

PART III—THE BIG TWO: PLATO & ARISTOTLE

CHAPTER 6

P L A T O

Plato (c. 428-348 BCE), a student of the rationally pioneering thinker, Socrates, and a teacher of the uniquely brilliant philosopher and scientist, Aristotle (c. 382-322 BC), is another remarkable thinker, polymath, encyclopedist, or comprehensive philosopher, whom ever lived or walked on this planet. So considerable was the mold into which he cast the enterprise of philosophy, science, the arts, and literature that, for centuries to come, he dominated the intellectual, academic, scholarly, and practical civilizational scene. In the words of the great 20th century logician and philosopher of science, Alfred North Whitehead (please see above), Plato was interpreted, thus:

...the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.

For, Plato, first, is the first Western thinker to singlehandedly pioneer the Academy—the comprehensive educational center, or space, where all forms of knowledge are integrated and taught (theoretical, practical, and produce forms of knowledge; from astronomy to zoology and more). Second, Plato, as an Academician and epistemological/pedagogical policy-maker was not uni-functional insofar as, contra his predecessors, he did not focus only on one specific area of thought and knowledge. Namely, he was not engaged only in the nature of existence or Stuff, as the Milesians did; nor exclusively in the changelessness of reality, as the Eleatics proposed. He, further,

went beyond Heraclitus and the Pythagoreans, whom viewed reality plurally. And, he extended his formidable philosophical system to critically encompass the Sophists' perspective and, especially, his former Socrates' elenchus, epistemology, and ethics.

Plato's Milieu, Upbringing, and Life

Plato, born one year after the death of king Pericles (c. 429) and when Socrates was 42 years of age, grew up within one of the richest and most distinguished families in Athens. Greece flourished, during this Golden Age, in all its culture and civilization, from philosophy to the arts to politics to commerce to regional trade. Plato's father traced his origins to the antiquitarian kings of Greece, and, prior, to the god Poseidon. On his mother side, we learned that she was the sister of Charmides and the cousin of Critias, both of whom were VIPs within the Greek oligarchy. While young at the death of his father, his mother, Perictione, married a close friend of Pericles, named Pyrilampes. Other relatives of Plato include close friends to the 'giver of law,' Solon, and Archon, the chief magistrate of Greece.

It is no wonder that in such a socio-political, high power and intelligentsia climate, Plato developed into knowing and learning about public life, as well as increasing his education relative to matters intellectual, political, economic, military, and so on. On the negative side, however, Plato was deeply aware of, and profoundly concerned about, the declining democracy of Greece, particularly at the wake of the dramatic Peloponnesian wars. First, he observed that there were no genuine, or authentic, leaders to potently guide his society. And, second, he was viscerally shaken by the trial and death of his teacher, Socrates, whom he tried, unsuccessfully, to bail out

and assist in an exile out of collapsed Athens. Moreover, Plato observed that, just as in competent navigation whereby the ship's pilot is advancedly knowledgeable and fully experienced, in statemanship a 'philosopher-king' is analogously required to productively and securely run the affairs of a country; a nation. This primary, leadership-like theme shall be the central topic of one of his most brilliant dialogues, *Republic*, some 200 pages, where theories of epistemology, mathematics, pedagogy, ethics, and, overall, metaphysics are expounded and minutely diagnosed. Socrates, his teacher, would be front and center character/actor of such prodigious dialectical and pragmatic work.

When he was approximately 40 (c. 387 BCE), Plato founded the Academy, the first Western University, in Athens. At the center of this comprehensive center of knowledge, Plato placed Mathematics, Astronomy, and Harmonics as the pivotal areas of knowledge and scientific pursuit. And, contra Isocrates, whom argued that pure research is of no practical use, notorious mathematician Eudoxus agreed with Plato's curricula and pedagogy, thereby transposing his own mathematical school, from Cyzicus to Athens, into the Academy. It is at the Academy where Plato vastly lectured, without the use of any notes (although it is reported that his brilliant student, Aristotle, whom entered the Academy, at the age of 17-18, c. 367 BCE, took copious notes), and developed and engineered his monumental dialogical, literary and philosophical work. Further, Plato traveled, at least three times, to Syracuse to instruct tyrant Dionysius II on the art and science of political leadership and governance. Alas, this despot was already advanced in age and his Platonic instruction was of a little utility. Plato died at the age of 80 (c.348/47 BCE).

The Platonic voluminous corpus mirrors, indeed, a progressive series of written dialogues (20 or so), on all areas of knowledge, from astronomy to mathematics to politics, ethics, the arts, literature, epistemology, and metaphysics *inter alia*. These dialogues, with Socrates, generally, as the central actor, may be grouped onto three sets. The first set, dubbed the Socratic Dialogues, as it emphasizes particularly ethics or plausible moral conduct, including such themes as: *Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*. The second addresses metaphysical issues and, specially, the Theory of the Forms, and consists of: *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. The last, written, at a later stage of Plato's life, is more of a technical and spiritual nature. It is composed of: *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*. Exactly, one can only variously relate diverse topics to diverse dialogues, albeit the above-categorization is historically more or less accurate. We shall start with Plato's theory of knowledge or epistemology!

Plato's Epistemology

Au contraire to the Sophists, who, as we discussed, viewed knowledge and human comportment as the results of subjectivism, individual perceptions, one's customs and mores, history, background, and, overall, culture, Plato staunchly rejected this perspective. He strongly contends, ensuing in the footsteps of his extraordinary teacher and moral philosopher, Socrates, that knowledge and ethics are grounded on a universal criterion of truth and certainty. That objective knowledge is possible. That the necessary and sufficient conditions of truth in matters as related as human nature, freedom, justice, courage, prudence, friendship, and, above all, integrity and wisdom are obtainable. In so doing, Plato will devise two original, thought-experiment literary and

philosophical mechanisms, famously expounded and referred to, across the world divide to the present day. Namely, the 'Metaphor' or 'Allegory of the Cave' and the 'Simile of the Divided Line.'

The Allegory of the Cave

Imagine, we are told by Plato, the existence of a large Cave. At the bottom of this Cave, there are seated prisoners, who are chained from their necks and legs; they cannot move to either side of them; and all they are exposed to is the front of the Cave. Behind them, there exists an elevation to the Cave, whereby a bunch of people are moving back and forth, and are carrying a variety of artifacts, including vases, animal and human figurines, and other objects and knickknacks. Further behind the moving people, there exists a fire that projects shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners. And further up, there is a small hole, or a mouth, to the Cave! In truth, all our prisoners are aware of, conscious of, or alert to, is the wall before them, along with only the moving shadows or fiery images or projections. Equivalently, the only *reality* that's present, or exists, for the prisoners consists of the shadows, the reflections!!

Now, Plato in his vivid imaginary style, poses the question, thus: Suppose that one of our prisoners is unchained. He stands up, turns around, and starts walking up, uprightly, toward the firelight; in the direction of the Cave's door. He would be in an excessively excruciating pain. He wanted to be re-chained, as the only reality, for him, is his prior life with the shadows and images. He would, undoubtedly, attempt to forcefully resist his liberator(s). He would violently oppose the change, his liberation, his emancipation. Suppose, additionally, that our prisoner was dragged forcibly up the steep and

difficult passage to the Cave's entrance. Once there, he is to be freed, to let go. He would, therefore, be exposed to the sunlight. That is, he would be exceedingly suffering; he would in tremendous pain, due to the intense solar radiation. Gradually, he would get accustomed to seeing the outside world, first, via grazing at the night sky. Then, early morning, he would look at flowers, one petal at a time, knowing, consequently, that the outside flower is much clearer, more beautiful, and more *real* than its shadowy projections, down deep, inside the cave. He would continue, progressively, adapting and assimilating to outside nature, realizing, as a result, that the sun is what gives the earth and its occupants life, various seasons, food, warmth, and such. He would pity his former colleagues, who are still living in a dark blur cave, receiving fake prizes, and experiencing only a profoundly obscure existence. A non-existence, which they view, or interpret, as all there is. Suppose, moreover, that our newly liberated prisoner returns to the cave. He would find it, despite his eyesight being still dim and variable, intolerable. His ex-colleagues would laugh at him for going up out the cave, abandoning, thus, his prior comfort and easy life. As Plato puts it:

...if they could lay hands on the person
who was trying to set [him] free and lead
[him] up, they would kill him.

It follows, hence, that most of us dwell in a world of obscurity, of darkness. Most of us take shadows and what appears to be real for the truth, knowledge, certainty, and adequate reality. Henceforth, it is the fundamental job, or function, of critical education to enlighten people, to take them away from a world

of mere shadowness to that of light, clarity, and illumination. Plato infers that people necessitate:

...a conversion of the soul...[which] is not [just] to put the power of sight in the soul's eye, which already has it, but to insure that, instead of looking in the wrong direction, it is turned the way it ought to be.

Alternatively, such a liberating transformation ought to be facilitated by philosophic education and philosopher-kings. And, though the newly emancipated prisoners should focus on the visible world, the world of true knowledge, enlightenment, and wisdom, they should not remain solely in this world of high contemplation and reflection. Periodically, they should descend back into the cave and re-experience their former existence, darkness, or ignorance. The ultimate purpose is to further educate one's soul, resurrect one's reminiscence, mathematical education, love, and, a fortiori, a continuous climbing towards the Ideal, the Good, or the Super-Form.

The Simile of the Divided Line

In addition to the Metaphor of the Cave, our abundantly fertile and creative thinker, Plato, of course, via his prodigious teacher, Socrates, shall present us with another simile, regarding the various stages of knowledge acquisition. Namely, he shall consider, on the one side, the *objects of knowledge* (epistemology—the Visible World (Sun) and the Intangible World (Good)), and, on the other side, the *modalities of thought* (ontology--ascendently, Opinion and Knowledge)

Schematically, thus:

	Objects	! Modalities	
	-----Y-----		
	!The Good	! Knowledge	!
<i>The Good</i>	!(Forms, Ideals)	!	!
(Intelligible)	!-----	!-----!	
	!Mathematics	! Thinking	!
Epistemology	!-----	!-----	Ontology
	!Things	! Believing	!
The Sun	!-----		
(Visible)	!Images	! Imaging	!
	!-----X-----!		

Following on the Allegory of the Cave, Plato views knowledge and the objects of knowledge as ascendant phenomena. Namely, with critical education (mathematics, astronomy, harmonics, and, in particular, dialectics), one moves, vertically, from X, as the world of shadows and illusions, with mere images and corresponding imagings or imaginings (mere copies, or shadows, that are simple copies and shadows, as in poetry, rhetoric, paintings, or sculpture) up to the True World of Reality, the Good, the Ideal, the Form, the Abstract, or the Universal. From X, one ascends, next, with a little higher degree of understanding to specific things and their correlative beliefs. One remains, though, in the world of opinions, or appearances, as in the prisoner being chained and viewing reality for the fiery projections or shadows in the wall before him! This whole, lowest level of objects and their modes of thinking mirrors only believing, as in seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting. We may see an ore looking bent in water, but once we grab it, or take it out the water, it looks straight! Water may look blue in the sea; once swimming in it, it looks clear or cloudy or whatever. The object (H₂O) and the subject belong to

the world of opinions, beliefs, and shadows. Appearance is not reality and reciprocally. A painting of Socrates is twice removed from the Form Human, as Socrates on canvas is merely a copy of the actual Socrates, and Socrates, the individual, is just a particular of the Universal Form Humanness. The same applies to poetry and rhetoric, as words are simply representation, or the appearance, of the Real Forms Love, Freedom, Justice, Friendship, Peace, and so on. No wonder were Socrates and Plato staunching critics of the Sophists, whom argued only from a subjective vantage point.

Above the small world of opinions (imagining and believing) comes the Real World of Objects and Modes of Thought, true epistemology (knowledge) and ontology (being). Vertically dialectically, one, now, makes a *giant, quantitative to qualitative* transformation, from the world of mere opinions to the true world, the real world of knowledge. One is, now, moving up the epistemic-ontologic ladder, using thereby mathematics to universally think things through. And, further up, dialectically ascendently, one is attaining, or abstracting the Good, the Forms, or the Ideals—Humankind, Justice, Love, Courage, Temperance, and, ultimately, Wisdom—Character and Intelligence. One now arrives, or approximates, the Intelligible World, rather than the mere Visible World. Philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians are now envisioning the *real thing* not just the *thing*. They engage in “abstracting”, or extracting out, from the visible thing what that thing “symbolizes.” When mathematicians think about a triangle, a square, or a circle they are, simultaneously, thinking, or abstracting, the Forms triangularity (the triangle-in-itself), squareness (the square-in-itself), or circleness (the circle-in-itself). Further, true philosophers, mathematicians, or scientists will *hypothesize* from some self-evident truth. However, they will ascend, or descend, dialectically up or down

until they verify, or test, its higher truth, its high probability, or, even, certainty. In Plato's own words, thus:

You know how students of subjects like geometry and arithmetic begin by postulating odd and even numbers, or the various figures and the three kinds of angle...These data they take as known, and having adopted them as assumptions, they do not feel called upon to give any account of them to themselves or to anyone else but treat them as self-evident.

Notice that a hypothesis, à la Plato, is merely a self-evident, isolated, or a separate truth. The dialectician needs to move further up, to the final stage, on the epistemic-ontologic ladder, X up to Y, viz., the highest stage of Intelligence: the Forms by means of *uniting, aggregating, and connecting* all hypotheses (Platonic hypothesis being a self-evident truth not our today's definition of a temporary truth or "an educated guess."), all self-evident truths. We shall turn to these notorious Forms below.

The Doctrine of the Forms

This is the most powerful, genuine philosophical contribution of Plato, i.e., the Theory of the Forms, Ideals, Universals, Abstracts, or what have you. Forms, according to Plato, are those patterns, or essences, that are changeless, eternal, and non-material. They are the unifying abstract principle, archetype, or common denominator to particulars, individual things, or specific objects. They are expounded in all Platonic dialogues. Thus: what are they really? Where do they exist? How do they interact with particulars, things, phenomena? How do they inter-relate? And, how do we obtain knowledge of them?

i) *The Nature, or What-ness, of Forms*: In Symposium, Plato contends that we perceive of, say, Beauty in a specific thing (flower) or individual (person). And, that which we perceive in one particular object or person is akin, or similar, or identical, to any other thing or individual. Therefore, things or persons *share* the same characteristic, property, or attribute amongst all of them. 'She is beautiful!', we utter;. Then we move to the next beautiful person with the recognition that beauty "in every form is one and the same." Once an individual discovers this general quality, or property, of Beauty, he then:

Will abate his violent love of the one,
which he will...deem a small thing and
will become a lover of all beautiful
forms; in the next stage he will consider
that the beauty of the mind is more
honorable than the beauty of outward form.

Phenomena, persons, or things may be beautiful. Beauty is always is! Beauty is changeless, eternal, and non-material whilst beautiful things are temporary, ephemeral, and constantly going out of existence, of the essence BEAUTY. Moreover, in Republic, Plato demonstrates that the philosopher desires to know the true essence, nature, substance, or substratum, of things. She/he does not desire knowing only instances, or examples, or illustrations, of things, like justice, beauty, or freedom. Rather, they desire to know *that* which make all just, beautiful, or free things, just, beautiful, or free. They want to know the essence of things, as Being, not just as Becoming or Nothing. These essences are Forms, and only the Forms provide the thinker with full knowledge, the full truth of Beauty, Justice, Freedom, or Goodness. Forms are apprehended by the dialectical mind and not by changing sensations or perceptions. It should be borne in mind, additionally, as we are told by Plato, in Parmenides, that the philosopher will easily apprehends Forms, as not all

particulars, one may legitimately ask, have a Universal Form, or copies of a changeless Form, as “in mud and dirt,” albeit one may refer to cat-ness, dog-ness, tiger-ness, tree-ness,..., as the universal forms of copies or individual cats, dogs, tigers, trees, ...

ii) Forms' Location or Loci:

It is simply logical, or linguistically conventional, to pose the question that if there are Forms, they must exist somewhere. To this, Plato contends that the Forms are “separate” from, or “apart away” of, the things they represent. In other words, they possess an “independent existence.” Firstly, because they were in the Mind of the *Demiurge*, *God*, or the *Supreme Principle of Rationality* prior to being imparted on particulars, things, or phenomena of this world. Secondly, the souls pre-exist material embodiments, as the souls, argues Plato belong to a non-material realm, a spiritual world. Last, Forms are at the highest level of the Intelligible World. They mirror the Good, the Supreme Good, Ideal, or Universal. They encompass the *perfect, absolute vision of reality*. In Plato's words, one reads:

[The Good] is the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this world, and the source of truth and reason in the other.

In short, the Forms, or Ideals, are the Agency via which the Infinite Law of Reason operates in the universe.

The Linkages Amidst Forms and Phenomena

Three modalities (or are they simply one?) which reflect the interaction between Forms and things. First, Forms are said to *cause* the substance of a thing or a person or an animal. Next,

things or phenomena *participate*, or *share*, in the Form. Last, a thing may be claimed to *copy*, imitate, or xerox the Form. Further, Plato maintains that the human mind conceives of the Form, thinks the Form, whilst observing, sensing things. One may conceive of Humankind and simultaneously observing Socrates. Aristotle expansively criticizes his teacher, counter-arguing that there can no thing separate from its Form or vice versa, as “there exists no such thing a matter-less form or a form-less matter.” The Form ‘flower-ness’ cannot be conceptualized, without at the same time, sensing the particular thing ‘flower.’

Inter-Form Relationships

How do the Forms interact with each other? Plato replies that rational dialogue, or intelligent discourse, will not obtain “if the forms are not weaved together.” We talk about various Forms, from things to animals to humans and so on, as when we converse about tables, cats, children, etc. And, each of these Forms reflect a genus and a species. We think and talk about table-ness, as a general category, and, then, we subdivide tables into square, rectangular, circular, etc. Philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists *ascend* (the Simile of the Divided Line) from the lowest thing, animal, or person, and, then, proceed dialectically upward to the Forms Table-ness, Tiger-ness, Humankind. Conversely, we *descend* from that which is general, universal, the Form, and, then, proceed dialectically downward toward the particular thing, animal, person.

The Knowledge of the Forms Per Se

In Symposium and other dialogues, Plato forcefully and imagistically proclaims that there are three (3) ways, methods,

or approaches to appreciating our knowledge of the Forms. First, he claims that we acquire knowledge through a process of *remembrance, recollection, or reminiscence*. Since the soul, the psyche existed prior to its embodiment in us. We reminisce of the soul via enlightenment, contemplation, critical education. Second, we use *dialectic* as a methodology of abstracting, analyzing, synthesizing, classifying, ordering, and such our ideas, concepts, and thoughts. Third, through our capacity of *desire (eros)*, or love, we incline toward a beautiful Object, then a beautiful thought, then, ultimately, Beauty itself.

To sum up, the Theory of the Forms, is a foundational, an Archimedean paradigm in philosophy, mathematics, and science, albeit inconclusive. Plato strongly suggests the existence of two worlds: one material represented by things, objects, and phenomena; the other, immaterial, reflected in the Forms, universals, or ideals. Moreover, it is only through Forms that scientists are able to detect general laws, or principles, that govern, explain, or predict phenomena. Forms are the key to our discourse in that we describe a phenomenon and we end up analyzing its Formal essence, evaluating, judging, critiquing, and so forth.

Plato's Moral Philosophy, or Ethics, Politics, & Economics

It is epistemically natural that Plato shall translate, manifest, or apply his formidable theory of knowledge to the social, political, economic, and moral worlds. In so doing, Plato, following in his teacher Socrates' footsteps, or utilizing his theory of universal definition and empirical evidence, continues to counter his opponents the Sophists. First, Plato, like his predecessor strongly holds that objective, universal standards of truth in physics and ethics are possible via clearly distinguishing between the world of illusions and shadows and

the realm of the Intelligible Good. Second, Plato contends the arguing from a skeptical, relativistic, or cultural position is prone to falsity, shallowness, and intellectual/practical volatility. Third, Plato views justice as rational, impartial, and universal regardless of one specific community's, or individual's, might, prestige, status, or wealth. Last, Plato advances the Socratic thesis that "knowledge is virtue." That "To Do is to Know", and "To Know is to Do." Therefore, Knowing and Doing or Doing and Knowing are identical, interchangeable, and dialectically achievable.

The Doctrine of the Soul

The *soul* is the central principle of life and wisdom in Plato's moral exposition as it is in his remarkable teacher's, Socrates, philosophy and methodology. The soul, we are told, in *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, *ceteris paribus*, ought to be diagnosed in a *tripartite* manner—as *reason*, *spirit*, and *passions* or *appetites*.

Take, as an excellent analogy, a charioteer. She/he mirrors reason, the faculty of leadership, or the intelligent guidance towards a function, a goal, or a value. That is, *within* each one of us, there is a relentless conflict, or antagonism, between our capacity to lead and attain a purpose, and our bewildering, spiritual and appetitive passions and forces (conscious and subconscious). The charioteer, thus, is constantly attempting to guide and direct two horses (spirit and passions) in the destination of said-goal. One horse, as Plato vividly imagines, is "[good]...needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only"; the other is "[bad]...mate of insolence and pride...hardly yielding to whip and spur." And, although the charioteer rationally knows the goal to be achieved and the good horse gently abides, the stubborn horse "...plunges and runs away, giving of all manner of trouble to his companion

and the charioteer.” Consequently, while reason is the principle of life and wisdom, it is, also, a goal-seeking mechanism. The appetites and spirit are inextricably connected to reason, and may either properly follow in the reason’s goal attaining or improperly refuse to oblige. Reason has the right, duty, and function of leading to happiness, wisdom. The spirit is neutral, at first, but then it shall carry out the rational directives. The appetites, desires, or passions do not know, nonetheless, how to clearly separate between the long-lasting ends of happiness (Ataraxia, repose, peace of mind, virtue, wisdom) and the mere appearance of pleasure. It is, therefore, the duty and right of reason to guide the spirit and desires. Reason must remove the obstacles to love and happiness. For, the lack of happiness and love are simply function of our *ignorance, the absence of dialectic and philosophic education*, and, ultimately, our *forgetfulness*. The *absence*, or lack, of educated reason is conducive to *vice, moral evil*. Notice that, as in Socrates, Plato estimates vice or ignorance not as opposites to the good, but, merely as the incompleteness of the good, the lack of the good.

Moral Evil as Ignorance or Absence of Knowledge

As we saw earlier, we know of the Forms, theorizes Plato, via our reminiscence of a prior ideal life, dialectic, and the capacity of love. Therefore, when the soul entered the body, it became immediately disturbed, convoluted, disturbed, or, even, corrupted. The soul, “dominated” by our physical body, is attracted by the earth below. The Demiurge, the Perfect God, or the Supreme Principle of Reason created the soul prior to earthly existence; the celestial gods, however, brought down the soul from the Forms, the absolute Truth, and Complete Knowledge. Equivalently, the soul contains two parts—the *rational* part, centered around the Forms; and, the *irrational*

part, driven by the body, or the spirit and passions, causing thereby ignorance, rashness, lust, and, overall, moral evil.

Plato states, thus:

*...when perfect and fully winged she [soul]
soars upward...whereas the imperfect soul,
losing her wings and drooping in her flight
at last settles on the solid ground—there ,
finding a home, she receives an earthly frame...
and this composition of soul and body is
called a living and mortal creation.*

The soul, as a result of Plato's metaphysical diagnosis, is inherently perfect. In "heavens", it knew only the Forms, the truth, and complete knowledge. Once it descended to the earthly world, it lost its nature, ambiguated thereby by the lures of the body, its misled spirit, passions, and desires. Even socially, Plato continues, individuals are determined by their actual community and their forebears in perpetuating ignorance, forgetfulness of the Forms, and, thus, the committing of moral evil or vice. How are we, poses Plato, to resurrect the harmony, the balance, or the prior equilibrium between the rational and the irrational sides of the soul? Is such a balance possible? Potential?

Re-establishing lost morality and fulfilling virtue

For Plato, ethics is simply the medicine of the soul. It is the corrigibility of our lost soul due its domination by the stimuli of the body, the equivocation of the desires, and the irrationalizing of human reason. Essentially, the human soul is perfect. It is merely ignorant, or forgetful, of the Good. That is, although the soul may operate erroneously, it is always seeking a goal, or a function, generally the fulfillment of one's happiness. And whenever it misbehaves, it does so unintentionally, i.e., unknowingly, including in cases of cheating,

lying, and killing. It follows that this absence of knowledge, “sleep of ignorance”, or dormancy of the truth is ‘deletable’ or removable through a ‘double approach of awakening.’ *Internal awakening* by dialectically rekindling the light of our prior existence, using thereby our rational abilities to contemplate, define, examine, assess, evaluate, and, overall, reminisce the Forms and the Truth. *External awakening* through an enlightened teacher, such as Socrates, whom utilizing irony and dialectical probing leads his questionee to discover lost, or forgotten, knowledge. Namely, like in the Allegory of the Cave, the philosopher shall “...release [the prisoners, society] from the chains, and the healing of their un-wisdom... [by being] forced suddenly to stand up, turn...and walk with eyes lifted to the light.” The ignorant person, or ignorant society, must be shifted around, turned up, and, hence, gaze at reality in lieu of looking solely at the shadows, the illusions, or the projections of knowledge, the truth.

In conclusion, happiness is the function, or the fulfilling of human goals, viz. virtue, or excellence of character, or, *a fortiori*, wisdom. Namely, true knowledge and integrity. For, Plato contends that every thing, or occupation, has a function. A knife, when used efficiently, it cuts bread. A physician, properly trained, must function as a virtuous healer. And, similarly, for the musician, the sculptor, the politician, the educator, and so on. Virtuous occupations and successes are predicated on knowing the limits and measures of one fulfilling one’s activities. The guitarist is required to observe the just and adequate tightening or loosening of a string to deliver the right pitch, sound, or musicality. The sculptor, as he/she works with their mallets and chisels, must constantly adjust the measure and confines of each stroke by observing the function, or the result, they desire to attain. Correspondingly, the job of virtue is to fulfill the goals of our inner harmony, internal

balance. Through reminiscence, dialectic, and love ('liberating true education'), one will use the adequate measure and limits to achieve all the functions of the soul, its virtue, or wisdom. That is, by moderating between our countless desires, we shall achieve the virtue of *temperance*. Analogously, in balancing the actions of our will, we will attain the virtue of *courage*, i.e., neither so aggressive nor so coward or weak. And, in harmonizing our capacity to reason, we shall acquire *wisdom*. These three (3) moral functions, as noted above, are completed in a dynamic process of self-awakening and other-awakening. Last, in their continuous connectivity, the three functions shall engender the fourth virtue, namely, *justice*, which is to each according to their proper due, merit, and limits and measures.

Plato's Political Philosophy or the Individual Soul Writ Large

Plato authentically argues that the individual person fulfills their function just as the state does. For, he considers the state to simply be a 'giant person', an aggregate of individual micro-players, or a macro-soul. The classes of the state, he maintains, are similar to the parts of the individual soul. The corollary being that both seek justice, or virtue, viz., the interaction of the temperance, courage, and wisdom. That is moral justice is like political justice. "We should begin", he said, "by inquiring what justice means in a state. Then we can go on to look for its counterpart on a smaller scale in the individual." Precisely, the state is a collocation of individual natures that aim at satisfying their economic needs (food, shelter, clothing or, in today's microeconomics terms, production, consumption, and distribution or the rational equalizing of limited resources to meet unlimited human wants). It is a natural creation, as no one person is fully self-satisfying. In Plato's economic-political analysis, there must exist a division of labor, as "more things will be produced and the work more easily and better done,

when every person is set free from all other occupations to do, at the right time, the one thing for which he is naturally fitted.” In *Republic*, there is a plethora of arguments and illustrations to why the state is naturally a macro-entity that allows for people to live in civility and, again, through the requirements of the division of labor, this will be conducive to a variety of function in agriculture, the industries, the arts, and so on. Plato claims:

[There will be] hunters and fishermen...artists in sculpture, painting and music, poets with their attendant train of professional reciters, actors, dancers, producers, ...barbers, cooks, and confectioners.

Plato continues that soon we would want to take “a slice of our neighbor’s territory” and, reciprocally, they want to cut out a “slice of ours.” Limited resources, therefore, shall engender wars, as infinite desires are the cause of moral evil, micro and macro. Regular people from farmers to artisans to traders will want to protect their property and needs; guardians will be formed to defend the state; and, at the highest level leaders will instruct and order the whole of the lower classes: workers and military. This is clearly analogous to the individual parts of the soul: reason reflected in the elite ruling class; spirit or strength mirrored in the military or the guardians; and, passions and desires embedded in the workers, farmers, artisans, traders, etc. But, one would immediately ask Plato, thus: How should this stratification of society be formed, defined, and approved by all members of the community? A quick response lies, according to Plato, in people’s natural abilities and meritocracy.

The Philosopher-King

In like manner to the individual or micro-soul, the macro-soul or the soul of the state goes through the same conflicts and tensions, specially between the appetites, the spirit, and rationality. Individually, a person's desires attempt to usurp their reason and their disorderly spirit try to overwhelm their higher faculties of intelligence and virtue. State-like, the populace may be ruled by its appetites, which passions may provoke internal anarchy. Similarly, the guardians unruly to trigger changes in government or *coup d'etats*. Therefore, it is incumbent upon society to advancedly educate its would-be rulers. Plato's recipe begins with insisting that those naturally prone to govern, or lead, ought to: i) learn literature, music, and elementary mathematics all the way to the age of 18; ii) at the age of 20, they need enrolling in advanced mathematics, while learning prescribed literature (as poets may run wild) and music (as musicians equally may become excessive). At the age of 30, future rulers need to learn advanced dialectic up to the age of 35. Beyond that, future public servants, or wise rulers, need practicing and serving the community for 15 years hence all the way to age 50. Only at this age, they are competent, or meritorious, of running the affairs of the state. Only at this advanced age of learning and critical education, they may be dubbed, and, thus, become "philosopher-kings!"

The Evolution-Devolution of the Platonic State: Virtues & Vices

Plato insistently thoughts that the state's soul, the macro-soul, or the collective political soul is an aggregate of all the individual souls. That is, the three particular components of one's person soul (passions, spirit/will, and reason), once in internal and external harmonies, should be conducive to the virtues of temperance, courage, and wisdom, respectively.

They will be united via the general virtue, he dubbed, justice: the right place and the right task for each in society. Correspondingly, the state's three classes (laborers, guardians, and rulers) ought to acquire the best they could, in terms of each class's internal and external harmony and in the overall state's achievement and delivery of social justice. The laborers need, therefore, attain temperance, along with a sufficient scope, or level, of wisdom, via creating goods and services, allocatable to the community, as well as the just protection of their work and private property. The guardians must seek and attain courage, with a certain degree of wisdom, while sharing, communally, both in property and marriages. Organized festivals should be held for these purposes, and those who display more courage, viz., young and competent soldiers, with more access and opportunity to wives. Incidentally, Plato views males and females equally. For, as far as they are meritorious, both sexes are prone to be excellent guardians, just like both may become, premised on their respective talent, or expertise, competent musicians, physicians, or what have you. In so doing, no particular guardian family will be favored. Thus, no potentialities, according to Plato, for privilege or power monopoly. The ruling class, the class of philosopher-kings, needs be at the helm of leadership, or at the top of political power and decision-making. As Plato wrote:

I was forced to say in praise of the correct philosophy that it affords a vantage-point from which we can discern in all cases what is just for communities and for individuals.

Plato continues, moreover, hence:

...the human race will not be free of evils until either the stock of those who rightly and truly follow philosophy acquire political authority,

or the class of providence to become
real philosophers.

In other words, only when all classes are to completely fulfill their separate functions, i.e., accomplish their naturally assigned virtue, be it temperance, courage, or wisdom, economic, social, and political justice shall obtain. Justice, as a holistic virtue, is both motivated and facilitated by the class of philosopher-kings!

Exactly, if the state, or the body politic, is a giant person, operating under the tripartite virtue, with a dynamic intersection carried through state justice, then order, harmony, freedom, and prosperity shall ensue. In this regard, attaining state justice or not (political virtue or political vice) is attributable to, or may be reflected in, thinks Plato, in five (5) forms of government—*aristocracy*, *timocracy*, *plutocracy*, *democracy*, and *despotism*.

Aristocracy, Plato concludes, is at the top of the virtuous political ladder since, at this echelon, all classes manifest their highest degree of temperance, courage, and wisdom. At this level, supreme rationality shall be exhibited by rulers, the other two subordinate classes' moderate and courageous performance notwithstanding. In the absence of such an aristocratic harmony, the state may descend to a lower level of governance, namely, timocracy. This was happening, in Plato's time, especially after the execution of his teacher, Socrates, and the wake of bad leaders arriving on the Athenian stage. Everywhere Plato's gazed, concerning the public stage, he observed that the government was bad. Namely, rulers become more interested in the love of honor than in the realization of the public good. This new political structure is characterized by the primacy of the military or the guardians or the

usurpation of the spirit over reason and wisdom. From here on, the political system will continue to degrade, thereby morphing onto plutocracy or the government by the rich, the wealthy. The common good is suddenly swapped for the riches. Plato states, thus: "...as the rich rise in social esteem, the virtuous sink." Society is, now, divided into two sub-classes: the rich class ("bourgeoisie" a la Marx) and the poor, working class ("Proletariat", also, a la Marx). The plutocrats, as a result, are concerned only with pleasure, and since pleasure is both momentary and variable ("necessary", "unnecessary", and "lawless"), the state becomes for grabs by the wealthy and unsatiated, the never materially satisfied class.

Next, the state may degenerate into democracy, whereby everybody seeks equality and freedom. Everybody is looking to maximize, rather than moderate, their goals and outcomes. One must notice, though, that the type of democracy Plato is referring to here is not the representative, or *indirect*, democracy; but, rather, a *direct* form of representation by anybody who's 18 years of age, regardless of their talent and public service training. Within his timeframe, or historical context, Plato was vividly aware of the Socratic tragedy and the ill political leadership. Equality and freedom of desires transformed into a mob rule, which, in turn, is based upon one appetite being as good as the next!

Last, democracy may descend into a state of despotism, authoritarianism, or tyranny. For, one masterful passion will emerge and attempt to control all the other ingredients of the soul. Precisely, the intense desire for wealth and pleasure by the masses will lead to plundering the rich class. And, as the rich and exploiting class resists, the populace will chose a master ideologue, who, in turn, will subjugate, if not cleverly

and oratorily dominate, them. The result is despotism with all its attendant horrible attributes and consequences.

Plato's Cosmology

Although Plato focuses his prodigious thought and methodology on the moral, political, economic, and social world, such an approach did not preclude him from considering the structure, nature, dynamics, and functions of the cosmos. Early on, like his former, Socrates, he had an enormous scientific urge to appreciate and discover the general laws and regularities of nature. Alas, he was: first, bewildered by the “likely story” reports on natural philosophy, or physics, by his predecessors, all the way from Thales to Democritus. Second, as he introduced his considerable paradigm on the Forms, he, somewhat, made an exact account of the visible world difficult, if not un-obtainable. Only a world of Forms, he told us repeatedly, contains a precise and sufficient full knowledge of the truth, certainty, and, ultimately, perfect reality.

Nonetheless, in many of his dialogues, especially *Timaeus*, Plato did focus solely on the world out there. It is, in his words, incredibly *orderly* and *purposeful*. Things are not only mathematics, as the Pythagoreans, before him, purport. Mathematics immensely *participate* in things; they are not the sole things for things, the only mechanisms to essence or reality. Reality, as the Atomists, for example, proclaim, is not the byproduct of atoms randomly swerving in the void; for, again, things and phenomena are so perfectly arranged and regulated. Therefore, there must be a far more *infinite intelligence* that mold them. The *Demuirge* is such a Molder; it is the supreme, or infinite, principle of reality. Furthermore, the Forms are embedded in a perfectly orderly *receptacle*,

which receptacle is the creation of the *World Engineer, the Super-Form*. Things of nature, like planetary orbits are so perfectly pre-arranged that that pre-suppose a Universal Reason, on Plato's physical explanation.

Notice, additionally, that Plato did not argue in favor of an Eternal Mind, religiously. Namely, that there is a Creator, whom, from nothing made everything. For Plato, matter always existed. It is a Form arranged through a receptacle, a matrix, a medium, or "a nurse of all becoming." Specifically, it is intelligibly ordered by a Divine Craftsman. Whether it is water, air, fire, or earth it cannot, on Plato's view, orders itself, as that which becomes, or unfolds, must become, or unfolds, through the "Agency of some Cause." It is within this receptacle, or space, that things appear and disappear; phenomena emerge and perish. Such a worldly cyclicity is strictly mathematical, geometric, and purposeful. Lines, segments, triangles, square, and many other space-like orderly manifestations of matter are constantly changing not by themselves-for-themselves but via a Divine Orderer. The Demurge, in a word, mirrors the Universal Reason, Mind, or Supreme Agency that fashioned the World. Plato states that: "...the generation of this cosmos was a mixed result of the combination of Necessity and Reason."

In a nutshell, Plato's philosophical system is so vast and multi-dimensional that it shall dominate, agreed to and disagreed with, at various degrees and limits, by all posterior Western thinkers to this day. Chief among these philosophers, mathematicians, scientists, social scientists, artists, ..., is his prodigious student and critic, Aristotle, to whom we shall now turn.