than of the latter.

2. In his “The Case For Far-Out Possibilities,” Freeman Dyson maintains that:

the right question to ask was not “Who are the best rulers?” but “How do we make sure that rulers can be peacefully replaced when they rule badly?” Democratic systems of government are designed to answer this latter question. Elections are held not to choose the best rulers, but to give us a chance to get rid of the worst without bloodshed. Constitutional monarchy is another solution to the same problem. The perennial problem of government is not to choose the best rulers, but to hold bad rulers responsible for their failures.[\[18\]](#)

580d **A second proof [580d-583b]:**

580d *Each part of the soul has its particular form of pleasure and its peculiar desire: knowledge, honor, and appetites.*

-581c-e The three types of people would, of course, each say that their sort of pleasure is the best! How shall we judge this issue?

--582a “*How are we to judge things if we want to judge them well? Isn’t it by experience, reason, and argument?*”

--582b-d Which of the three types has the most experience of the three kinds of pleasure? Which is most adept at reasoning and argument? The philosopher!

--583a “Then of the three pleasures, the most pleasant is that of the part of the soul with which we learn....”

A third proof [583b-592b]:

583c We say pain and pleasure are *opposites*, but actually, there is a middle ground between them (that is, the absence of pain)!

-584 Some confuse *true* pleasure with the mere absence of pain!

--584e-585a “Is it any surprise, then, if those who are inexperienced in the truth have unsound opinions about lots of other things as well, or that they are so disposed to pleasure, pain, and the intermediate state that, when they descend to the painful, they believe truly and are really in pain, but that, when they ascend from the painful to the intermediate state, they firmly believe that they have reached fulfillment and pleasure?”

-585b-c Ignorance and pain are “empty” states of the soul, and it is true belief, knowledge, etc., which are the “fulfilled states” which contrast with these empty states (rather than the intermediate states).

-586a-b “Therefore, those who have no experience of reason or virtue, but are always occupied with feasts and the like, are brought down and then back up to the middle, as it seems, and wander in this way throughout their lives, never reaching beyond this to what is truly higher up, never looking up at it or being brought up to it, and so they aren’t filled with that which really is and never taste any stable and pure pleasure. Instead, they always look down at the ground like cattle, and with their heads bent over the dinner table, they feed, fatten, and fornicate. To outdo others in these things, they kick and butt them with iron horns and hoofs, killing each other, because their desires are insatiable. For the part they are trying to fill is like a vessel full of holes, and neither it nor the things they are trying to fill it with are among the things that are.”

--His discussion here should remind us of what he said in the “divided line passage” [509-511 d] and his

“allegory of the cave” [514-520]“if one isn’t “exposed” to the “better pleasures,” one can’t even know what one is missing according to Plato’s Socrates here. Those who are unaware of the “true pleasures” (those of philosophic discussion, reflection, and knowledge), then are like those in the cave who are content to live a life of looking at shadows (that is things which are largely unreal”those items which fit into the lowest category of cognition and reality in the divided line passage).

-586e”...when the entire soul follows the philosophic part, and there is no civil war in it, each part of it does its own work exclusively and is just, and in particular it enjoys its own pleasures, the best and truest pleasures possible for it.”

--In a passage from 587a-589b Plato’s Socrates offers both a tortured mathematical evaluation of how distant the tyrant is from the aristocrat, and a comparison of the tyrant with various mythological beasts. Instead of feeding the beasts within us, of course, he maintains we should domesticate them! This passage may be skipped altogether!

-589d”...can it profit anyone to acquire gold unjustly if, by doing so, he enslaves the best part of himself to the most vicious?”

-590c-d”...when the best part is naturally weak in someone, it can’t rule the beasts within him but can only serve them and learn to flatter them?

....to ensure that someone like that is ruled by something similar to what rules the best person, *we say that he ought to be the slave of that best person* who has a divine ruler within himself. It isn’t to harm the slave that we say he must be ruled, which is what Thrasymachus thought to be true of all subjects, but *because it is better for everyone to be ruled by divine reason, preferably within himself and his own, otherwise imposed from without, so that as far as possible all will be alike and friends, governed by the same thing.*”

592a-b Plato’s Socrates suggests that this picture of an ideal state may be a model”...for anyone who wishes to look at it and make himself its citizen on the strength of what he sees. It makes no difference whether it is or ever will be somewhere, for he would take part in the practical affairs of that city and of no other.”

(end of reading selection—we won’t cover Book X)

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Notes: (click on note number to return to text for the note)

[1] The art of disputation and polemics.

[2] Cf., Lynda Lange, “The Function of Equal Education in Plato’s Republic, in *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*,” eds. Lorene Clark and Lynda Lange (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1979), pp. 3-15, for a critique of Plato’s sexist treatment of women. Cf., also, John Gould, “Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens,” in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* v. 100 (1980), pp. 38-59.

[3] Cf., C.D.C. Reeve, “The Naked Old Women in the Palaestra: A Dialogue Between Plato and Lasthenia of Mantinea,” *op. cit.*

[4] Eli Sagan, *The Honey and the Hemlock* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), p. 144.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[6] Wikipedia’s “[The Open Society and Its Enemies](#)”, accessed on 03/27/17.

[7] By ‘participants’ Plato means to speak of the individual beautiful things. Thus, *Beauty Itself* (the form Beautiful) is one thing and individual things, like the Mona Lisa, are different things which are what they are because they “fall under” (or “participate in”) the relevant form.

[8] Lack of science, or ignorance.

[9] Renford Bambrough, “Plato’s Political Analogies.” *op. cit.*, p. 105.

[10] Steven Weinberg, *To Explain The World: The Discovery of Modern Science* (N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2015), p. 19. Emphasis (italics) added to the passage twice.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20. Emphasis (italics) added to the passage.

[12] Timocracy: “timorous” = “fearful” of course, here, in a “Platonic” sense! Remember his discussion of the “auxiliaries,” and their sort of *civic courage*.

[13] Eli Sagan, *The Honey and the Hemlock*, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

[14] See the note to the passage at 343d-344c regarding the translation of *pleonexia*.

[15] Plato, *Symposium* (211d-212c), trans. Michael Joyce [1935], in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1961), pp. 562-563.

[16] *Platonic* love is given the following definition by *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (N.Y.: Random House, 1969), p. 1103: “love of the idea of beauty, seen as terminating an evolution from physical desire for an individual through love of physical beauty and later of spiritual beauty. 2. an intimate companionship or relationship between a man and a woman which is characterized by the apparent absence of sexual desire; a spiritual affection.”

[17] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1984), pp. 501-502.

[18] Freeman Dyson, “The Case For Far-Out Possibilities,” *The New York Review of Books* v. 58 (November 10, 2011, pp. 27-27, p. 27.