

Nicolae Sfetcu

Plato: *The Republic*
On justice

Dialectics and Education

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Plato, *The Republic: On Justice* – Dialectics and Education

Nicolae Sfetcu

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Plato

Biography

The main biographical source about Plato, according to the testimony of the Neoplatonic Simplicius (Aristotle 2021), was written by the disciple Xenocrates, but unfortunately it has not reached us. The earliest biography of Plato (Riginos 1976) to date, *De Platone et dogmate eius*, is by a second-century Latin author, Apuleius (Apuleius 100AD). All of Plato's other biographies were written more than five hundred years after his death. The Greek historian Diogenes (2nd and 3rd centuries) is the author of a series of biographies of Greek philosophers (*The Lives of Philosophers*) in which he refers to the life of Plato (Laertius 2018). He also wrote a funeral praise for Plato. Other early biographers of Plato are Olympiodorus the Younger in the sixth century (Grotius 1826) (Filippi 2017, 5-12 (I)) and an anonymous source (Westermann 1964, 388–96). An important source about Plato's life is his philosophical dialogues, thirteen letters (possibly false though, with the possible exception of Letters VII and VIII), the writings of Aristotle, an excerpt from the Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara's *History of Philosophers* (*Syntaxis ton philosophon*). 1st century BC (Dorandi 2016, 186–87), Prolegomena's anonymous writings on Platonic philosophy traditionally attributed to Olympiodorus, *Suda*, 10th century (Adler 1967) and Plutarch's *Life of Dio*, 1st-2nd Century (Boas 1948, 439-457 (57)) (Plutarch 102AD).

Apollodorus of Athens, in the *Chronology*, dates Plato's birth to the Eighty-eighth Olympics, on the seventh day of the month of Targelion, and the end of May, 428 BC (Laertius 2018, 26, 72) (Helios 1960) (Nails 2002).

Plato has aristocratic origins (Robin 1935). He was born in Athens. His father, Aristone, is said to have been one of the descendants of Codro (Filippi 2017) (Hutchins 1952), the last legendary king of Athens. Plato's real name was Aristocle, after his grandfather. The mother,

Perictione (Platon and Brisson 2020), descended from the famous legislator Solon (Laertius 2018, 122 (III,1)) (Kirchner 1901, vol. I) (Guthrie and Guthrie 1986, vol. 4). Perictione is also the first cousin of Critias and the sister of Charmides, two of the Thirty Tyrants of Athens in 404 BC.

According to Diogenes Laertius (Laertius 2018, vol. 3), Speusippus refers in *Plato's Funeral Feast* to a legend that Plato was in fact the son of the god Apollo and the brother of Asclepius, "physician of the body, as is Plato of the immortal soul" (Laertius 2018, vol. 1) (Guthrie and Guthrie 1986, vol. 4). Thus, as in the Bible, Plato's mother, Perictione, had a vision with Apollo after which she became pregnant (Bazzarini 1837, vol. 5 p 912). This version is contradicted by the unknown author of *Prolegomena* (Motta 2014, 126–28). It seems that through the legend of Apollo, Speusippus, being the son of a sister of Plato, actually tried to promote the myth of the philosopher after his death (Motta 2014), the deification of Plato continuing in the Neoplatonic era according to Porphyry and Proclus. (Motta 2014, 61)

Plato had two brothers, Adimanto and Glaucone (Croiset 1922, 2), about whom he speaks in *The Republic* (Plato and Jowett 1991, sec. Book 2, 368), and a sister, Potone, whose son, Speusippo, will be a student. and Plato's successor, taking over the leadership of the Athens Academy on Plato's death (Robin 1935) (Apuleius 100AD) (Laertius 2018). Plato's mother, after the death of her father, remarries her maternal uncle, Pylilampus, giving birth to a son, Antiphon, Plato's half-brother (Guthrie and Guthrie 1986, vol. 4).

The name Plato was given to him by his gymnastics teacher, Ariston, a fighter from Argos, due to his very broad shoulders (from the Greek *πλατύς*, *platýs*, meaning "wide"). Seneca mentions the meaning of Plato's name: "His very name was given to him because of his broad chest" (Laertius 2018, vol. 3 p. 4). Others consider the same etymology of the word, but with reference

to the width of its forehead or the grandeur of its literary style (Notopoulos 1939, 135–145) (Weischede 2021, vol. VI 58:29–30).

Plato practiced pancrazio (a kind of fight) and boxing. Also, according to the references of Diogenes Laertius to Apuleius (Laertius 2018, vol. I, 2), Olympiodorus (Laertius 2018, vol. II, 3) and Eliano (Laertius 2018, vol. II, 30), Plato would have cultivated painting and poetry, writing dithyrambs, verses and tragedies that will later help him write his dialogues. Speusippo praised the sharp intellect and prodigious memory that Plato showed as a child, and his dedication to study in adolescence (Tarán 1981, 236–37). Plato is said to have been a pupil of Theodore of Cyrene, a disciple of Protagoras, Socrates, and Theaetetus, who taught him mathematics. According to Plutarch (Plutarch 1892), Plato was well versed in music science, being a student of Dracon and Metellos of Agrigento. He was a training colleague of Isocrates, who was six years older than him (Laertius 2018, vol. III, 1).

Plato had close ties with the oligarchic party of that time (Juignet 2015). He considered politics a duty of honor of every citizen (Platon and Brisson 2020), but he gave up politics early on, disgusted by the excesses and rage of the parties (Croiset 1922, 2).

”In my youth I went through the same experience as many other men. I fancied that if, early in life, I became my own master, I should at once embark on a political career. And I found myself confronted with the following occurrences in the public affairs of my own city. The existing constitution being generally condemned, a revolution took place [...] As I observed these incidents and the men engaged in public affairs, the laws too and the customs, the more closely I examined them and the farther I advanced in life, the more difficult it seemed to me to handle public affairs aright. For it was not possible to be active in politics without friends and trustworthy supporters; and to find these ready to my hand was not an easy matter, since public affairs at Athens were not carried on in accordance with the manners and practices of our fathers.” (Plato 2021, 324)

Plato drew on the philosophical work of some of his predecessors, especially Socrates, but also Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras, to develop his own philosophy, which explores most important fields, including metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and politics. with his teacher Socrates

and his student Aristotle, he laid the foundations of Western philosophical thought (Mondin 2022, vol. I, 139) (Whitehead 2010, 39) (Colli 2014, 13) (Hegel 1995, 154)

Pythagoras and his followers exerted a strong influence on Plato (Brisson and Fronterotta 2019). Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, states that Plato's philosophy closely follows the teachings of the Pythagoreans (Aristotle 1991, vol. 1)(Aristotle 1991, bk. 1). These influences are later confirmed by Cicero (Cicero 1886, 1, 17, 39) (McFarlane 1998), and Bertrand Russell in *A History of Western Philosophy* (Russell 2013, 122–24). R. M. Hare states that Plato was influenced by Pythagoras in at least three points: Plato's republic resembles the community of thinkers that Pythagoras had established at Croton; Plato would have taken from Pythagoras the idea that mathematics and abstract thinking in general are the foundation of philosophy, science, and morality, and both had a mystical approach to the soul, possibly influenced by Orphism (Taylor, Barnes, and Hare 1999, 103–189) (Russell 2013, 122–24).

Plato died in 347 or 346 BC, according to Seneca at the age of 81 on the same day he was born (Riginos 1976), being buried at the Academy. Neanthes claims to have died at the age of 84 (Benson 2008, sec. The Life of Plato of Athens).

Plato is considered one of the most important and influential philosophers in human history (Kraut 2017), being considered one of the founders of Western religion and spirituality (Whitehead 2010). The philosophy he developed, known as Platonism, is based on the theory of Forms known by pure reason as a solution to the problem of universals.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson put it:

”You find in him that which you have already found in Homer, now ripened to thought,—the poet converted to a philosopher, with loftier strains of musical wisdom than Homer reached; as if Homer were the youth and Plato the finished man; yet with no less security of bold and perfect song, when he cares to use it, and with some harp-strings fetched from a higher heaven. He contains the future, as he came out of the past. In Plato you explore modern

Europe in its causes and seed,— all that in thought, which the history of Europe embodies or has yet to embody.” (Emerson 2007)

Alfred North Whitehead argued that "the whole history of Western philosophy is but a series of secondary notes about Plato" (Whitehead 2010)

Theophrastus, speaking of philosophers, said of Plato that he was the first in fame and genius, and at the same time the last in chronology.

Travels

According to Plutarch (Plutarch 2018), Plato made a trip to Egypt (Obenga 2005, 101–21), about which Diogenes Laertius writes that: “At the age of twenty-eight, according to Hermodor, he [Plato] went to Megara, to Euclid, accompanied by a few other students of Socrates” (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 6). But his travels in Egypt are controversial (Mathieu 2013, 24–106).

Plato, according to Diogenes Laertius (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 8) which relates the testimony of Aristoxenus, is said to have participated in three military expeditions during the Peloponnesian War to Tanagra, Corinth and Delio, from 409 BC, until 407 BC. In Delio he will also receive a reward for his contribution (Rees 1953, vols. 2, 74). In fact, at the Battle of Tanagra in 457 BC. and Delio from 424 B.C. it is impossible that Plato took part, being born around 427 BC. (Nails 2002) (Grote 1867, vol. 1). But Socrates would have fought at Delio (Plato 1999, 29e), where he is said to have stood out (Plato 2003, 219e–20), so it is possible that there was an overlap of the two figures (Boas 1948, 439–57).

Around 390 BC, Plato traveled to Magna Graecia where he met the Pythagorean Archytas of Tarentum (Cosenza 1977, 245).

In 388/387 B.C. he went to Sicily to study the volcano Etna, according to Diogenes Laertius (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 18), Athenaeus (Di Naucrati 2001, vol. I, 12) and Apuleius (Apuleius 100AD, 1, IV).

He was invited by the tyrant Dionysius I to come to Syracuse, where he met the tyrant's brother-in-law, Dione, who became one of his closest disciples (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 46) (Plato 2021). Fallen into the misfortunes of Dionysius due to his speeches, he flees aboard a ship led by the Spartan Pollide (Plutarch 2018, 5, 3–7) (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 19).

Arriving in Aegina, an enemy island of Athens, he was taken prisoner and enslaved. It was redeemed by the Socratic Annicerides of Cyrene (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 19, 20) (Sordi 1992, 83–91) (Amit 1973, 54–59).

In 367-366 BC Plato reached Syracuse again where Dionysius the Younger had taken power, invited by Dione to implement the political reforms proposed by Plato. The tyrannical faction opposes (Plutarch 2018) (Muccioli 1999, 201), eventually reaching the exile of Dione. Plato remained in Syracuse for a while, in the "hope of doing all the best he could" (Bonacasa, Braccesi, and Miro 2002, 15), but at the outbreak of a war conflict he left Sicily with the promise of Dionysius II that the end of the war will recall him and Dione (Plato 2021, 338a).

In 361 B.C. he travels to Sicily for the last time, but Plato's attempts to defend Dione led to the rupture of relations with the tyrant, being expelled from the acropolis and transferred to the house of Archedemus (Plato 2021, 348a-e; 349a-e).

" I, an Athenian and friend of Dion, came as his ally to the court of Dionysios, in order that I might create good will in place of a state war; in my conflict with the authors of these slanders I was worsted. When Dionysios tried to persuade me by offers of honours and wealth to attach myself to him, and with a view to giving a decent colour to Dion's expulsion a witness and friend on his side, he failed completely in his attempt." (Plato 2021, 333d)

In 360 BC he manages to leave Sicily with the help of Archita and the Pythagoreans of Taranto. He arrives at Olympia where he meets Dione for the last time. He succeeded in 357 B.C. to take power in Syracuse, but was killed three years later (Laertius 2018).

In the last thirteen years of his life, between 360 and 347, Plato does not seem to have left Athens.

Socrates

Plato frequented the Heraclitus Cratylus and the Parmenidean Hermogene, but it is uncertain whether the information is true or just to justify his later doctrine, influenced by the ideas of his two great predecessors, Heraclitus and Parmenides, whom he considered the true founders of philosophy.

According to Elien the Sophist, Plato met Socrates around 407 BC, when he persuaded him to devote himself to philosophy, with Plato destroying all his works of art (Elien 1772, bk. II, 30).

Plato's meeting with Socrates was fundamental. After the oligarchic and pro-Spartan government of the Thirty Tyrants, which included Plato's uncle, Critias, Socrates was accused by the new democratic government of impiety and corruption of young people and sentenced to death in 399 BC. In *Apology of Socrates*, Plato describes the process in which he acted as Socrates' defender, denouncing the falsity of the accusations, calling on several witnesses, including "Adimanto, son of Aristone, whose brother is Plato, present here." (Plato 1999, 34a) But Plato was not present in the last hours of Socrates' life. (Plato 1993, 59b) (Epictetus 1928, bk. I, 8, 13) It is assumed that thus Plato may wish to state that dialogue will not be an opportunistic chronicle of Socrates' death but a literary reconstruction in accordance with the dialogical spirit of the master. (Plato 1993, 200), or that he does not want to compromise by sharing the accusation of atheism that led to the death of Socrates.

In five dialogues Plato prefigures the process: *Theaetetus* (Plato et al. 1992), *Euthyphro* (Plato 2020c) (Plato 1999, 33d–34a), *Meno* (Plato 1999, 38b) (Plato 2020b), *Gorgias* (Plato 1864) (Plato 1993, 59b), and *The Republic* (Plato and Jowett 1991) (Plato et al. 1992, 210d). Socrates' trial is addressed by Plato in the dialogues *Apology of Socrates* (Socrates' defense speech) (Gaiser 1980), and in *Crito* (Plato 2020a) (Aristotle 1991, 987b) and *Phaedrus* (Plato 1993) (Ryle 1931,

119–124) (after the death sentence of Socrates). The only passage in which Plato speaks of Socrates in his own name is *Letter VII*, the authenticity of which is generally admitted:

”... among other things they tried to send a friend of mine, the aged Socrates, whom I should scarcely scruple to describe as the most upright man of that day, with some other persons to carry off one of the citizens by force to execution, in order that, whether he wished it, or not, he might share the guilt of their conduct; but he would not obey them, risking all consequences in preference to becoming a partner in their iniquitous deeds-seeing all these things and others of the same kind on a considerable scale...” (Plato 2021, 27)

Aristotle attributes to Socrates a different doctrine of Forms (by investigating the natural world) than that of Plato (which exists beyond and outside the ordinary range of human understanding) (McPherran 1999, 268). But in Plato's dialogues, Socrates seems to support Plato's ideas.

C. D. C. Reeve (Plato and Reeve 2004) highlights some positive theses developed by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, constituted in a kind of ethical intellectualism (*technê*) according to which to be virtuous and happy an expert knowledge is enough: the doctrine of unity of virtues: virtues (justice, piety, courage, etc.) are all identical with wisdom or knowledge and conceived as a type of craft (*technê*) or expertise; possession of this knowledge is necessary and sufficient for happiness (Plato 2020a, 48b) (Plato 1864, 470e); and no one ever acts contrary to what he knows or thinks is better, so that the weakness of the will is impossible (Plato 2008, 352a–59).

In *Apology of Socrates*, he describes the nature of his philosophical activity in Athens:

”I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone that I meet. I shall go on saying, in my usual way, My very good friend, you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honor, and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul? ... I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls.” (Plato 1999, 29d–30b)

According to Brickhouse and Smith, “Socrates, as Plato depicts him, is not a teacher at all; he is a seeker after moral wisdom who engages others to engage in the same search.” (T. C. Brickhouse and Smith 1997, 4).

Academy

In 387 BC, Plato bought a park in Athens dedicated to Academus (Thucydides and Crawley 2006, bk. ii:34), on the site where Cimon was to enclose the place with a wall (Plutarch 2018, bk. xiii:7). There he founded a school which he named the Academy, in honor of that hero, and dedicated it to Apollo and the Muses. The area where the Academy was located was decorated with oriental and olive groves (Plutarch 2018, bk. xiii:13).

Plato's Academy was a communion of knowledge in which gymnastics and cultural activities were held, often with guests, and the exact sciences were taught, preparing the study of philosophy both in itself and in its political applications. The motto of the Academy, which emphasized that geometry was a fundamental concern, was: "Let None But Geometers Enter Here" (Saffrey 1968, 67–68).

Most of the participants were part of the aristocracy (Kalligas 2020, 76) (Barnes and Barnes 2000, 31), and although Plato did not charge a participation fee (Mueller 2000, 170) (Nails 2002) (Kalligas 2020), each member had to maintain himself. There were also two women who studied with Plato at the Academy, Axiothea of Phlius and Lasthenia of Mantinea (Craig 1998).

Based on Plato's lectures on Good and Dialectics, (Zeyl 1997, 2) the teaching was conducted through discussions with the disciples, led by Plato or the older disciples, and lectures given by illustrious personalities passing through Athens. Some researchers believe that the Academy's curriculum was very similar to that discussed in Plato's *Republic* (Mueller 2000, 170–71).

Plato's Academy was a school for many illustrious personalities of the time (Guthrie and Guthrie 1986, 23) (Hornblower, Spawforth, and Eidinow 2012). The best-known disciple is Aristotle, who studied here between 367-347 BC, before founding his own school, Lyceum, but also others, such as:

- Theophrastus, until 348 BC;
- Pamphile, who will be the master of Epicurus;
- Philip of Opus, editor of *Laws* and possibly the author of *Epinomis*;
- Aminta of Heraclea, against whom Ariston of Chios will write;
- Chion; Aeschine; Hyperide; Hermodor of Syracuse; Focion; Demosthenes (Aulu-Gelle and Verger 2021, chap. XIII); Calipus of Athens; Eudoxus of Cnidus; Hestiae of Perinth; Heraclides of Pontus, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Menechmus, Menedemus of Eretria; Euphrasius of Euboea; Leon of Athens and Leon the Academician;
- Echecrate, who was the first Pythagorean;
- Hermias de Atarneus, future protector of ostracized Aristotle;
- Python and Heraclides, citizens of Enos, advisers and assassins of Cotys I in 359 BC, both citizens of Enos, a Greek city on the Thracian coast (Aristotle 2013, bk. V, X, 1311 b 21) (Laertius 2018, bk. III, 46);
- Aristonymos, legislator of the Megalopolis, in Arcadia;
- Theodectes of Phaselis, tragic poet;
- and two women: Axiothea of Phlius and Lasthenia of Mantinea.

After Plato's death, the leadership of the Academy was taken over by his nephew Speusippo. The Platonic Academy was destroyed by the Roman dictator Sulla in 86 BC (Lindberg 2008, 70) and will be temporarily closed after the death of Philo of Larissa in 83 BC. The school

will survive until the year 529 (Platon and Brisson 2020, XII), when it was permanently closed by Justinian after various periods of alternating interruptions of activity.

There have been three periods in the history of the Academy: the Old Academy, the Middle Academy and the New Academy. The main figures in the Old Academy were Speusippus (Plato's nephew), who succeeded him as head of the school (until 339 BC) and Xenocrates (until 313 BC). Both sought to merge Pythagorean speculation on numbers with Plato's theory of forms.

Plato's work

Plato's entire body of work has survived intact to this day, decisively influencing Western culture (Plato 1997) (Laertius 2018, bk. III). For Plato, dialogue is the only tool capable of highlighting the research character of philosophy, the key element of his thinking. Certainly, the written word is more precise and in-depth than the oral one, but the oral discourse allows an immediate exchange of views on the subject under discussion (Plato 1993, 275 c). The main protagonist of the dialogues is Socrates, except for the last dialogues where he is assigned a secondary role, disappearing completely in *Laws* and *Epinomis*.

David D. Cicia (Cicia 1987) considers dialectical education to be an instrument of human liberation (Freire and Macedo 2000), which must be based on accurate knowledge of the human condition in both ignorance and enlightenment and use a precise method, appropriate to the purpose. An understanding of dialectics can be reached through the "functional interpretation" of Plato (Wellman 1970). According to Klein, an interpretation of any Platonic dialogue must start from the following premises:

1. A Platonic dialogue is not a treatise or the text of a lecture, but is similar to mimes, such as those of Sofron and Xenarch.
2. The seriousness of a platonic dialogue is permeated by playfulness.

3. Readers shall be considered as silent participants in the discussions.

4. No Platonic dialogue presents Plato's thinking with complete clarity. (Klein 1977)

Favorinus said of Plato: “Modify or delete an expression from Plato's speech; no matter how skillful you make this change, you will alter the elegance.” (Aulu-Gelle 2012)

Classifications of works

Platonic dialogues have been grouped by many commentators in various classifications. According to some, a classification would be chronological: the first dialogues would be characterized by the strong influence of Socrates, those of maturity in which he would have developed the theory of ideas, and the last period in which he felt the need to defend his own conception from attacks on the address of his philosophy, realizing a deep self-criticism of the theory of ideas. The school in Tübingen and Milan takes into account the evolutionary style of Platonic dialogues (Tarrant 1935). The style, based on the Socratic dialogue, evolves considerably over time, from short and lively interventions that give liveliness to the debate to long interventions, which give the work a treaty character rather than a debate. (Reale 1972, 347) (Plato 2021, 341, c-d)

The grouping of works by stylometric analysis (Barrow 2014) is considered the closest to reality; according to this analysis, the first works are generally aporias, those from the middle period offer more clearly stated positive teachings, and the “late” dialogues are characterized by a difficult and challenging philosophy.

Chronological

Plato's works are usually grouped in the early (sometimes by some during the transition), middle, and late (Plato and Burnet 1911) (Plato et al. 1992, 142c–143b). This classification is

criticized sometimes for the uncertainty and lack of absolute agreement on the true chronology (Plato 1997) (Plato et al. 1992, 142c–143b).

Starting with the year 395 BC, in the first dialogues Plato addresses the cultural problem represented by the figure of Socrates and the role of the sophists. Other aspects: ethical (rejection of revenge, favoring human happiness ("eudaimonism")), virtue is good in itself, unity among virtues, compliance with the law), psychological (wrongdoing is done out of ignorance, moral principles), religious (gods are wise and good, divination, the divine inspiration of artists, there may be an afterlife), methodological and epistemological (defining knowledge of ethical terms, examples of ethical value, connoisseurs of a particular subject do not err in their judgments on that subject).

- *Apology of Socrates*: monologue;
- *Crito*: legitimacy of laws;
- *Ion*: the meaning of human art and divine art;
- *Euthyphro*: justice and godliness;
- *Charmides*: temperance (aporia);
- *Laches*: virtue (aporia);
- *Lysis*: friendship;
- *1st Alcibiades*: true wisdom and good government;
- *2nd Alcibiades*: prayer;
- *Hippias Major*: beauty;
- *Hippias Minor*: the identity of virtue and science;
- *Menexenus*: Aspasia;
- *Protagoras*: the didactic character of virtue;

- *Gorgias*: rhetorical art.

In the middle period up to 367 BC, Plato addresses the conditions that allow the foundation of science. Clear differences in style and philosophical content from early dialogues; the discussions extend to almost all areas of research known to mankind. Topics covered: the theory of forms, immortality and reincarnation, moral psychology with a tripartite soul, justice, art criticism, platonic love.

- *Clitophon*: uncertain assignment;
- *Meno*: history;
- *Phaedo*: immortality of the soul;
- *Euthydemus*: eristic;
- *Symposium*: love;
- *Republic*: the ideal state;
- *Cratylus*: language;
- *Phaedrus*: the tripartition of the soul.

The last works were written in Athens. Topics covered: philosophical methodology, critique of the previous theory of forms, the myth of Atlantis, the creation of the Universe, the laws on which society should be organized; Socrates begins to be absent from the dialogues.

- *Parmenides*: opposite hypotheses;
- *Sophist*: sophism;
- *Theætetus*: knowledge;
- *Statesman*: politicians;
- *Timæus*: cosmology, the structure of matter and the eschatological problem;
- *Critias*: a continuation of *Timæus*, unfinished; the myth of Atlantis;

- *Philebus*: the true Good for a happy life;
- *Laws*: unfinished, published posthumously by Philip of Opunthe, who divided it into twelve books and added a final one, *Epinomis* (Laertius 2018, bk. III 37)

Tetralogy

A common system for referring to Plato's texts is that of tetralogies, attributed by Diogenes Laërtius to Thrasyllus, a scholar and astrologer of Tiberius' court. The grammarian Thrasyllus, in the first century, by emphasizing an argumentative affinity (Mondin 2022, vol. 1 p 146), ordered the Platonic works in groups of four (tetralogies):

- *Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, Crito, Phaedo*
- *Cratylus, Theætetus, Sophist, Statesman*
- *Parmenides, Philebus, Symposium, Phædrus*
- *1st Alcibiades, 2nd Alcibiades, Hipparchus, Lovers*
- *Theages, Charmides, Laches, Lysis*
- *Euthydemus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Meno*
- *Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Menexenus*
- *Clitophon, Republic, Timaeus, Critias*
- *Minos, Laws, Epinomis, Letters*

Other works considered false are: *Definitions, On Justice, On Virtue, Demodocus, Sisyphus, Eryxias, Axiochus, Halcyon, Epigrams* (Platone 2001)

Trilogies

A different and older classification dates from Aristophanes of Byzantium (3rd century BC), who ordered the Platonic works into five trilogies:

- *Republic, Timaeus, Critias*

- *Sophist, Statesman, Cratylus*
- *Laws, Minos, Epinomis*
- *Theaetetus, Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates*
- *Crito, Phaedo, Letters*

Dialogues admit, as ways of acquiring knowledge, memory, refutation and dialectic, and ways of exposing thinking through dialectics, myth and paradigm.

Lexical grouping

Specialists in lexical statistics (Brandwood 1976) and the history of ideas classified Plato's dialogues into various "groups," the four main groups (Simeterre 1945) (Gill 2014, 61) being:

1. The first works (399-390): *Apology of Socrates, Crito, Protagoras, Laches*.
2. Transition period (390-385): *Meno, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Euthydemus, Lysis, Menexenus*
3. Maturity period (385-370): *Symposium, Cratylus, Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus*
4. Last period (370-345): *Parmenides, Theaetetus, Laws, Philebus, Sophist, Statesman, Timaeus, Critias*.

Plato's philosophy

Plato's philosophy is in line with the pre-Socratics, sophists and artistic traditions that underlie Greek education, in a new framework, defined by dialectics and the theory of ideas. For Plato, knowledge is an activity of the soul (Brisson and Pradeau 2007), affected by sensitive objects and internal processes. Platonism has its origins in Plato's philosophy, although it is not to be confused with it. According to Platonism, there are abstract objects, a different notion from that of modern philosophy, which exists in another realm distinct from both the external sensible world and the internal world of consciousness, and is the opposite of nominalism (Rosen 2001). His philosophy is the theory of forms, a distinction between perceptible but unintelligible reality (science) and imperceptible but intelligible reality (mathematics), Geometry was Plato's main motivation, and it also shows the influence of Pythagoras. Forms are perfect archetypes whose real objects are imperfect copies (Rosen 2001).

In *The Republic*, the highest form is considered to be the Form of Good, the source of all other Forms that could be known by reason (Rosen 2001). Glaucon classifies the three kinds of good and asks who is right: those we accept for their sake without regard to consequences, those we accept both for their own sake and for the sake of their consequences, and those we do not accept them for their sake but we accept them for the sake of their consequences. Socrates attributes justice to the second kind of good.

Aristotle summarizes Plato's philosophy as follows:

” After the philosophies which have been described there succeeded Plato’s treatment, which for the most part followed them (apparently the Pythagoreans and Eleatics, who have been last spoken of), but also possessed peculiar features over and above the Italian philosophy. For Plato had been) from his youth up familiar with Kratylus and so with Hera- ' kleitan opinions, to the effect that all which is “sensed” is in perpetual flux and there can be no science about it, and this conception he retained. Socrates, however, though deal-^ ing with moral ideas and not at all with the nature of the. world, yet in those subjects did search after the universal and-pay attention to obtaining definitions; and Plato, adopting his method, yet assumed, owing to the influence above-mentioned, that the definition must be of

somewhat else, and not of what is “sensed.” For he held it impossible that a general determination should apply to any of what are sensed, seeing that these are in perpetual change. Therefore he gave the name of “forms” (*ideai*) to being of this kind (i.e. to what could be defined), and held that what was sensed had its name from this being, and as alongside it; for the manifold of what have the same name with the forms (as light objects with lightness, etc.) are what they are (he said) by participation in the forms.” (Aristotle 1991)

Friedrich Nietzsche criticized Plato's "idea of good" and some elements of Christian morality in *Beyond Good and Evil* (F. Nietzsche 1886), interpreting them as "Platonism for the masses." Martin Heidegger argued against Plato's philosophy of existence in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010), and the philosopher of science Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (K. R. Popper 2020) considers the utopian political regime in the Republic as a totalitarian prototype.

Soul

Plato does not give a precise definition of the soul, but some of its properties seem to be more important than others, such as the principle of motion and thought. (Plato 1993, 245 c). The soul is connected with the Ideas, the divine, with its own movement. It is immortal and tripartite, consisting of three components: *epithumia* (*ἐπιθυμία*, "appetite", the seat of desire and passion), *thumos* (*θυμός*, the irascible, aggressive, courageous element) and *logistikon* (*λογιστικόν*, the "rational" or spiritual element, immortal, divine, a "demon" (*daimon*)). In *Timaeus*, Socrates locates the parts of the soul in the human body: reason is in the head, the spirit in the upper third of the trunk, and the appetite in the middle third of the trunk, to the navel (Plato 2015, 44d, 70).

Francis Cornford considers, in addition to the theory of Forms, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul (Campbell 2021), considered to be the one who gives life to the body and the bearer of moral properties (the mind, what thinks in us).

”... has not the soul an end which nothing else can fulfil? for example, to superintend and command and deliberate and the like. Are not these functions proper to the soul, and can they rightly be assigned to any other?

To no other.

And is not life to be reckoned among the ends of the soul?

Assuredly, he said.” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bks. 1, 353d)

Plato considered that love is motivated by the desire for the highest form of beauty (Beauty itself), and love is the motivational power through which it is realized (the ideal of "Platonic love").

Human life is a union of the soul with the human body. (Platon and Brisson 2001, 58)

The function of the myth

A feature in Plato's work is the use of myth for didactic purposes, as a form of traditional-popular knowledge that preceded the birth of Greek philosophy and to argue his philosophical reasoning. Myths highlight a relationship of ideas (Plato 2015, 38a3). They express the tradition transmitted through feelings, values and knowledge shared by a community. Plato believes that myth should be re-evaluated as useful and necessary for understanding, in ethics and politics. The myth is in fact an exposition of some ideas, difficult to accept by contemporaries, in the form of a story, with an allegorical and didactic function and concepts through images that facilitate the meaning of a rather complex discourse, creating in the reader an intellectual tension and a positive attitude towards the development of reflection. Thus, myth helps to overcome the limits imposed by rational research, becoming an "alternative way" of philosophical thinking (Valgimigli 1942, XXXVIII).

In Plato's works, three types of myths can be distinguished: false myths (e.g., stories), myths based on true reasoning (verifiable), and false and unverifiable myths (Plato and Stewart

1905); and two types of myth topics: the origin of the universe and morality and the soul (Edelstein 1949).

"The myth designates the obligation imposed on philosophy to consider its project, that of a rational explanation of all things, in the light of what seems to elude reason. The use of myths is not a sign of renunciation, but rather of a strategy of solution: insofar as human life must be found in the knowledge of the world and the divine principle of its perfection, its model, the myth will give people a look plausible, the representation of this model, without which it could not live adequately. " (Platon and Pradeau 2004, 31)

The Platonic mythical tales touch on the fundamental issues of human existence, such as death, the immortality of the soul, knowledge, the origin of the world, and link them closely to the themes and logical-critical discourses to which the philosopher entrusts the task of producing true knowledge and representation of reality, such as the myth of the cave (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII 514 A – 519 A) or the myth of Er (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. X 614 A – 621 D).

Notable Platonic stories for their inspiration generally include those about the forms of knowledge or the "line" (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI 509 D – 511 E), and the "mystery of love" (Plato 2003, 209 E – 212 C) about the hierarchy of beauty.

Ideas - Theory of Forms

Plato rejects the foundation of knowledge based on sensation (Plato et al. 1992), considering that learning is in fact a memory (Plato 2020b, 81 c-d), that the object of research is only partially unknown to man, who, after contemplating it before birth, he "forgot" it in the depths of his soul. The purpose of the search is a knowledge already present, but hidden in it, which philosophy will have to awaken it with reminiscence or "anamnesis". In the religious beliefs of metempsychosis typical of Orphism and Pythagoreanism, the soul, when the body dies, being immortal, moves to another body. Plato assumes that there are Ideas that have characteristics opposite to phenomenal entities: they are incorruptible, ingenerated, eternal and immutable. These

Ideas live in a supersensible world that is partially visible to souls once they are detached from their bodies. Ideas are more accurately translated as "Forms" (Reale 2001, 120).

Thus, the four stages of knowledge are imagination, mastery of shadows and superstitions (*eikasia*); sensitive objects, which give rise to false beliefs (*pistis*); geometric and mathematical truths, proper to discursive reason (*dianoia*); and intelligible ideas, accessible only by speculative and intuitive means (*nòesis*). Only what is absolute can be truly known (Philopon 1969) (Saffrey 1968). Perfect knowledge belongs only to the Gods. Human knowledge is based on philosophy, and is always imperfect, limited to the hyperuranion.

Forms are the true objects of definition and knowledge, immaterial and immutable realities, universal and intelligible (Plato 1993, 77 a). The theory of Ideas, or of intelligible Forms, can be summarized in two notions, that of form (which designates the intelligible being), and that of participation (which designates the relationship between being intelligible and becoming sensible). According to Aristotle, Plato's best-known argument in support of the Forms was the "one over many" argument (Aristotle 1991, bk. 1).

The Platonic theory of knowledge is best reflected in line theory:

“Now take a line which has been cut into two unequal parts, and divide each of them again in the same proportion, and suppose the two main divisions to answer, one to the visible and the other to the intelligible, and then compare the subdivisions in respect of their clearness and want of clearness, and you will find that the first section in the sphere of the visible consists of images. And by images I mean, in the first place, shadows, and in the second place, reflections in water and in solid, smooth and polished bodies and the like ... Imagine, now, the other section, of which this is only the resemblance, to include the animals which we see, and everything that grows or is made... Next proceed to consider the manner in which the sphere of the intellectual is to be divided... There are two subdivisions, in the lower of which the soul uses the figures given by the former division as images; the inquiry can only be hypothetical, and instead of going upward to a principle descends to the other end; in the higher of the two, the soul passes out of hypotheses, and goes up to a principle which is above hypotheses, making no use of images as in the former case, but proceeding only in and through the ideas themselves.” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI, 509d-510a)

The division of the line can be summarized as follows:

- sensitive knowledge or opinions (*δόξα*)
 - imagination (*εἰκασία*)
 - faith (*πίστις*)
- intelligible knowledge or science (*ἐπιστήμη*)
 - discursive thinking (*διάνοια*)
 - understanding (*νόησις*)

Ontology

The representation of knowledge by a line has both ontological and epistemological significance, the modes of knowledge and the corresponding realities being: conjecture (*εἰκασία*, *eikasía* - images and illusions), faith (*πίστις*, *pístis* - living beings, object) thinking (*διάνοια*, *diánoia* - notions and numbers), intellect (*νόησις*, *nóêsis* - Forms), plus ignorance corresponding to non-being.

Is the ontology of Platonism based on the answers to the question of what Ideas are based on and how do they relate to the objects of sensible knowledge? Thus, in the famous myth of the cave in *Republics*, the sensitive world is presented as an imperfect image of the world of ideas, understood instead as the "real world". Plato offers the interpretation of the allegory: the slave freed from the cave represents the soul, which frees itself from bodily bonds through knowledge. The elements of the outside world represent the ideas, while the objects inside the cave (and the images of their design on the wall) are just their imperfect copies. The sun, which allows us to recognize the true aspect of reality, is a symbol of the idea of Good.

Platonic ontology is "dualistic", with two conceptual levels of sensible realities and ideas, between which there is an ontological difference. The only possible relationship between the plane of phenomena and that of ideas is the "mimetic" (*mimesis*): every sensible reality (*ente*) has its

model (*eidōs*) in the intelligible world. The "leap" between the two levels can be made by the human soul, rising through knowledge from material to intellectual existence.

Epistemology

Plato contrasts, in several dialogues, knowledge (*epistēmēs*) and opinion (*doxa*). Knowledge is not empirical and comes from divine understanding. Forms are also responsible for both knowledge, and are understood by pure reason. In some places Plato reverses the intuition of cognoscibility and reality. Reality is not accessible through the senses (the one who sees with the eyes is blind). In several dialogues Plato launches several hypotheses but does not reach any clarification of his position, thus ending in *aporia*.

Knowledge is found in an eternal, non-experiential form, and is acquired through pre-birth memories (Plato et al. 1992, 156a). Plato associates knowledge with the understanding of Forms and the relations between them, through processes of collection and division (Baird and Kaufmann 2008). Understanding Forms provides fundamental knowledge that does not need to be justified, thus avoiding infinite regression (Fine 2008, 411–36).

Plato is considered to be the father of the famous definition of knowledge, as a true justified faith (Fine 2008, 165–190), based in particular on the claims of *Theætetus* (Fine 2003) (Plato et al. 1992, 201c–d) and from *Meno* (Plato 2020b, 97d–98a).

Ethics

Plato often addresses ethics in his dialogues, including virtues and vices, considering "Good" as the supreme form. Socrates states in Plato's works that no one does evil, and that virtue is innate and cannot be learned (Chappell 2010).

According to Plato's philosophy, ethics is based on the Form of Good, and virtue, through its three parts (wisdom, courage and moderation) represents the knowledge and recognition of this

form with the three parts of the soul (reason, spirit and appetite). In addition, by virtue of Justice each part of the soul is constrained to perform its own function (Seyffert, Nettleship, and Sandys 1894, 481). The virtue of Justice involves addressing the issue of knowledge, so an understanding of the genesis of the "world of ideas" as a result of a more comprehensive and profound "political" commitment.

R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley discuss the issue of what have been called subjective and objective theories of duties in the *Republic* (Cross, Woozley, and Platón 1964): whether we should help the man who looks good or the man who is good, a matter of general morality, "whether a man is to be judged morally for acting (or failing to act) as he thinks the situation requires, or for acting (or failing to act) as the situation actually requires".

The fundamental purpose of ethical or political education is not to provide knowledge, but to socialize desires in pursuit of true happiness (Plato and Jowett 1991, 518b—519d).

The highest form of justice in Plato is righteousness, both at individual and community-level. There is a fundamental responsibility to seek the wisdom that leads to the understanding of the Form of Good, which leads to a good life under a philosopher-king in a society with three classes (philosopher-kings, guardians and workers), a mirror of the individual tripartite soul (reason, spirit and appetite). Justice thus occurs naturally in a society in which all its parts are harmonized (Murphy 2015).

Politics

For Plato, the role of politics is to create unity, especially through virtue and education. Monique Dixsaut, considers that the *Republic* "focuses on a cultural reform and outlines the plan of a constitution model", while the *Laws* "aim to establish a second-hand city for which it

determines the legislation and institutions", and the *Statesman* deals with the science needed for good policy (Dixsaut 2003).

Platonism arose from Plato's reflections on politics. According to Alexandre Koyré: "Plato's entire philosophical life was determined by an eminently political event, the condemnation of Socrates to death", with a clear distinction between "reflection on politics" and "political activity" (Koyré 1945). It is certainly not in this last sense that we must understand the centrality of politics in Plato's thinking. Reflection on politics focused on the process of human growth as a member of the organic polis.

According to Socrates, a non-harmonized state will degrade by going through all forms of organization with their specific leaders, from aristocracy (with philosopher-kings) to timocracy (warriors), oligarchy (rich), democracy (people) and, finally, tyranny (tyrants) (Plato and Jowett 1991, 488, 561a–b 571a).

R. J. Rowan credits Plato as the first to suggest that social change necessarily reflects the workings of deeper principles and models, of laws that determine visible external events. "The relation of social classes and class conflict is taken by Plato to be central to these changing patterns," and revolutions are not accidental. Also, patterns of social and political change are inseparable from the structure of the soul or character of individuals (Rowan 2014).

The philosophical state

Plato's dualism between truth and appearance, soul and body, is also found in the political conception. A state that assigns to its citizens functions incompatible with their level of wisdom risks easily degenerating. Plato interprets society by analogy with a living organism (Plato and Jowett 1991) (Plato 1988). The task of harmonization belongs to those who manage to reach the essence of the idea of Good: philosophers, whose function is identical to that of the rational

component of the human soul, which harmonizes the other two components of the soul, the intellectual and the lust.

Plato's political conception is based on the idea of justice, the same as that of his professor Socrates. The city, according to Socrates, in Book II of the *Republic*, arises from the need of people to associate to produce and the need to resort to a division of tasks (Dixsaut 2003, 218). For Alexandre Koyré, solidarity is the main driving force. And in order to be defended, a new social class appears: the warriors, the guards of the *Republic* (Koyré 1945, 110, 112). In Book I of the *Laws*, Plato appeals to the myth of puppets to represent the soul as a reality made up of parts that are not spontaneously in harmony, thus justifying the role of politics (Schuhl 1954). The purpose of a well-established city is the conformity of its citizens with the Good. The unity of the city is achieved through a political regime (*politeia*), with the help of philosophy (Pradeau 2010), which harmonizes the three social classes: leaders, guards and workers, each with specific virtues. In order to eliminate any form of earthly and personal interests, the ruling class and the warriors must share all the properties, even the children, and the community will take care of them. Arts-based education such as poetry or music are disapproved because they are limited to a sterile imitation of the sensible world of the Idea.

In *Laws*, according to Jean-Jacques Chevallier, Plato "abandons the perfect state, ruled autocratically only by wisdom", and proposes a mixed regime between monarchy and democracy (Chevallier 1951).

Plato's ideal state was also criticized by Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (K. R. Popper 2020). Others saw it as an early form of communism, an anticipation of the egalitarian society proposed by Karl Marx. Marx, on the other hand, reproached Plato for conceiving of a rigid, aristocratic caste state. But Plato's "aristocrats" are in fact intellectual

aristocrats, according to moral criteria that are found in everyone, not on the basis of a right acquired at birth.

Art

Plato's philosophical relationship with art was ambivalent, often even negative, considering that the visual arts in particular, but also certain forms of music and poetry, are imperfect imitations of the world of Ideas. Due to the strong influence of art, Plato believed that the state should limit artistic manifestations in order to prevent harmful effects on the community. He accepted only the simple traditional forms of art, believing that innovations in art could compromise the ideal, harmonious and stable characteristic of society. Order, measure (adequacy) and harmonic proportions (*συμμετρία*: symmetry) were considered decisive criteria for beauty (Sauerland 2019, 152–54).

Sean McAleer lists several arguments developed by Socrates in the *Republic* against art (McAleer 2020): the metaphysical argument (art only makes copies of the copies and therefore not worth taking seriously), the epistemological argument (artists do not know what they are talking about and what he paints), the moral argument (art corrupts even the best of us).

Unwritten doctrines: One and the Dyad

Plato considers the written word to be of limited value:

"... writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer. (Plato 1993, 275d)

and in the Seventh Letter he says:

"... every man of worth, when dealing with matters of worth, will be far from exposing them to ill feeling and misunderstanding among men by committing them to writing." (Plato 2021, 341c)

Jacque Derrida also comments on the predominance of speech over Plato's writing (logocentrism in Platonic thought) (Derrida 1968). Aristotle speaks of Plato's "unwritten teachings" (*ἀγραφα δόγματα*), mentioning a lesson entitled Good (*Περὶ τἀγαθου*) which Plato gave, concerned with "mathematics, that is, numbers, geometry, and astronomy, and that the Good is One" (Aristotle 2012, 41–42).

According to Plato's *7th Letter*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1991, bk. I, XIII, XIV) and other sources (Busa 1995), Plato would have omitted in his writings to discuss some of the most important ideas (Sarri 1997, X), named by Tübingen school exponents (including Hans Joachim Krämer, Konrad Gaiser and Thomas Alexander Szlezák) as "unwritten doctrines", recovered on the basis of "indirect traditions".

"Now since the Forms are the causes of everything else, he [i.e. Plato] supposed that their elements are the elements of all things. Accordingly, the material principle is the Great and Small [i.e. the Dyad], and the essence is the One (τὸ ἓν), since the numbers are derived from the Great and Small by participation in the One."

"From this account it is clear that he only employed two causes: that of the essence, and the material cause; for the Forms are the cause of the essence in everything else, and the One is the cause of it in the Forms. He also tells us what the material substrate is of which the Forms are predicated in the case of sensible things, and the One in that of the Forms—that it is this the duality (the Dyad, ἡ δυάς), the Great and Small (τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν). Further, he assigned to these two elements respectively the causation of good and of evil." (Aristotle 1991, 987b)

and in *Physics* he says:

"It is true, indeed, that the account he gives there [i.e. in *Timaeus*] of the participant is different from what he says in his so-called unwritten teachings (Ancient Greek: *ἀγραφα δόγματα*, romanized: *agrapha dogmata*)." (Aristotle 2012, 209b)

Aristoxenus states in this regard that:

"Each came expecting to learn something about the things that are generally considered good for men, such as wealth, good health, physical strength, and altogether a kind of wonderful happiness. But when the mathematical demonstrations came, including numbers, geometrical figures and astronomy, and finally the statement Good is One seemed to them, I imagine, utterly unexpected and strange; hence some belittled the matter, while others rejected it." (Gaiser 1980)

Alexander of Aphrodisias, according to Simplicius, stated that, “according to Plato, the first principles of everything, including the Forms themselves are One and Indefinite Duality (*ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς*), which he called Large and Small (*τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν*)”. (Tarán 1981, 226)

According to Friedrich Nietzsche (F. W. Nietzsche and Oehler 1920), Plato's work has the sole purpose of bringing back to the memory of his disciples the knowledge already learned orally in the Academy. Heinrich Gomperz states that a full understanding of Plato's work could only be achieved through indirect evidence: Plato's philosophical system is not explicitly developed in dialogues, but is found only, at least starting from the Republic, behind them. This system is a deductive and dualistic system because it leads "all things" to two essentially different original factors. (Ryle 1931, 48–49)

According to these analyzes, for Plato, starting from the Pythagorean conceptions, the whole reality, not only the sensitive one, but also the world of ideas, is the result of two first principles: One and Dyad (Platone, Reale, and Andolfo 2000, 56). One (the "Good" of dialogues) is all that is unitary and positive, while the Dyad, or the world of differences and multiplicity, generates disorder.

The Republic

The Republic (Ancient Greek: *Πολιτεία, Politéia*) was written between about 380 and 370 BC. A. E. Taylor states that the Republic was already written in 388 (Taylor 2009), and G. C. Field suggested the date of 375 BC (Hornblower, Spawforth, and Eidinow 2012) The title *Republic* is derived from Latin, being attributed to Cicero, who called it *De re publica (On Public Affairs)*, or even *De republica*, thus creating confusion as to its true meaning. *The Republic* is considered an integral part of the utopian literary genre. The second title, *Peri dikaiou (περὶ δικαίου, On Justice)*, may have been included later.

The Republic is only the third part of a larger project that was to include an ideal history of Athens, as well as a political and physical philosophy. The dialogue takes place in Piraeus, in the house of Cephalus in Syracuse (Platon 1848).

The book is divided into 10 books: the first deals with the subject of justice; in the next two books Plato expounds his theory of the "ideal state"; the fourth and fifth books deal with the relationship between things and ideas, between the sensitive and supersensitive world (hyperuranion); books six and seven describe the theory of knowledge; the eighth and ninth books talk about the state and the family; and the last book examines the idea of the immortality of the soul with the Myth of Er.

Stylometric studies suggest that the first book was written previously and separately from the other nine (Brandwood 1992, 96–97). Dümmler suggests that it was originally published as an autonomous dialogue, (Dümmler 1889) with a view to a later sequel (Szlezák 1992, 368). Charles Kahn emphasizes the close connection between the various books of the *Republic* (Kahn 2008).

The central theme of the book is justice (T. Brickhouse and Smith 2022), argued with the help of several Platonic theories, including the allegorical myth of the cave, the doctrine of ideas, dialectics, the theory of the soul and the project of an ideal city. *The Republic* refers to what is

called *φιλοσοφία περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα* ("philosophy of human things"), being presented as an organic, encyclopedic and circular work, with an emphasis on the relationship between the universal and the particular.

There are several interpretations of the *Republic's* architecture, including the hypothesis of a "concentric composition", an "arched" structure, "large vaults" in which justice is the center of balance, or a "mirror" structure (Mathieu 2014).

Benjamin Jowett highlights several aspects of the book, which he considered to be the most important (Jowett 1892): (1) the dual character of the *Republic*, a Greek state and a kingdom of philosophers, the paradoxes of the *Republic* as Morgenstern called them (community property, families, the rule of philosophers, the analogy between the individual and the state), the subject of education, essential differences between ancient and modern politics suggested by the *Republic*, comparison of the *Republic* with *Statesman* and *Laws*, Plato's influence on his imitators, and nature and value political ideals and religious ideals.

Richard Lewis Nettleship regards the *Republic* as a book of moral philosophy (Nettleship 1958), in which the real question is How to live best, inseparable from the question: What is the best order or organization of human society?

Philip Allott states that *The Republic* is about three codependent and co-determinant things: "the individual human being, human society, and the universe - I and We and All," developing "a philosophy of what we think that we know (epistemology) and a philosophy of what we choose to do (morality)." (Allott 2011)

Many philosophers saw in *The Republic* a first sketch of socialism (Plato and Stelli 2007), emphasizing the communal and anti-individualistic aspects highlighted in the concept of collective good and in the idea of the community of goods, women and children.

Popper glimpsed in the ideal state of the philosopher of *The Republic* the prototype of the modern authoritarian state with the hierarchical structure of society, the cult of rulers and the purity of race. He considers that *The Republic* "was meant by its author not so much as a theoretical treatise, but as a topical political manifesto" (K. R. Popper 2020, vol. 1: 162).

The Republic is considered by many academics to be the greatest philosophical text ever written (Gibbons 2001), being the most studied book in top universities (Ha 2016) (Jackson 2016).

Martin Luther King, Jr., said *The Republic* would be the only book he would take to a desert island with the Bible (Sharpe 2019).

Characters

Socrates: philosopher, professor of Plato, who occupies most of the dialogues, developing the theme of the ideal city.

Thrasymachus: sophist, who initiates the discussion, initially arguing that justice is "the profit of the strongest".

Cephalus: elderly owner of the house hosting the dialogue; he argues that justice and happiness in life consist in the accumulation of material goods.

Glaucon: A student of Socrates who accompanies him from Cephalus

Polemarchus: pupil of Socrates, son of Cephalus

Adeimantus: student of Socrates.

Cleitophon: Athenian politician

Summary

Book I: Socrates arrives at the house of Cephalus, where he begins discussions about old age and presents his own model of happiness and justice. Polemarchus also expresses his opinion on justice and justice as a duty, to do good for friends and evil for enemies. Thrasymachus

expresses his opinion on political justice, arguing that justice is practically the utility of those who are stronger. Socrates intervenes by saying that if those in power were tyrants, they would harm everyone, and they could all be controlled by injustice. Justice is a virtue of the soul, as Socrates says, thus contradicting Thrasymachus who sees injustice as a virtue.

Book II: Glaucon intervenes by talking about the right life and the categories of good, stating that human justice consists in obtaining its own advantages. An unpunished injustice requires the force of power. True justice for the common man would be a "disguised injustice." Adeimantus intervenes, stating that justice is sought only for the reputation it gives to the just man. Socrates proposes the analysis of justice in an "ideal city", starting from the origins, from the primitive nucleus, a simple village of peasants with specific tasks which then expands and needs security, and later a consciousness of the people which consists in knowledge and education, exposing the tasks of each citizen.

Book III: Presents the duties and artistic education of the city's guards, who must not be corrupted by poetry and literature. Socrates distinguishes three types of poetry: imitative, narrative, and mixed. The lie should be reserved only for leaders with the intention of doing good ("noble lie"). Guardians must beware of imitation, going only on virtuous actions. Their education focuses on gymnastics and medicine, and the legal field, for a healthy body and a clean soul. Thus, the city which, a little earlier, was considered dependent on laziness, will be purified. Only artists and workers who will create beautiful things should be admitted to the city. Adeimantus and Socrates then discuss useful speech and imitative speech, the problem of love and medicine.

Book IV: Resume the issue of justice among citizens. Adeimantus asks if the guards are happy with the constraints imposed on them, and Socrates states that everyone in the city is satisfied with the tasks they have, with a proper education. The main virtues are wisdom, courage,

temperance, to which is added justice, the sum of the three virtues. Wisdom (specific to leaders) involves deep knowledge and the ability to give good advice. Courage is a skill specific to soldiers, to constantly protect judgment on things to be feared and on them. Temperance (specific to workers) implies that citizens should be neither too rich (because they will stop working) nor too poor. Later Socrates analyzes the types of soul, making an analogy with the black and white city horses, led by a moderating coachman.

Book V: At the urging of Adeimantus, Thrasymachus, and Glaucon to discuss the communities of women and children, Socrates describes the family relationships in the city: the wives of the warriors will all be common to all; none of them will live especially with any of them; in the same way children will be common, and parents will not know their children, nor will the latter their parents. Marriages between "better" citizens favor the good of the city, and children must be shared, supporting the common brotherhood. He goes on to talk about the importance of philosophy for politics and making a comparison between the individual and the city, both presented as unified bodies. The philosopher must practice the constant search for truth, thus being the one who makes the least mistakes, so the best representative of politics for the ideal city.

Book VI: The discussion of the fate of philosophers and sophists continues, arguing that the philosopher is best suited to rule wisely. Socrates makes an analysis of Greek politics. He points out that governments have always despised the philosopher, through the allegory of the ship, in which the helmsman is a blind, wise old man who is constantly challenged by the people on board who want to rule. The philosopher-king ensures the salvation of the city. He makes the analogy between the idea of good as the highest knowledge and the sun which, in its perfection, shines with wisdom. Then draw a line with four segments: sensitive images, sensitive objects,

mathematical entities and Ideas, which can be known by imagination (*εἰκασία*), faith (*πίστις*), discursive reason (*διάνοια*) and intelligence (*νόησις*), respectively.

Book VII: Socrates discusses the myth of the cave to make us understand the obscurantism of man's ignorance, from which he must be able to free himself to find the true "light" of wisdom. The philosopher breaks the chains and emerges from the cave into the outside world, a metaphor for the ascending dialectic, thus understanding that the inside of the cave is just a distorted reflection of the real world which is the intelligible world. After realizing the existence of another better and truer world, Socrates continues the training of the philosopher-king, stating that he must continue his study of mathematics, geometry, and dialectics. The philosopher is the one who rises to the contemplation of the idea of Good, and this is why he is the best possible guardian.

Book VIII: Here Socrates makes the deepest analysis of the happiness of the righteous and the unrighteous. He talks about the main forms of government: aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny (the worst). It favors the aristocracy to the detriment of the oligarchy and democracy, which over time become corrupt and lead to worse forms of government, such as timocracy and tyranny. In the oligarchy, the poor will revolt against the rich and build a democratic regime that promotes the power to do whatever you want. But freedom and equality lead to unrest, children no longer respect their parents, and lazy and profiteers will appear, and finally anarchy that will favor the tyrant who will present himself as a protector. Socrates' conclusion is that because of the impulsiveness of the human soul and corruption, the intervention of the philosopher is necessary.

Book IX: Socrates insists on the idea that the tyrant, although he rules by fear, is himself a slave to his own passions. Socrates details the metaphysics of pleasures, praising the right rational pleasures of the philosopher, superior to the other two irrational parts of the soul. Socrates then

recapitulates: the people will be happiest in the aristocracy, less in the timocracy, and less in the oligarchy, and so on to democracy and tyranny. There are three parts to the soul: the rational part or the intellect, the part that seeks bravery and honor, and the lower part that seeks only pleasure. It highlights the difference between the ruling philosopher and the tyrant, and appeals to an allegory by dividing the soul into a polyphonic monster, a lion and finally a man who, thanks to the lion, dominates the monster, guaranteeing justice.

Book X: The last book discusses poetry and imitation. The poet, and art in general, imitates sensitive objects, so they generate an illusion based on hidden passions that contaminate the soul and make them bad citizens. Therefore, such artists would be banned in the ideal city, but the dithyrambs (praise of the gods) and epics must be preserved. Socrates reiterates the immortality of the soul. Vices hurt him, but they don't destroy him. Finally, he exposes the "myth of Er" in Pamphylia, who was found dead after a battle but was resurrected at the funeral home because he had been ordered by the Supreme Judges to be the messenger of the future. The purity of the soul can be obtained only after it has freed itself from the limitations of the human body, deserving only then the reward after death, that is, eternal life in contemplation of the truth.

The internal unity of this last book has often been questioned, being seen as an appendix to the other nine books (Babut 1994), as being written later to the other books of the *Republic*, or even it is the work of a publisher who imitated Plato's work.

There are many interpretations of the *Republic* by dividing it in this way according to the subjects treated, one of the best-known classifications of Bertrand Russell, in *A History of Western Philosophy* (Russell 2013, bk. I, part 2, cap. 14):

1. Books I – V: Defining justice; ideal communities ("utopia"); guardian education;

2. Books VI – VII: Philosophical leaders; the myth of the cave; the theory of forms; political regimes;
3. Books VIII-X: Practical forms of government.

Jowett highlights five "natural divisions of the *Republic*, as follows:

1. Book I beginning - II 367: Morality of everyday life and theories of that time.
2. Book II 368 - V 471: Specifying the system involved in the existence of the moral being.
3. Book V 471 - to the end of Book VII: The ideal morality or philosophical religion and its real or metaphysical basis.
4. Books VIII - IX: Checking the connection between "well-doing and well-being, by concomitant variations of ill-doing and ill-being"
5. Book X: The psychological corroboration of the "criticism passed upon unreal appearance, pointing out the connection between the unreal in cognition and in feeling". (Bosanquet 1895)

Topics

In the traditional interpretation, the *Republic* is a continuation of the discussions in *Gorgias*, according to which virtue and polis laws are a trick invented by a mass of weak people to capture the lust for power of the best individuals, few in number but naturally inclined to lead. (Plato 1864, 482c–86). The theses of Calicles from *Gorgias* resemble the ideas set forth by Trasymachus in Book I of the *Republic* (Plato and Vegetti 2007, vol. 2, p 202).

From Eric Brown's point of view, the central political theses expressed by Socrates in the *Republic* are: the best rulers are wise, the best rulers govern for the benefit of those led and not for their sake, it is very unlikely that a city will have the best rulers because there is a gap between the

values of most people and the values of the wise, the greatest harm to a city is the civil strife for who should lead, the harmony between citizens about who should rule, and the harmony requires for the city to cultivate virtue and the rule of law (Brown 2017).

In terms of content, the *Republic* can be divided into several parts (Plato and Vegetti 2007, 17–18):

Justice and righteousness (Book I)

If justice is more convenient than injustice (Plato and Jowett 1991, 331d). Thrasymachus makes three statements that favor injustice over justice as a way of life: rulers rule only in their own self-interest, injustice is more profitable than justice, and the unrighteous man has a better life than the righteous. Socrates contradicts this, arguing that the function of the soul is to direct human life, and therefore the soul must have an excellence in the absence of which it cannot perform its function well (Plato and Jowett 1991, 350d4-5); and since justice is the excellence of the soul, "the just soul is the one which lives well; and the man who lives well is *eudaimon*, the man who does not live well is not; therefore it is the just man who has a better life, not the unjust man." (Cross, Woosley, and Plató 1964)

Sean McAleer develops five arguments against Thrasymachus' definition: 1) the argument of error (the possibility that leaders make mistakes in drafting laws): leaders are stronger than those led, justice is (obeying) commands, leaders sometimes make mistakes and do not command what is to their advantage, so justice is not (always) the advantage of the strongest; 2) craft argument (craftsmen always seek to help their subjects first): crafts seek to help those they own, all components of a ship are weaker than the ship as a whole, so all crafts seek to help the weakest not the strongest; 3) the argument of the one who wants more (the unjust person who wants more than anyone else and does not recognize any moral constraint in fact contradicts the conclusion

held by Thrasymachus); 4) the common goal argument (not even a criminal gang can achieve its goals unless some kind of justice regulates group relations): if x allows successful joint action and y prevents this then x is stronger than y, justice allows and injustice hinders successful joint action, so justice is stronger than injustice); and 5) the argument of function (a righteous person is happy and an unjust person is unhappy): the virtue of a thing allows its function to be fulfilled well, life is a function of the soul, justice is a virtue of the soul, injustice a vice, so the righteous man lives well; the unrighteous person lives badly, in addition, happiness means living well and unhappiness means living badly, so the right person is happy and the unjust person is unhappy. (McAleer 2020)

Polemarch considers that justice is to benefit friends and harm enemies (Plato and Jowett 1991, 331c-e). Socrates refutes this view because it would appear that justice can be useful in time of war but not in time of peace. Thrasymachus states that justice is the profit of the strongest (Plato and Jowett 1991, 338c). Socrates counter-argues with a syllogism (Plato and Jowett 1991, 339a-e). Finally, Socrates demonstrates that since life is a function of the soul and virtue of the soul is justice, the latter is the only guarantee of a happy life (Plato and Jowett 1991, 346b-47). At the end of Book I, Socrates acknowledges that they have not clarified what justice is (Plato and Jowett 1991, 354b-c), although its usefulness has been recognized and it has been acknowledged that it must be a virtue.

In Book II, the debate on justice continues, with Socrates directing the discussion towards justice in the city: “first in cities searching for what it is; then thusly we could examine also in some individual, examining the likeness of the bigger in the idea of the littler” (Plato and Jowett 1991, 368e – 369a). This type of justice is evaluated up to Book V, arguing with a series of myths and "noble lies." Justice is the cause of the existence of the three virtues (temperance, wisdom, and

courage). Regarding the "noble lie", Plato accepts falsity if it refers to "morally admirable" aspects (Smith 2009).

Book IX discusses whether it is better to be righteous than unjust. The government should be left to the philosophers, who are the most just, and therefore the least corrupt.

The Ideal State (Books II-III)

Glaucon divides the goods into three parts: desirable for himself, desirable for himself and for the benefits they bring, and desirable only for the benefits they bring. Socrates places justice in the second category. Later, Socrates is asked to prove that justice is more advantageous than injustice (Plato and Jowett 1991, 367b-c), which is put in difficulty. He begins to sketch the birth of a polis from a small village inhabited by peasants and artisans, which he later extended by introducing workers and soldiers (Plato and Jowett 1991, 372e-75). Socrates shows that in the evolution from the first polis to the second, a progressive physical and moral degeneration takes place. Thus arises the idea of an ideal and perfect state, in which citizens are required to do the only task assigned to them by the state, dividing them into three social classes: craftsmen, guards, and rulers or philosophers (the only ones capable of governing the state with moderate wisdom). Belonging to one of the classes is done during education when it is determined what is best for the individual to do.

Plato thus constructs an ideal state in which there is a theoretically perfect justice, defined as Kallipolis, divided, like the tripartite division of the soul of the individual man (Plato and Jowett 1991, 439a-41), into three social classes: gold (rulers-philosophers), silver (warriors), bronze (workers). Thus, compared to the current contractual theories of the modern state, Plato's state has a natural origin. If all practitioners of the various trades exchanged tools with each other, this would do no harm to the city (Plato and Jowett 1991, 434a). If workers, guardians, and rulers did

the same thing between different classes, on the other hand, they would destroy the city (Plato and Jowett 1991, 434a—b).

C. D. C. Reeve considers several types of freedom that can exist in a state: individual freedom implies the idea that everyone does what we want, and a state is free insofar as it limits individual freedom only to guarantee equal freedom to all its members; instrumental freedom, to do what we want, but which seems insufficient for true freedom or autonomy; and the deliberative freedom to have and satisfy those desires that we would choose to have if we were aware of our actions. In this sense, the *Republic* is an attempt to design a city whose members enjoy as much real happiness as possible and as much real freedom as possible (Plato and Reeve 2004).

D. B. Futter states that Plato's *Republic* allows for a dialectic of the city centered on an interpretation of justice as geometric equality: the first city assigns social roles, the second city disrupts the geometric pattern to allow desires for greatness and self-knowledge, and "the third city re-establishing the geometrical pattern by means of poetic catharsis, a noble lie, and the placement of an armed camp" (Futter 2018). In search of the definition of justice, the characters of the dialogue develop three defective communities: a city for pigs (the human being is vulnerable and deprived of many things (Plato and Jowett 1991, 369b5-7), a city with a fever, a luxurious, abundant city (Plato and Jowett 1991, 372a5-c1)) and a city with an armed camp (soldiers become guardians who suppress the fever of the luxury city by censorship (Plato and Jowett 1991, 415e1-2; 399e). The myth of metals is a useful lie, which symbolizes deep social truths The noble lie forms the boundary between the city with fever and the purified city of the armed camp.

Plato's ideal state, Kallipolis, is a utopia, based on the fragile assumption that the ideal leader is a true philosopher. Socrates, in Book VI, however, considers this idea plausible (Castelnérac 2011).

The city-soul analogy. Harmony of the parties (Books IV-V)

Plato anticipated the idea that a human society is in a sense an organic thing, with its own laws of growth and decay. Socrates defines the virtues that the state must possess: wisdom (typical of rulers), courage (specific to guardians), temperance, and justice (defined as order and harmony between different parts of the state). In Book IV, Socrates is asked if the guardians can still be happy because of the restrictions imposed. He replies that happiness for the guardian lies precisely in the fulfillment of his duty.

Socrates argues that we cannot consistently explain certain cases of psychological conflict unless we assume that the soul has at least two parts according to the principle of non-opposition: the same thing at the same time” (Plato and Jowett 1991, 436b8–9). His arguments explain the *akrasia* (weakness of will) (Brown 2017). The soul is divided into rational, irascible and concupiscible, and justice exists only when the three parts are in harmony. Thus, Socrates then concludes that the tyrant is the most unhappy man.

Julia Annas considers that Plato's main idea in the *Republic* was to make an analogy between the city-state and the individual soul (Annas 1981). Norbert Blössner (Ferrari 2007, chap. 13; pp. 345–385) supports this thesis by talking about an analysis of the functioning and moral improvement of the individual soul. Christopher Rowe believes that the argument in Books II-IV that virtues are distinguished in terms of the tripartition of the soul is rhetorical, designed only to confirm Glaucon, but he does not intend to be literally correct (Smith 2009).

Form Theory (Metaphor of the Line and the Myth of the Cave, Books VI-VII)

Plato considers that Forms offer solutions to metaphysical and epistemological problems caused by *elenchus* and *flow*, being intelligible objects above the influence of *flow*, with stable meanings or references. Forms provide the basis for the definitions of the virtues that Socratic

ethics needs. (Plato and Reeve 2004) To argue his theory of knowledge, Plato uses two of the best-known images: the metaphor of the line and the myth of the cave.

The metaphor of the line, in the second half of Book VI:

"Now take a line which has been cut into two unequal parts, and divide each of them again in the same proportion, and suppose the two main divisions to answer, one to the visible and the other to the intelligible." (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI, 509d-510a)

The four unequal parts correspond to the four planes of knowledge. At the lowest level of knowledge are the opinions (*doxa*), which are not real, but just mere appearances, shadows. True knowledge is that which goes to real objects whose sensitive objects are only imitations. Only intelligible knowledge, that is, conceptual knowledge, ensures true and universal knowledge; the opinion based on the two lower stages of knowledge comes to confuse the truth with its image (Adorno 2008, 95–97).

For better clarification, the myth of the cave is used at the beginning of Book VII: chained from birth are people who cannot see the entrance; behind them burns a fire and, between the fire and the entrance to the cave, passes a road with a wall that acts as a screen; along the way many people carry various objects on their shoulders, the shadows of which are projected on the bottom of the cave. For the prisoners, the shadows they see are reality. But if one of them were released and forced out of the cave, he would initially be amazed at the light and feel pain; however, he would gradually get used to it, he could see the reflections of the waters, then the real objects, the stars and finally the sun (the Good). Returning to the cave, he will have to get his eyes used to the darkness again, and his companions would laugh at him if he tried to tell them what he saw (Plato and Jowett 1991, 514a–20). Good can be thought of as the form of Forms, or the structuring of the world as a whole.

In this way Plato means that the sensitive reality of imagination and conjecture is comparable to the shadows that prisoners see projected on the wall, while the "real" (Forms) exists

somewhere outside of time and space, which is nothing but "the idea" (*εἶδος*) (Silverman 2003). The cognitive process of the prisoner in the cave is also described as a difficult and gradual ascent, according to the metaphor of the line: first the opinion, identified in the faded shadows, then the objects that are part of the sensitive world, then the reflections, identifiable with mathematics, until the idea of Good that illuminates all the others (in myth, it is the sun). Plato asserts the primacy of the Good over other ideas by comparing it with the sun:

"Just as in the visible sphere sunlight and sight can be considered exactly like the sun, but it is not right to believe that they are the sun, so in this other sphere it is right to believe that science and truth are both like good, but they would it would be wrong to believe that one or the other of them is good: the condition of good is worthy of even greater honor." (Plato and Vegetti 2007, 509a)

The science of good is the first science necessary not only for those who must govern a state, but for anyone who deals with a particular science, because it is the science of truth that unites and supports all other sciences. The form of good is like a self-illuminated object that can help knowledge become intelligible, like reasoning or logic. But the allegory of the sun is also about reality and its nature:

"The sun, I think you would say, not only gives visible things the power to be seen, but also ensures their appearance, growth and nourishment - although it itself will not be... Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their knowledge of the good, but also their existence and being are due to it; although good is not being, but something still beyond being, superior to it in rank and power." (Plato and Vegetti 2007, 509b)

Thus, in the analogy of the sun, the form of good is a paradigm of rational order that allows the philosopher to determine what is good, helping other types of expertise (Plato and Vegetti 2007, 369b) (Plato and Reeve 2004).

David K. O'Connor draws an analogy between the shadows of Plato's cave and the shadows of Homer's world, rejected by Nicholas D Smith (Smith 2009) because the shadows of Plato's cave, unlike those of Homer, are not dead things, or reminiscent of them after death.

Family and State (Books VIII-IX)

Discussions in the Republic mention five regimes that tend to degrade in succession: aristocracy (ideal state), timocracy, oligarchy (plutocracy), democracy, and tyranny (despotism). From the aristocracy (led by the wise philosophers) to the timocracy through civil war, the leadership being taken over by those who love power and honor. But the temptations of wealth allow the emergence of the oligarchy, with the polarization between the rich (those who lead) and the poor, with an emphasis on property. Democracy emerges from the conflicts between social classes, when the poor revolt and take power. But in this context, demagogues also appear, who will deceive the people, eventually coming to power. Excessive freedoms give rise to three distinct social classes: the ruling class, the elites, and the common people. Tensions between the poor and the elite make the plebs give more power to the leaders who, due to the inherent corruption, end up leading by tyranny.

Plato criticizes democracy because its inevitable result is demagoguery. Oligarchy corrupts society through the importance given to money and arbitrary decisions, resulting in a disappearance of ethical values. Tyranny is the inevitable result of democratic degeneration (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VIII, 560c). Leaders must not have private property, nor children, in order to be interested only in the good of the state. Women will be in common, just like men, and couples will be determined by magistrates so that better and better bloodlines are generated.

Socrates clarifies the role of art, considering it an imitation of the sensible world, which in itself is an imitation of the world of ideas. Plato condemns figurative art forms, and theatrical performances (especially tragedy), as the emotional charge of such performances could have a negative influence and corrupt action on citizens.

Richard Lewis Nettleship states that Plato supported communism in several parts of the Republic "as supplementary machinery to give effect to and reinforce that spirit which education

is to create" (Nettleship 1958). Harvey Yunis states that " Plato went so far as to encourage his readers to reject society's inherited norms entirely (regarding such basic matters as marriage, family life, private property, and religious belief) and to accept in their stead norms that were derived from an idiosyncratic, idealist vision of reality and articulated by an autocratic philosopher", a statement rejected by Nicholas D Smith (Smith 2009).

Myth of Er (Book X)

Through the myth of Er, (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. X) Plato intends to argue in favor of the immortality of the soul and metempsychosis, and to show the role of chance, freedom and necessity in human life. A soldier who died in battle has been resurrected, and says that in the afterlife, the bodies in which he reincarnates are randomly assigned. Souls will quench their thirst with the waters of the Lethe River, but those who have done it improperly will forget their former lives, while philosophers, who, guided by reason, have not drunk, will keep their memories, only slightly attenuated, of the world of Ideas, to which they can refer later to expand their knowledge.

For Stephen Halliwell, Er's myth "can fruitfully be thought of as inviting a "cyclical" reading in conjunction with the preceding dialogue, a reading that forms the hermeneutic parallel to the existential cycle of life and death pictured in Er's account," claiming that we should consider the myth as a "philosophical recomposition, not an outright rejection, of poetry", a story of the soul both after death and before death (Smith 2009).

Dialectics

Dialectics, a process that leads us to the knowledge of Forms and ultimately to the highest Form of the Good (Seyffert, Nettleship, and Sandys 1894, 481), through discussion, reasoning, questionnaire, and interpretation, has preoccupied philosophers since antiquity (Corbett and Connors 1999). It is found in the work of Parmenides in the 5th century BC, continued by his student Zeno of Elea in his famous paradoxes (considered by Aristotle as the inventor of dialectics (Laertius 2018, bk. IX 25ff, VIII 57). Kant states that for the ancient Greeks dialectics meant a logic of false appearance, "the logic of illusion. It was a sophisticated art of giving one's ignorance, even intentional tricks, the outward appearance of truth by imitating the thorough and exact method that logic always requires, and by using his subject as a cloak for every empty statement." (Kant 1998, A 61))

Socrates practiced dialectics through the method of oral dialogue, which he called the art of "the birth of souls" (a method also called Mayanism, or the method of Elenchus (Wiktionary 2021)), which could lead, according to Socrates' intention, to confirmation or refutation (Wyss 2014) of some statements, or so-called "aporia" in which no definitive conclusion was reached (Ayer and O'Grady 1992, 484) (McTaggart 1911, 11). In Plato, dialectics is a type of knowledge (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI), with an ontological and metaphysical role, which is reached by confronting several positions to overcome opinion (*doxa*), a shift in the world of appearances. or "sensible") to intellectual knowledge (or "intelligible") to the first principles (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI, VII). It also involves the ordering of concepts into genera and species by the method of division, and embraces multiplicity in unity, being used to understand " the total process of enlightenment, whereby the philosopher is educated so as to achieve knowledge of the supreme good, the Form of the Good." (Blackburn 2008)

The main problem with science, for Plato, is that it treats its fundamental principles as "absolute" starting points, which must be accepted without argument (Plato and Jowett 1991, 510c—d). But if they are false, the whole system will collapse. Dialectics implies a defense of these starting points against objections, by resolving any aporias or problems that may arise (Plato and Jowett 1991, 534b—c, 437a). In this process, definitions can be changed conceptually to preserve their immunity to dialectical (*elenctica*) rejection. The philosopher, through dialectics, can bring them together in a unified, holistic theory, thus reaching authentic knowledge (Plato and Jowett 1991, 533d—534a) (Plato and Reeve 2004).

"... dialectic, and dialectic alone, goes directly to the first principle and is the only science which does away with hypotheses in order to make her ground secure." (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 533b)

Plato's dialectic includes several methods of reasoning (Caraher 1992), such as the method of consequence (examining and testing all the consequences of a hypothesis) (White 1976) and the method of division (dividing the object of study and analyzing components) (Boethius and Stump 1988, 25) (Blackburn 2008). According to Plato, dialectics must answer questions such as "How do we reconcile the difference between the sensible and the intelligible world?", Or "How do the two planes of reality harmonize?" If the world of ideas and the real world are opposite, what sense does it make to place the idea as the cause of apparent reality? Would it not be more correct, as in *Parmenides*, to consider that there is only the world of ideas, reducing the world of nature to pure illusion? The first solution proposed by Plato was the theory of participation (*methexis*): private entities would each participate in the corresponding idea. Later, the philosopher proposed the theory of imitation (*mimesis*), according to which natural entities are imitations of their respective idea. The demiurge of *Timaeus* has the role of mediator between the two dimensions. (Plato 2015, 28ab – 29a)

At an advanced stage, the world of ideas takes on the appearance of a complex system, which includes the concepts of diversity and multiplicity. The principle of the division (*diairesis*) of the intelligible world makes possible the dialectical connection of each empirical reality to its supreme principle, bringing the dialectical method closer to the cognitive possibilities of the scientific method. To this end, Plato postulates a hierarchy or subdivision of ontological reality and to answer the problem with *Parmenides*, which he defined as "terrible and venerable" (Plato et al. 1992, 183 e5-184 a1) on the impossibility of objectifying Being.

Plato never gives a definition of dialectics, although he speaks of it as the most effective way to reach the truth. In *Phaedrus* the dialectic is a "process of union and multiplication" (Plato 1993, 265 d-e), the idea being in fact a unit of the multiple. In *Parmenides*, Plato gives a demonstration of how dialectics works in discourse: looking for all possible answers to a question, then, through a falsification procedure, refuting one after another the non-conforming answers, based on principles; the answer that is not falsified comes to be considered more true than the others, but never true in the absolute sense. Plato reformulates a new conception in *Philebus*, where Socrates undertakes to define what pleasure is by saying the famous phrase that "many are One and One is many." This reaffirms a principle of the Idea, to be unique and perfect, while reflecting the multiplicity of the sensible. The most coherent methodology of the application of dialectics is set out in the *Sophist* (dichotomous method): a) based on a question, it is isolated from the concept it is intended to define; b) this concept is attributed to a larger class in which it is understood; c) divide this class into two smaller parts to see which of the two subclasses the concept is still included in, and so on, subdividing until further fragmentation is no longer possible; d) it results that the definition found is the one that corresponds to the concept we wanted to explain. In

Cratylus, written about the same time as the *Republic*, Plato considers the use of dialectics for cognitive purposes. It should be noted that although it presents itself as a science (*episteme*), dialectics is only a rigorous procedure but never manages to reach the truth, resembling the one later developed by Descartes, and later by Hegel.

The distinctive features of dialectics, for Sean McAleer (McAleer 2020) are: the possibility to give an account of the being of everything (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII 534b), knowledge integrated through connections between individual Forms (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII 531c), purely formal reasoning “without making use of anything visible at all, but only of Forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI 511b), understanding how different Forms are related to the Form of Good which is “the unhypothetical first principle of everything” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI 511b), and foundationalism (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII 534bc), Sean McAleer warns that it is dangerous for dialectics to be practiced without love for the truth, being the quintessential tool of the true philosopher, which allows for full understanding (McAleer 2020). The dialectic embedded in the education of philosopher-kings, as Socrates explains, is a form of dialogue that incorporates arguments to obtain a secure and true understanding of reality (Being) and a knowledge of the Good itself. Dialectics is therefore a way of testing explanations (Magrini 2012). Thus, M. Peters considers that "dialectic is a progressively more synoptic ascent, via a series of ‘positions’ [hypotheses], until an ultimate is reached". (Peters 1967)

In the context of dialectics, James Magrini assumes that the knowledge that philosophy strives to achieve is the knowledge of sentences. His conclusion is that the knowledge or understanding of virtue for Socrates is not objective (scientific), nor any technique (*episteme*) expressed through a propositional discourse. For Magrini, the characteristics of philosophical

knowledge are: a form of unpropositional, manifest insight, and which is entirely neither subjective nor objective in nature, rather mediates both realms, " but it is intensely "reflexive" in nature, i.e. it is a form of self-knowledge, wherein self is known, and in varying degrees, transformed in relation to the Being of virtue, and so there is a distinctly phronetic character to this understanding" (Magrini 2012).

E.T. Gendlin states that dialectics is an activity of formation of the concept starting from a "reminiscence", a forgotten memory. It all starts with a statement or a definition of a concept starting from this pre-conceptual knowledge, and its implications (the activity of dialectics) are extracted. When the implications come to contradict the statement, it is abandoned. The contradiction contains in itself the indications for the formation of the next better definition. Dialectics is the formation of the concept, controlled by and within the order of nature, including activities, predefined knowledge, experiential, desire and choice. In the end, dialectics is self-knowledge. (Gendlin 1966)

According to F. Gonzalez, dialectics is both "negative" and "positive":

"This dialectic is negative only in showing that no proposition can capture the specific the specific nature in question; it is positive, however, insofar as the very process of examining and refuting suggested definitions can provide insight into what this nature is [...] in the very process of refuting words, propositions, and images for the inability to express that nature in question (the "fifth"), insight is barely gained into what he nature is. The qualification "barely (mogis) is important. Because it shows that this insight [...] is not the kind of knowledge that will put an end to all inquiry or that can be "grasped" once and for all." (Gonzalez 1998, 267)

"[The] dialectician, therefore, does not fool himself into to thinking that the flaws of ordinary experience can be overcome through the construction of an ideal language or the systematization of a formal logic." (Gonzalez 1998, 271)

But, according to Gadamer, the discursive movement between the four modes of dialectics, while essential, does not guarantee that " if one avails oneself of them," it is possible to " grasp the thing itself with complete certainty." (Gadamer and Smith 1980) (Magrini 2012)

Simon Blackburn states that Plato's dialectic is "the process of eliciting the truth by means of questions aimed at opening out what is already implicitly known, or at exposing the contradictions and muddles of an opponent's position" (Blackburn 2008, 104). Louis Hartz considers that in Plato's dialectic the predominant opinion is modeled by the synthesis of many contradictory opinions, by debate. (Hartz 1984) Karl Popper regards dialectics as the art of intuition for "visualising the divine originals, the Forms or Ideas, of unveiling the Great Mystery behind the common man's everyday world of appearances," (K. R. Popper 2020, vol. 1: 133) but he criticized it for its willingness to "bear contradictions" (K. Popper 2002, 316):

"The whole development of dialectic should be a warning against the dangers inherent in philosophical system-building. It should remind us that philosophy should not be made a basis for any sort of scientific system and that philosophers should be much more modest in their claims. One task which they can fulfill quite usefully is the study of the critical methods of science." (K. Popper 2002, 335)

Education

Plato's educational model (*paidèia*) differentiates the level of education according to students' skills. Thus, a basic education includes, in addition to gymnastics and other bodily exercises, and music (the exercise of the spirit), without being imposed by force, because a free man must be free in the conquest of knowledge (Plato and Jowett 1991, 536). If the student has skills, he is educated in mathematics to become a strategist, and in astronomy to raise the soul. From these, the best are selected to become good leaders, studying philosophy and dialectics. Women will have the same rights and duties as men (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. V, 455d). Such an education makes it possible to build a harmonious community capable of preventing degenerative forms of timocracy, plutocracy, and democracy, all of which inevitably lead to the worst of governments: tyranny. Plato believes that it is good to form the mind or soul, to educate and train it in easy, progressive stages, so as to pay attention to forms, not material things. Thus, it will move smoothly from simple principles to more complex and powerful principles (Rowan 2014).

According to Zuckert, for Plato, in every dialogue the search for wisdom has a formative or educational effect, expressed in the first principle of philosophical hermeneutics and in the interpretation of all texts (Zuckert 1996).

Franck Fischer considers that in the *Republic* the purpose of dialogue is to form a state and a society by establishing the legitimacy of the right of philosophers to govern (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. V, 474b-c), based on two distinct imperatives: one personal and one moral, and second public and political. Plato, through Socrates, in the context of the myth of the cave, considers that gymnastics and music are arts taught in the cave, while geometry and arithmetic are sciences "from outside" (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 533c-d), the work of a prisoner already out of the cave and corresponding to the third segment of the Line (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 526e2-3).

Geometry facilitates the observation of the idea of Good, and the arithmetic calculation also presupposes a prior intuition of the idea, through mathematical reasoning (Fischer 2006). Fischer finds that the epistemological equivalence between the mathematical sciences in Book VI (arithmetic knowledge allows access to the Idea) is at odds with their pedagogical hierarchy in Book VII (geometry allows access to the Idea) (Marrou 1981, 120). Plato's hierarchy for education in Book VII involves music, then arithmetic and logic, then geometry, followed by the science of solids, astronomy, the science of harmony, and finally dialectics (Plato and Jowett 1991, 521c–33).

In art, Socrates recommends the mimetic, imitative, and imitation of good character to educate guardians (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. III 397d-398b), being against a multiple poem, composed of several voices and several levels of narration (Castelnérac 2011).

Victor Goldschmidt (Goldschmidt 1955) considers that there is a certain correspondence between these sciences and the Line which provides the framework for "a classification of sciences" (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 532c). Thus, if geometry involves the prisoner contemplating the shadows of the cave "from the outside," astronomy seems to correspond to the contemplation of the night constellations in the cave myth (Plato and Jowett 1991, 516a-b63), allowing the leap from sensible to intelligible and preparing the soul for the vision of the intelligible Idea. Fischer establishes, as a conclusion, the ways of relating political education and access to ideas in general: the identification of the possible natural philosopher (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 517c4-5 , VII, 540a-b); the fight against political corruption (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII 519b-c); the civic obligation that education generates (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 518d4-5 , VII, 526e2-3); the pedagogical virtue of education (Fischer 2006).

In Books VI and VII of the *Republic*, Plato presents at least three iterations of a dialectical process that the guardian must follow in order to be a true philosopher: the geometric iteration (Plato and Jowett 1991, 189—192; 509c—511d) (divided line), mythical iteration (Plato and Jowett 1991, 193—197; 514a—518a) (cave myth), and pedagogical iteration (training of philosophers, divided into a theoretical part consisting of the progressive study of disciplines (Plato and Jowett 1991, 197—212; 519a—534d) and a complex practical part throughout life (Plato and Jowett 1991, 214—220; 534e—541a). The “dialectical process” ends when a vision of the idea of well-being is reached, after which the knowledge gained is applied in practice (Lamarre 2013).

According to James Magrini, Plato's dialogues take place through a process of hermeneutic interpretation, thus being constructive and participatory, in which Socrates and the other participants in the dialogue are co-educators, so “there is a trans-formative aspect that might be understood in terms of *Bildung*”, “an authentic notion of *paideia*, or education”. The use of the myth of the cave to exemplify the progressive philosophical education allows, through the dialectical method, to reach the knowledge of the form (*eidos*) of the Good (Magrini 2012).

Magrini highlights the educational aspects of dialectics as a dialogue in philosophical hermeneutics in a quote:

“*Bildung* is both a formative and transformative (dialogical) process implicit within the dynamics of hermeneutic encounter. Insofar as the parties involved in a hermeneutic encounter emerge from it thinking differently... *Bildung* is transformative ... *Bildung* is, in part, the process of coming to understand what we have understood differently. *Bildung* is formative in that it brings something into being from within the encounter. It forms a hermeneutic civility between those who are obliged to each other for becoming different to themselves, and who know that they are dependant upon the other for opening potentialities for understanding that are not presently theirs” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VII, 527b7-8)

Philosopher-king

According to Socratic principles, to do justice one must know what is right (Granata 2001, 68), and this is best known to the philosopher (Movia 1991, 233) (Rutherford 1998, 7–8) (Arrington 1991, 434–35). Plato detailed this concept, highlighting the distinction between the philosopher (who seeks the principles of truth without claiming to possess it) and the sophist (who lets himself be guided by opinion as the only valid parameter of knowledge) (Movia 1991, 233). Plato considers philosophers to be ideal leaders for two main reasons: because they know what is right, and because they do not want to lead (Plato and Jowett 1991, 520e–521b). In reality, cities are run by people who do not know what is right and are fighting with others to lead.

Socrates' death sentence led Plato to find that there was an incompatibility between philosophy and political life. The task of philosophers would thus be to ensure that philosophy is not in conflict with the state, so that a righteous man is no longer condemned to death. For many Athenians, philosophy was useless, as in Aristophanes' comedy *The Clouds*, in which the philosopher is portrayed as a boring and pedantic person lost in his abstract discussions. Plato proves that philosophy has its roots in history, in everyday reality, aiming at real and universal problems, there is a close connection between philosopher and politics (Mondin 2022, 144).

“Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.” Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon.” (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. V, 473 c-e.)

"Philosopher-kings" are those who love the sight of truth (Plato and Jowett 1991, 475c), the argument being supported by the analogy of a captain and his ship or a doctor and his medicine. Franck Fischer believes that the philosopher can be corrupted, his naturalness can be damaged and only a small number escape (Fischer 2006). Those who possess this naturalness will become great

politicians, benefactors or criminals, depending on the degree of degradation. Those who are not corrupt, like Socrates, are touched by a "divine favor" (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. VI, 492a ; 496c). According to Plato, the philosophers have the ability to touch with their eyes what always exists and is identical with itself (Plato and Jowett 1991, bk. V, 479a2-3). Thus, the training described in Book VII is not so much about training a philosopher as it is about a tutor philosopher becoming a good politician.

The philosopher is a person with a boundless curiosity for a new experience, and this is his natural character, but he does not look specifically for novelty, but for the truth. He always seeks unity in variety. His search for knowledge differs from other such searches in that he always tries to arrive at the principles or "forms" that underlie "manifold and changing world of experience, as it presents itself to us, is the partial appearance. We have next to ask, What is the bearing of this conclusion on the fitness of the philosophic nature to govern? and this again brings us back to the question, What is involved in being a good ruler or guardian? ... He proceeds to deduce from the simple conception of love of truth all the virtues which seem to him to be part of perfect human nature." (Nettlehip 1958)

Socrates points out "the uselessness of the few genuine philosophers, the corruption of most of those who are gifted with the philosophic nature, and the usurpation of the name of philosopher by charlatans," arguing with the allegory of the ship, in which the only man who could steer the ship is the true philosopher, but he is despised by others. The so-called opinion leaders only formulate opinions, without knowing what they are talking about; they can never be philosophers. On the other hand, there is a category of small and crooked people who end up practicing philosophy out of interest, without having anything natural in common with it, coming to develop poorly born theories and ideas that circulate in the world under the name of

philosophical principles. Thus, distorted philosophy becomes " an artificial jargon of words and ideas fitted together like a puzzle, so as to look consistent, whereas true philosophy is a natural harmony of word and deed, theory and practice." (Nettleship 1958)

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