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# The Platonic Conception of Intellectual Virtues

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*Its Significance for Contemporary Epistemology  
and Education*

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THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

2018

## ABSTRACT

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My main aim in my thesis is to show that, contrary to the commonly held belief according to which Aristotle was the first to conceive and develop intellectual virtues, there are strong indications that Plato had already conceived and had begun developing the concept of intellectual virtues. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the importance of Aristotle's work on intellectual virtues. Aristotle developed a much fuller (in detail and argument) account of both, the concept of 'virtue' and the concept of 'intellect', metaphysically, epistemologically and psychologically. Still, the first conception of intellectual virtues is to be found in the Platonic corpus. Such a realization is not only of historic interest, but most importantly, as I am going to show, the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues could prove promising in contemporary debates on virtue epistemology theories and in virtue-based approaches to education.

Plato's discussion of rational desires is the strongest indication of the presence of the concept of intellectual virtues in Platonic dialogues. Rational desires are constitutive of intellectual virtues: desires are dispositional; rational desires are dispositions to pursue rational goods. Intellectual virtues are such dispositions. Additionally, there is further evidence that Plato had conceived of intellectual virtues. His rigorous educational program in the *Republic* aims at the development of rational desires<sup>1</sup>, while in the *Symposium* he discusses the intense rational desire to know the Good<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, in order to be intellectually virtuous, one must not only have a desire for knowledge; one must also be systematically and reliably successful in achieving the end of their rational desires. I will show that the success component of Plato's intellectual virtues can be

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, *Rep.*, VII, 521d-540c.

<sup>2</sup>The *Symposium* starts up with erotic desires but the discussion soon shifts to the rational desire for knowledge, to be a lover of wisdom.

found in his dialectic method. Plato's dialectic is both a virtue developer and a reliable method used by philosophers in order to reach the objects of their rational desires<sup>3</sup>.

I will argue that *episteme* is one of Plato's primary intellectual virtues. Towards this end, I will invoke Pritchard's recent argument according to which understanding, which is distinct from knowledge, is a form of cognitive achievement and therefore what is finally valuable<sup>4</sup>. I will argue, based on textual evidence from the middle Platonic dialogues and recent discussions in the exegetical literature, that Plato's *episteme*, although commonly translated as knowledge, is closer to Pritchard's conception of understanding. I will also show that Plato's *episteme*, similarly to Pritchard's conception of understanding, is a cognitive achievement that cannot be attained by luck or testimony.

The Platonic conception of intellectual virtues has something unique to offer to contemporary virtue epistemology. Plato, unlike Aristotle, does not differentiate between theoretical and practical wisdom. A wise agent, according to Plato, is wise in both practical and theoretical matters<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, Plato, unlike Aristotle does not make a sharp distinction between moral and intellectual virtues. Therefore, the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues, in comparison to the Aristotelian, offers a more suitable starting point for scholars who want to argue that intellectual virtues are but a subpart of moral<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, I will argue that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues is also of significant merit for virtue-based approaches to education. Plato questioned whether we can attain knowledge but nevertheless went on to develop his Socratically inspired theory of education according to which we can teach learning without knowing.

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<sup>3</sup>Objections are anticipated as to the reliability of the dialectic but, like in the cases of pianists and athletes, we never have a guarantee of success. The dialectic, according to Plato, is the best method we have to reach the truth.

<sup>4</sup>Pritchard, 2010, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>Philosophers, according to Plato, have to hold office to help the republic with practical issues and are best suited to do so because of the understanding of the form of the Good they have acquired from Plato's rigorous educational program.

<sup>6</sup>See for example Zagzebski, 1996, p. 258 where she argues that intellectual virtues are but a subpart of moral virtues and that normative epistemology is a part of virtue ethics.

Socrates proclaimed his ignorance numerous times<sup>7</sup>; nevertheless, he went on to educate the youth of Athens. This is what I will suggest that Plato's notion of intellectual virtues can contribute to theories of education: we should teach children not by transferring knowledge to them directly but by building dispositions into them to seek and acquire the truth.

I will argue that although somewhat ignored by contemporary scholars, Plato's theory of education has much to teach us about epistemic character education today. The Platonic educational program does not advocate the direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student but rather focuses on building the learners' epistemic dispositions. Building upon the Socratic method, Plato's educational program does not "spoon-feed" knowledge to the learners but rather fosters the growth of intellectual virtues through problem-solving<sup>8</sup>. The Platonic decades long educational regime aims at training Philosopher-Kings in three types of virtue: (i) Moral Virtue; (ii) the Cognitive Virtue of Abstraction; (iii) the Cognitive Virtue of Debate.

I will explain ways in which fostering intellectual virtues through problem-solving could be applied in classrooms today and I will argue that Plato's rigorous education program is of definite merit for contemporary theories of education, especially given the fact that scholars in the field are looking for alternatives to the traditional methods of teaching.

I will also dedicate a section to showing that Socrates was not a moral philosopher but rather an epistemic character builder<sup>9</sup>. Socrates trained his students/interlocutors in desiring the truth without offering them any knowledge-education. I will also briefly highlight some of the most significant differences between the Platonic educational program, as described in the *Republic*, and the Socratic educational method.

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<sup>7</sup>See for example the *Apology*, 22c: "I am wiser than this human being. For probably neither of us knows anything noble and good, but he supposes he knows something when he does not know, while I, just as I do not know, do not even suppose that I do."

<sup>8</sup>The slave boy demonstration (82a-86a), performed by Socrates in the *Meno*, is an excellent example of this problem-solving teaching method.

<sup>9</sup> Scaltsas, T., Lytra, I. and Kotsonis, A. (Forthcoming) "Socrates: The Very First Epistemic Character Builder" (tentative title). *Ancient Philosophy Today: Dialogoi*. Edinburgh University Press.

I will also discuss, before concluding my thesis, two different accounts of educational failure as presented by Plato in the *Republic*. The first one is the individuals employing the eristic method (as a result of failure in dialectic education) and the second is the individuals who correspond to the four imperfect societies (brought about again by the lack of proper education). I will argue that these two accounts can inform our understanding of what should be avoided when educating for epistemic (and moral) virtue nowadays.

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

A. Kotsonis

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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First, I would like to thank Prof. Scaltsas for all his guidance and support. I would not have been able to produce this study without him as my principal supervisor. He has been my guide in this journey much like Socrates has been his interlocutors' guide to true philosophy.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr. Gasparatou, for all her feedback and support. I really enjoyed my visits to the University of Patras. I am also indebted to all the staff at the University of Edinburgh for attending presentations of my thesis and providing feedback - especially Prof. Pritchard, Prof. Ridge and Dr. Levy. I am also thankful to all my peers at the University of Edinburgh for making me feel part of this great philosophic community.

I have presented almost the entirety of my thesis in various conferences (different sections of my research at different places). I am thankful to the audiences of all these conferences for putting my arguments under meticulous scrutiny.

I would like to thank my family for so many reasons that I would run out of space if I tried to list them here. They have heard me talking about the topic of my thesis so many times that they can probably defend it better than me.

Many thanks also to all my friends from Palaio Faliro (Panos, George, Spyros, Petros, Panos, Achileas, Alex, Yiagos, Aris, Pantelis, Baggelis and Kornilis) for taking my mind off philosophy when I needed it the most.

Last, but definitely not least, special thanks to my other half, my companion in this journey of life, to whom I dedicate the quote on page 11.



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“...Because their natural form had been cut in two, each half longed for what belonged to it and tried to engage with it; throwing their arms around each other and locking themselves together, they died from not eating or indeed doing anything else, because they refused to do anything apart from each other”

From Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* (191a5-b1)

# INTRODUCTION

## Extensive (Lay) Summary

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When I first met with Prof. Scaltsas (my principal supervisor) back in the summer of 2014, I already had a topic in mind (related to the Aristotelian conception of virtue and its influence on contemporary theories of virtue) that I wanted to pursue. Still, in that first meeting, Prof. Scaltsas urged me to read the *Republic* and to present to him the main arguments discussed in this monumental philosophical work of Plato. Reading the *Republic* would give me a better insight into the ancient Greek understanding of the term *arête* (virtue). I had read many sections of the *Republic* before but never all ten books in a systematic manner and in their proper order. I found reading the *Republic* so enjoyable that I ended up reading all ten books in less than a week. During our second meeting, and as soon as I had finished presenting the main arguments of the *Republic* to Prof. Scaltsas, the realization that Plato had conceived and had started developing the concept of intellectual virtues popped up. What stronger evidence of Plato's conception of intellectual virtues than his discussion of rational desires and the need to acquire the objects of such desires? And what better way to reach to the objects of such rational desires than the method of the dialectic? We noticed right away (well, Prof. Scaltsas did more than me!) the potential implications of this realization for a number of philosophical areas and especially for contemporary theories of virtue epistemology, virtue ethics and virtue education. My research topic changed instantly and the outcome is the study that you have before you. What follows is an outline of the chapters included in my thesis.

### *Chapter I*

In the first section of the first chapter of my thesis, I give a brief overview of Plato's *Republic*. More specifically, I briefly present the most important, for the Platonic understanding of the term virtue, sections of the *Republic* and discuss these sections in relation to my study's objectives. Some of the topics and theories I discuss include

Plato's four cardinal virtues<sup>10</sup>, the analogy of the just city and the just individual<sup>11</sup>, the tripartition of the soul<sup>12</sup> and Plato's arguments as to why men who are just are always happier than those who are unjust<sup>13</sup>. Starting with a discussion of the *Republic* is quite vital for the purposes of this study because, as I am going to show later on, the *Republic* includes some of the most important indications of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. It is also in the *Republic* that Plato discusses to the fullest his rigorous educational program which includes the vast majority of his key arguments and theories<sup>14</sup> about virtue education, such as the importance of rational desires for the epistemic success of the agent.

I proceed, in the second section of this chapter, to give a brief presentation of Aristotle's conception of moral and intellectual virtues. The discussion of this section allows me, later on, to present the conditions that according to Aristotle, an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous. A potential Platonic conception of intellectual virtues would be rather close to the Aristotelian and therefore I will use the latter as a blueprint of what I should be looking for in the Platonic corpus. In this section, I discuss Aristotle's definition of virtue<sup>15</sup> and the distinction he draws between moral and intellectual virtues<sup>16</sup>. I also discuss Aristotle's intellectual virtues and especially his two principal ones: *phronesis* (practical wisdom) which involves an awareness of the

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<sup>10</sup>*Rep.*, IV, 427e-433b.

<sup>11</sup>*Rep.*, IV, 435b: "But now the city was thought to be just because three natural kinds existing in it performed each its own function, and again it was sober, brave, and wise because of certain other affections and habits of these three kinds." "True," he said. "Then, my friend, we shall thus expect the individual also to have these same forms".

<sup>12</sup>*Rep.*, IV, 439a-440e.

<sup>13</sup>See for example the three different pursuits of men argument (*Rep.*, IX, 579d-583a).

<sup>14</sup>Plato's approach to educating virtue in the *Republic* is going to inform my discussion in chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>15</sup>*EN*, 1007a1-a3: "Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it."

<sup>16</sup>*EN*, 1102a26-28: "...that one element in the soul is irrational and one has reason" and *EN*, 1139a1-a5: "We divided the virtues of the soul and said some are moral virtues and others virtues of the intellect."

particulars<sup>17</sup> and *sophia* (theoretical wisdom) which involves the highest objects of knowledge which are not human affairs<sup>18</sup>.

In the third section of the first chapter, I discuss some of the most important theories and arguments made by scholars working in contemporary virtue epistemology. I begin by discussing the two commitments that unite all contemporary virtue epistemologists - that epistemology is a normative discipline and that its primary focus is the agent - and proceed to briefly present the capacities that virtue reliabilists<sup>19</sup> and the traits that virtue responsibilists<sup>20</sup> identify as intellectual virtues. Most importantly, in this section I discuss Zagzebski's (1996) neo-Aristotelian theory of virtue which features heavily later on in my discussion.

In the last section of the first chapter, I present a list of conditions that an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous. The conditions of this list come from the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian conceptions of intellectual virtues. They include: i) the motivational component of intellectual virtues<sup>21</sup>, ii) the success component of intellectual virtues<sup>22</sup>, iii) that one is not born possessing intellectual virtues, iv) that intellectual virtues develop gradually through time and practice and v) that intellectual virtues always aim at what is finally valuable. It is for indications of these conditions that I will be looking for in the Platonic dialogues.

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<sup>17</sup>See for example *EN*, 1141b15-b17: "Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only-it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars".

<sup>18</sup>See for example *EN*, 1141b1-b5: "...Philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge. Combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature".

<sup>19</sup>See for example Sosa (1980, 1991) and Greco (2002).

<sup>20</sup>See for example Montmarquet (1993) and Zagzebski (1996).

<sup>21</sup>See for example *EN*, 1139a18-a20: "The virtue of a thing is relative to its proper. Now there are three things in the soul which control action and truth-perception, reason, desire" and Zagzebski, 1996, p. 270 "An act of intellectual virtue A is an act that arises from the motivational component of A".

<sup>22</sup>See for example *EN*, 1139b14-b16: "Let us begin, then, from the beginning, and discuss these states once more. Let it be assumed that the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth..." and Zagzebski (1996, p. 270): "An act of intellectual virtue A is an act that arises from the motivational component of A, is something a person with virtue A would (probably) do in the circumstances, is successful in achieving the end of the A motivation..."

## Chapter II

In the second chapter, I proceed to present and discuss Plato's theory of rational desires. Rational desires are the strongest indication of the presence of the concept of intellectual virtues in Plato's dialogues. Rational desires are an indication of intellectual virtues because rational desires are the necessary motivational force behind the development of intellectual virtues. In order to reach the object of rational desires one must excel intellectually, that means that one must develop intellectual virtues.

I begin this chapter with a presentation of Plato's tripartite division of the soul and the objects that correspond to the desires of each part of the soul. I also give a brief summary of the recent contemporary debate on the method that Plato uses to derive the three parts of the soul and argue that this debate, no matter its outcome, does not affect my arguments. I then move on to discuss the numerous passages in Plato's middle dialogues that show the importance of rational desires for the epistemic success of the agent. Such evidence include Plato's use of the word philosophy<sup>23</sup>, Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*<sup>24</sup>, Plato's definition of philosopher in the *Republic*<sup>25</sup> and the chariot allegory in the *Phaedrus*<sup>26</sup>.

In the second section, I present the Platonic dialectic method and show how it relates to the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. I argue that the dialectic method is another major indication of the presence of intellectual virtues in Plato's work. The dialectic is both a virtue developer and also a reliable method for reaching the objects of rational desires<sup>27</sup>. Examples in Platonic dialogues of people being good or bad

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<sup>23</sup>A lover of wisdom is by definition motivated by his/her rational desires.

<sup>24</sup>The discussion starts with erotic desires but very soon shifts to the desire to acquire the good.

<sup>25</sup>See V, 474c-487a.

<sup>26</sup>See 246b-c.

<sup>27</sup>Rational desires and the dialectic (as a reliable method of reaching the truth) combined satisfy both the motivational and the success component of intellectual virtues. Objections are anticipated as to the reliability of the dialectic but, like in the cases of pianists and athletes, we never have a guarantee of success. The dialectic, according to Plato, is the best method we have to reach to the truth.



dialecticians<sup>28</sup> also show how one can become better at the dialectic<sup>29</sup> and its tools (e.g. division<sup>30</sup>) through practice<sup>31</sup>.

### Chapter III

I begin the third chapter with a discussion of Plato's conception of *episteme* in order to show that it is his primary intellectual virtue. I note that in order to achieve my goal I need to show that it always aims at what is finally valuable. At this point, I discuss Pritchard's (2010) recent argument<sup>32</sup> that understanding, which is distinct from knowledge, is a form of cognitive achievement and therefore finally valuable<sup>33</sup> and show that Plato's *episteme*, although commonly translated as knowledge, is closer to Pritchard's conception of understanding. The evidence that I use to support my argument are i) the rider and the bridle maker example from Book X of the *Republic*<sup>34</sup>, ii) that, for Plato, *episteme* of the Forms is holistic and therefore goes beyond simple knowledge<sup>35</sup>, and also iii) Socrates' definition of dialecticians in Book VII of the *Republic*. Moreover, I show that philosophers, in order to acquire *episteme* of the Forms, must move from hypothesizing to the first principle<sup>36</sup>. I argue that this move to

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<sup>28</sup>See for example the comments Socrates makes regarding Protagoras' strength in the dialectic - *Prot.* 340a: "Many of the audience cheered and applauded this. And I felt at first giddy and faint, as if I had received a blow from the hand of an expert boxer, when I heard his (Protagoras') words..."

<sup>29</sup>If Plato did not believe in the necessity of practice he would allow philosopher kings to rule from an early age.

<sup>30</sup>Division entails an ability which has been acquired through practice: "... to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints and not to try to splinter any parts, as a bad butcher might do" (*Phaedrus*, 265e). Like butchering, division requires practice, one is not born possessing such ability.

<sup>31</sup>An article I wrote in which I discuss many of the arguments offered in these first sections of my thesis is forthcoming: Kotsonis, A. (Forthcoming) "Delineating the Continuity of Thought from Plato to Aristotle on Intellectual Virtues", *Proceedings of the World Congress "Aristotle 2400 years"*, Thessaloniki, Greece.

<sup>32</sup>An argument with which I completely agree.

<sup>33</sup>See for example (2010, p. 67): "...understanding and knowledge come apart, and come apart precisely because understanding, unlike knowledge, is a form of cognitive achievement, and hence is finally valuable".

<sup>34</sup>"Then does the painter know what the bit and bridle ought to be like? Isn't this something that even the makers- the harness-maker and the smith-don't know, but only the horse-man who knows how to use them?" (601b-c).

<sup>35</sup>McDowell, 1973, p. 250.

<sup>36</sup>This relates to Socrates first and second sailing (*plous*). According to Socrates, hypothetical method is second best to a teleological account.

the first principle shows that *episteme* cannot be achieved either by luck or by testimony<sup>37</sup>.

Arguing that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue leads me to discuss the relation of Plato's conceptions of *episteme* and *sophia*. I use textual evidence to show that Plato uses *episteme* and *sophia* interchangeably and that the two do not differ in epistemological value. At this point I also point out, that for Plato, wisdom already includes a practical element<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, I argue that Plato does not need a separate intellectual virtue similar to Aristotle's *phronesis*. This is a significant difference between the Platonic and the Aristotelian conception of intellectual virtues. If a contemporary scholar were to argue that theoretical wisdom already entails practical elements and that theoretical and practical wisdom are not as neatly separated as Aristotle believed, then that scholar would be better off following the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues.

In the last section of this chapter, I discuss some of Plato's most important epistemological arguments, as presented in the *Republic* through the Simile of the Sun (507a-509c), the theory of the Divided Line (509d-511e) and the Allegory of the Cave (514a-521b). The discussion in this section of such Platonic theories and arguments (and especially the Allegory of the Cave) connects fittingly the next two chapters with what I will have discussed up to that point.

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<sup>37</sup>The two reasons why Duncan argues that knowledge is not a cognitive achievement, see for example (2010, p. 50): "One can have knowledge while not exhibiting the corresponding cognitive achievement, and one can exhibit a cognitive achievement while failing to have knowledge."

<sup>38</sup>This is evident from the fact that philosophers, according to Plato, have to hold offices to help the Republic with practical issues and are best suited to do so because of the wisdom they have acquired from Plato's rigorous educational program and especially from practicing the dialectic: "And, lifting up the brilliant beams of their souls, they must be compelled to look toward that which provides light for everything. Once they see the good itself, they must be compelled, each in his turn, to use it as a pattern for ordering city, private men, and themselves for the rest of their lives. For the most part, each one spends his time in philosophy, but when his turn comes, he drudges in politics and rules for the city's sake, not as though he were doing a thing that is fine, but one that is necessary. And thus always educating other like men and leaving them behind in their place as guardians of the city, they go off to the Isles of the Blessed and dwell" (VII, 540a-b).

## Chapter IV

In the fourth chapter of my thesis, I argue that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues could prove promising in contemporary virtue-based approaches to education. Contemporary virtue-based approaches to education heavily rely and build upon the Aristotelian conception of intellectual virtues. I want to argue that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues has something different to offer to contemporary virtue-based approaches to education than the Aristotelian conception and that is learning through problem solving.

To that end, I present and discuss Plato's rigorous educational program as portrayed in the *Republic*. I argue that the Platonic educational program aims at training learners in three types of virtue: (i) Moral Virtue; (ii) the Epistemic Virtue of Abstraction; (iii) the Epistemic Virtue of Debate. I explain how fostering intellectual virtues through problem-solving would look like if applied to classrooms today, before concluding that Plato's rigorous education program is of definite merit for contemporary theories of education especially given the fact that scholars in the field are looking for alternatives to the traditional methods of teaching.

I also dedicate a section to the Socratic method and its importance for contemporary epistemology and education. Although, I argue that Plato was the first to conceive the concept of intellectual virtues -which is indeed the case- nevertheless there are indications that Socrates was the first character builder<sup>39</sup> in the history of philosophy. The ultimate goal of Socrates' teaching was to develop the epistemic character of his interlocutors. Socrates trained young Athenians in one cognitive virtue: *desiring truth*, while refusing to offer them any knowledge-education. The training method he used for developing this epistemic disposition in them was the repeated exercise in his elenctic method.

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<sup>39</sup>For example, through the Socratic Method, Socrates' interlocutors develop rational desires to know the truth. Socrates' aim is to develop these rational desires by revealing to his interlocutors their ignorance: "That is why even now I still go around seeking and investigating in accordance with the god any townsman or foreigner I suppose to be wise. And whenever someone does not seem so to me, I come to the god's aid and show that he is not wise" (*Apology*, 23b).

I conclude this chapter with a comparison of the Socratic method of education (as portrayed in Socratic dialogues) and Plato's educational program (as presented in the *Republic*). I also anticipate and discuss two potential objections to my argument that Plato's educational program can be of value for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education: (i) The 'Noble Lie' and (ii) The Self-controlled Individual.

### *Chapter V*

In the *Republic*, Plato does not only highlight that successful education leads to the desired outcomes, but also that education fails if not properly structured and safeguarded against corruption. Plato's accounts of the consequences of improper education serve as a cautionary tale and as a justification for his rigorous educational program. The last chapter of my thesis is divided into two sections, each discussing a different way in which, according to Plato, education might go astray. The first Platonic account of educational failure I discuss is the eristic method. This account highlights that those who have not gone through the necessary educational stages lack rational desires and thus should not be trained in the dialectic because they will use it for their personal gain and not as the method for discovering the truth.

The second account<sup>40</sup> of educational failure I discuss comes from Plato's discussion of the five regimes - how they come about and the character of their corresponding individuals. This is Plato's account of how less than perfect political regimes and individuals come about mainly as a result of educational failure. While discussing these accounts I look into their importance for Plato's general philosophic endeavors but most importantly their significance for contemporary education. I argue that there are elements in these accounts that are of merit nowadays - features that should be incorporated in modern accounts of virtue education.

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<sup>40</sup>Both accounts come from Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*.

## Remainder of Introduction

I will now proceed to (i) discuss the aims and methodology of this study, (ii) point out some of the limitations of the current study, (iii) identify the intended audience and (iv) briefly outline my dissemination plan.

### I. Aims and Methodology

The aim of this study is twofold. The first objective is to point out and discuss the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. As I will highlight, Plato's conception of intellectual virtues has gone unnoticed by scholars working in ancient philosophy as well as by scholars working in contemporary virtue epistemology and virtue education (see for example section 1.2). The second objective of this study is to show that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of merit for both contemporary theories of virtue epistemology and virtue education. The Platonic conception of intellectual virtues has certain features, which as I am going to show, can be of significant merit for the building of new theories of virtue.

The methodology I employ consists in exploring Plato's middle (and some early) dialogues in order to consider whether Plato was the first to conceive of intellectual virtues and to examine whether Plato has made any arguments that can be of use in resolving contemporary debates of virtue epistemology and virtue education. This is a less common approach to the subject of ancient philosophy – an approach that is not enclosed in the boundaries of debates relating to ancient philosophy but investigates whether parts of some of the theories and/or arguments of ancient philosophers can be of merit nowadays. Therefore, I do not spend much time criticizing or arguing over translations of the Platonic texts - apart from one section where it is absolutely necessary (see section 3.1). The focus of this study is rather to investigate whether Plato's conception of virtue has to offer something to philosophy and education today.

The approach that I use in order to accomplish the primary aim of this study is quite straightforward. I use the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian conceptions of intellectual

virtues as a guide to what I should be looking for in Platonic dialogues. I end up showing that all of the criteria that the Aristotelian tradition considers fundamental for intellectual virtues are present in Platonic dialogues. The best (and only) way to show that Plato had conceived and had started developing the concept of intellectual virtues is through direct textual evidence from his dialogues. Therefore, in order to meet the first goal of my study, I rely strongly on the Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue and also on a number of textual evidence from mostly the middle - and in a few cases also from the early - Platonic dialogues.

I continue using textual evidence from Platonic dialogues in order to achieve the second objective of my study. Still, I also employ a more contemporary approach in that I make arguments which are less connected with interpretations of Platonic dialogues and more related to the contemporary understanding of the concept of virtue. I also formulate, in several sections, my own arguments without relying much on textual evidence from Platonic dialogues (e.g. how the problem solving method can be applied in schools nowadays).

Overall, this study necessarily starts with a fairly standard ancient philosophy approach and relies on direct textual evidence in order to show that Plato had conceived of intellectual virtues. Once this has been achieved, the approach followed in the remaining chapters (3-5) is somewhat mixed: I still employ, whenever needed, textual evidence but also include elements of a more contemporary approach and make several arguments that rely little on textual evidence.

## II. Potential Limitations

The main arguments that I am making in this study rely primarily on the *Republic* for textual evidence. I also use sparsely evidence from other dialogues such as the *Symposium* (rational desires), the *Protagoras* (expertise in the dialectic), the *Meno* (recollection/problem solving method), the *Phaedrus* (rational desires) and the *Apology* (epistemic character building). Therefore, it is obvious that one potential limitation of this study is that it does not include a discussion of textual evidence from late Platonic dialogues such as the *Laws*, the *Statesman* or the *Sophist*. This, however, is done on

purpose. First of all, relying mainly on the *Republic* for textual evidence showing that Plato was the first to conceive and to have started developing the concept of intellectual virtues suffices for the purposes of this study. Secondly, it is in the *Republic* that one can find the most significant implications of the Platonic development of intellectual virtues for contemporary theories of education and epistemology. The *Republic* is the dialogue in which Plato discusses how the philosophers are to acquire intellectual and moral virtues through his rigorous educational program. Lastly, there is not enough space in this study for a thorough discussion of late Platonic dialogues. I note, however, that this might be something worth pursuing in future research projects.

Another feature of this study that might appear as a potential limitation to some of the readers is that I do not dwell much on debates of ancient philosophy and classical nature. For example, although I discuss the ongoing debate amongst scholars of ancient philosophy on Plato's method for deriving the three parts of the soul, I do not adhere to one particular interpretation. In addition, I do not spend much time debating over the proper way to translate Plato's text. Arguing for one translation over the other is outside the scope of this study. This is of course with the exception of one or two cases, such as in the case of *episteme* and philosophy, where my argument greatly relies on the proper translation of the terms. Again, of course, this limited discussion of debates of ancient philosophy is done on purpose. The focus of this study is the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues and how it can be of merit for contemporary epistemology and virtue based approaches to education. Therefore, it is only to be expected that I focus more on the contemporary aspects of the discussion and less on the classical ones.

Another potential limitation of this thesis is that I do not draw a sharp distinction between the Platonic and Socratic philosophical ideas. This is because I believe it is nearly impossible to know where the Socratic theories stop and where Plato's own philosophical ideas begin. In other words, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact point in time (and dialogue) at which Plato stopped presenting the Socratic philosophy and started discussing, through Socrates, his own philosophical ideas. Nevertheless, I attribute important theories that are commonly considered Socratic (such as Socratic intellectualism and his elenchus) to Socrates and important Platonic theories that are commonly and rightfully considered Platonic (such as the tripartite division of the soul)

to Plato. Also, whenever it is needed to differentiate between the Socratic and the Platonic philosophical ideas, I follow Vlastos' (1991) taxonomy of early (e.g. *Republic* Book I, *Georgias*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*) and middle dialogues (e.g. *Symposium*, *Republic* Books II-X, *Phaedrus*). According to Vlastos, the character of Socrates in the early dialogues is more faithful to the historic Socrates while from the middle dialogues onwards the character of Socrates is used by Plato as a mouthpiece of his own philosophical views.

### III. Intended Audience

The audience that might be interested in this study, which is also the audience this study is intended for, can be classified, very roughly, into four groups<sup>41</sup>: (A) Undergraduate and Postgraduate students, (B) Academics, (C) Educators and (D) Education policymakers<sup>42</sup>.

(A) Undergraduate and Postgraduate students, depending on the discipline they study, may be interested in different sections of this thesis. For example, students of an ancient philosophy and/or classical orientation will most likely find the second chapter of this study as the most thought-provoking one (i.e. chapter two is where I argue for the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues). This chapter might help them broaden their understanding of Plato's conception of virtue as well as his overall philosophical position. Then again, students interested in epistemology will find chapter 3 (Virtue epistemology) far more interesting and perhaps of some use for their studies. This chapter, for example, might help them understand the roots and origins of the concept of intellectual virtues. Lastly, students working on philosophy of education, as well as education in general, will find chapters four and five the most interesting. These chapters

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<sup>41</sup>I want to point out here that there can be some overlapping between members of these four groups. For example, one can be an academic and an educator at the same time.

<sup>42</sup>Of course, people that do not belong to any of these four groups might also find parts of this study interesting. For example, parents might come to understand the importance of epistemic virtues. This might lead them to foster the development of such virtues in their children through fun problem-solving activities and they might be motivated to send their children to schools that follow a virtue-based approach to education.



might help them better understand the ancient Greek approach to educating moral and intellectual virtues as well as to consider how educational theories of the past can be of great importance for contemporary theories of education.

(B) Still, not only students, but also academics of different disciplines may find different sections of this study interesting depending on their specialization and/or interests. Given that my main aim is to argue that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of significant merit for contemporary theories of epistemology and virtue education, I believe that academics working in epistemology (and especially virtue epistemology) and education (and especially virtue education) will be the ones most interested in this study. This, of course, does not mean that the study will not be of interest for academics approaching the issues from a classical and/or philosophy of history perspective. As far as I am aware, no one has ever argued for the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. I believe that the realization that Plato was the first to conceive of intellectual virtues informs and influences some of the debates of scholars working in these fields (i.e. virtue epistemology, virtue education, ancient philosophy, philosophy of history).

(C) Several parts of this study, and especially sections in the fourth and fifth chapters, can be of interest for educators (i.e. people working at any level of education: primary, secondary, university level...). Practitioners of education will be mostly interested in the practical implications of the study (Robb, 2014). They might be interested in reading the Platonic problem solving approach to fostering the development of epistemic virtues as well as the ways such an approach can be implemented in classrooms nowadays (Chapter 4). They might also be interested in reading how virtue-education might go wrong and how we can avoid such educational failures (chapter 5). One of the aims of this study, after all, is to propose ways in which the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can give us practical methods to foster the development of moral and epistemic virtues in schools nowadays.

(D) Policymakers might also find something of interest in this study. It is true that they might find the terminology of some of the parts of this study cumbersome but I believe that some of the arguments can be used to further convince them for the superiority of virtue-based approaches to education over traditional teaching. Policymakers might not be interested in reading this study in its entirety but they might be interested in listening to some of the arguments in a presentation that has been tailored after their needs. For example, they might be interested in listening how important the growth of rational desires in students is for a successful educational system; and this is something that might influence them in supporting and/or drafting policies that promote virtue-based approaches to education. Still, should one get the chance to present his/her research to policymakers, one should present it in a time efficient and convincing manner (Ruxton, 2014, p.261).

#### IV. Dissemination Plan

Dissemination is the process of communicating the findings of a research to the wider community (Robb, 2014, p. 237). The dissemination strategy of any given study is quite often as important as the study itself. There is little point in formulating and defending arguments that nobody will ever hear or read. This is especially true for studies, such as this one, that want to participate in debates and make arguments that do not only have theoretical but also practical implications. One such argument made in this study is the proposal that we should teach students not by transferring knowledge directly to them but by building their epistemic dispositions through a problem-solving teaching method.

Having identified, in the previous section, the intended audience of this study, I will now go on to discuss how my dissemination strategy will allow me to reach such audience. The dissemination strategy does not start at the end of the research process, but goes hand in hand with it from the very beginning (Robb, 2014, p. 238). To that end, I have already tried to disseminate parts of my study by going to various conferences. Conferences are an excellent way to present parts of a study and receive feedback on ideas (Robb, 2014, p. 242). The conferences I have presented parts of my

work have been of a wide variety of audience and this is something that serves well my goal of disseminating my research to the groups I have identified (I have attended conferences in *Oxford*<sup>43</sup>, *Edinburgh*<sup>44</sup>, *Rhodes*<sup>45</sup>, *Genoa*<sup>46</sup>, *Athens*<sup>47</sup>, *Liverpool*<sup>48</sup> and *Thessaloniki*<sup>49</sup>). For example, in Oxford I had the opportunity to communicate my arguments for the importance of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues for contemporary education to both scholars and practitioners of education. On the other hand, in Thessaloniki, I had the opportunity to present the argument that Plato was the first to conceive and to have started developing the concept of intellectual virtues to an audience of scholars of ancient philosophy and classics.

Still, the golden standard for disseminating research is publishing peer-reviewed articles (Robb, 2014, p. 242). A paper in which I argue that Plato had conceived the concept of intellectual virtue well before Aristotle has been accepted for publication in the proceedings of the “*Aristotle 2400 Years*” World Congress. Also, another paper in which we argue (co-authored with Prof. Scaltsas and Lytra) that Socrates was the very first epistemic character builder is forthcoming in the *Ancient Philosophy Now* journal. My article for the importance of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues for virtue-based approaches to education is also under review in a philosophy of education journal and I am currently in the process of writing an article for the importance of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues for contemporary virtue epistemology.

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<sup>43</sup>‘*What Can We Learn from Plato about Intellectual Character Education*’ - PESGB 2018 Annual Conference, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK (24<sup>th</sup> of March, 2018).

<sup>44</sup>I was given many times the opportunity to present my work in Edinburgh, see for example: ‘*Socrates – The Very First Epistemic Character Builder*’ - Eidyn Research Center Event for the Chinese Epistemology Society, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK (9<sup>th</sup> of November-2017).

<sup>45</sup>‘*Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and the Issue of Explicit Moral Action Guidance*’ – 29<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Philosophy, Rhodes Island, Greece (7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2017).

<sup>46</sup>‘*The Platonic Conception of Intellectual Virtues: Its Significance For Epistemology and Education*’ - Aretai Center 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference Connecting Virtues: Theoretical and Educational Insights, Genoa, Italy (29<sup>th</sup> of September, 2016).

<sup>47</sup>‘*The Discovery of Intellectual Virtues*’ - World Philosophy Congress on the Philosophy of Aristotle, Athens, Greece. (11<sup>th</sup> of July, 2016).

<sup>48</sup>‘*The Platonic Conception of Intellectual Virtues: Its importance for education*’ - 3rd International Conference on Critical Pedagogies and Philosophies of Education, Liverpool, UK (17<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016).

<sup>49</sup>‘*Delineating the Continuity of Thought from Plato to Aristotle on Intellectual Virtues*’ - World Congress “Aristotle 2400 years”, Thessaloniki, Greece (23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2016).

Finally, establishing a presence in the internet is also important for every study. It allows one to communicate their research worldwide (Robb, 2014, p. 244). I have disseminated parts of my research online through sites such as academia.edu and my University's profile page. In addition, a video of my presentation for the 3M competition (2016)<sup>50</sup> titled "*Lovers of Wisdom*" is on YouTube.

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<sup>50</sup>*'Educating lovers of wisdom'* – Presentation for the PPLS 3 Minutes Competition (3M), University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK (11<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016).

## CHAPTER 1: THE ANCIENT GREEK AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTIONS OF VIRTUE

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I begin my thesis with an overview of the ancient and contemporary conceptions of virtue. More specifically, I start with a very brief presentation of the Platonic conception of virtue (as portrayed in the *Republic*) and at the same discuss issues that connect it to the main theme of this study.

I then proceed to discuss the Aristotelian conception of virtue and focus mostly on his conception of intellectual virtues. In this chapter, I also discuss the contemporary virtue responsibilists' and virtue reliabilists' conceptions of epistemic virtue as well as the recent revival of virtue ethics. I conclude this chapter with some of the most important conditions that an agent must satisfy, according to the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian perspectives, in order to be intellectually virtuous. Discussing these conditions will be instrumental in helping me identify the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. It is for indications of these conditions that I will be looking for in the Platonic dialogues (chapter 2).

The topics of the sections that follow in this chapter are the following: 1.1 The Concept of Virtue in the *Republic*, 1.2 A Summary of the Aristotelian Conception of Virtue, 1.3 The Contemporary Revival of the Concept of Virtue and 1.4 The Criteria that an Agent Must Meet in Order to be Intellectually Virtuous.

## 1.1 THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE IN *THE REPUBLIC*

### Plato's Virtue theory

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Although many of the dialogues Plato wrote are devoted to ethical questions, it is in *the Republic* that Plato presents his own ethical ideas most fully (Mason, 2010, p. 135). It is also in *the Republic* that Plato discusses extensively his rigorous educational program (that he has developed for his philosophers) which, as I am going to show later on, includes some of the most important indications of the development of the concept of intellectual virtues to be found in Plato's work. Furthermore, Plato's theory of epistemology also features heavily in the discussion in the *Republic* (see for example the Simile of the Sun: 507a-509c, the theory of the Divided: 509d-511e and the Allegory of the Cave: 514a-521b). What is more, and perhaps most important, is that all these topics are not discussed separately. In the *Republic*, Plato shows how his ideas and theories about ethics, education, epistemology as well as other philosophical branches such as political philosophy, philosophy of psychology and metaphysics are interrelated and better understood and approached as a whole. Several scholars consider the *Republic* as Plato's Magnum Opus (see for example, McPherran, 2010, p. 2 and Anderson, 2014, p. 127).

It is for reasons such as the ones discussed above, that for the purposes of this study, I am going to focus for the most part on *the Republic*. More specifically, amongst other theories and arguments, I will present and discuss Plato's conception of the four cardinal virtues (IV, 427e-433b), the analogy of the just city and the just individual (IV, 435b), the tripartite theory of the soul (IV, 439a-440e), the philosophers' rigorous educational program (VII, 521d-540c) and Plato's arguments as to why just men are always happier than men who are unjust (IX, 579d-583a). All of these theories are directly related to the topic of this study and Plato's conception of virtue. I believe that presenting and discussing parts of Plato's *Republic* is instrumental for the purposes of this thesis. This is because, as I am going to show at a later point, Plato does not clearly differentiate between moral and intellectual virtues and some of the most important indications of intellectual virtues are to be found in the *Republic*. For reasons of convenience, I am going to present now the various topics Plato discussed in *the*

*Republic* in the order they are presented in the books. I am also going to highlight briefly how they are connected to the theme of this study:

### *Book I*

Book I of the *Republic* begins with Socrates and his interlocutors seeking the definition of justice. After being prompted by Socrates, Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus attempt to give a definition of justice. Cephalus defines justice as speaking the truth and paying your debts (331b), Polemarchus defines justice as the art which gives good to friends and evil to enemies (331e), and Thrasymachus (whose arguments represent those of the Sophists) final definition of justice is that it is nothing but the interest of the strongest (338e). In a typical Socratic fashion, Socrates refutes all of the attempted definitions given by his interlocutors. As a result, Book I ends in aporia. We learn what justice is not but not what it is. The search for definitions, the Socratic refutations and the aporetic conclusion of Book I is reminiscent of early Platonic dialogues. Because of these, some authors (e.g. Vlastos, 1991) have argued that Plato wrote Book I of the *Republic* at a much earlier date than the rest of the books.

### *Book II*

In the second book of the *Republic*, Socrates is challenged by Glaucon to defend justice for itself (and not because of its consequences) and prove that a just person is always happier than an unjust person (358b). Socrates argues that they should first look for the origin of justice in the city and then by analogy find the origin of justice in the individual (369a). This is an important point in Plato's discussion. In the rest of the *Republic*, Socrates, seeking to define justice and arguing that a just person is happier than a person who is unjust, will lead the discussion to topics such as the just state, his theory of Forms, virtue ethics, his rigorous educational program and his arguments for the immortality of the soul. Towards the end of Book II, Socrates notes that if the city is to be luxurious, it will need an army (373e) and the soldiers of this army must be educated in a very specific way in order to protect the city from its enemies (376d). This leads Socrates to discuss the importance of censoring certain stories if the soldiers are to do their duty well. Stories, for example, that portray Gods not as good (e.g. portray them as deceiving and lying) should be banned (381e). This point, as I am going to highlight later on, is quite significant for the Platonic educational program (See section 4.2.1).

*Book III*

Socrates continues his discussion of the importance of censoring certain stories. For example, he argues that stories portraying death negatively should be banned in order for the guardians of the city not to fear death (386b). He then moves on to discuss the importance of musical education and how it can help produce a harmonious soul and a good character (401-402). Besides musical education, Socrates also presents and discusses at this point the physical and military education of guardians, stressing the importance of a good diet and the development of good habits (403c-405a). At the end of Book III, Socrates discusses how those who are to advance to the second stage of education are to be selected from amongst the guardians (412a-414a) and also presents the myth of metals (414a-416a). I will discuss the myth of metals (also known as the ‘Noble Lie’) in section 4.5 in order to evaluate whether it detracts from the value that the Platonic theory of education has for contemporary virtue-based educational theories.

*Book IV*

In Book IV of the *Republic*, Plato presents his four cardinal virtues. Plato’s four cardinal virtues are called cardinal because they are necessary for a virtuous life. Socrates argues that the city he is describing is perfect and virtuous and thus wise (*σοφῆ*), courageous (*ανδρεία*), has temperance (*σώφρων*) and is just (*δικαία*) (427e). The just city’s wisdom is to be found with the city’s leaders and is the knowledge that enables them to rule the state well (428d). Its courage is to be found with the soldiers and is the law-abiding judgement about what to fear (430b). Temperance is to be found in the city’s unanimity in agreeing on who ought to rule the city and who should be ruled (431e) and finally justice consists in the three classes fulfilling their proper function (433c10-15).

In his discussion of conflicting desires<sup>51</sup>, Socrates argues that the soul has three parts and by using the analogy of the just city and the just individual, he shows how wisdom, courage, temperance and justice are to be found in the just individual’s soul (435a-b). Wisdom is found in the rational part of the soul. Courage is found in the spirited part.

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<sup>51</sup>This is Plato’s method of tripartition. Conflicting desires show the existence of different parts of the soul. This is because, according to him, a non-compositional soul cannot have opposite desires.



Temperance is an agreement between the three parts (i.e. rational, spirited and the appetitive) of the soul as to who should rule and who should be ruled. Justice results from the proper functioning of each part of the soul. According to Socrates, one is just only when each part of her soul performs its proper function. For Socrates, justice is balance of the soul parts and injustice is imbalance (444b). Book IV of the *Republic* includes some of the most important indications of Plato's conception of intellectual virtues and as such features heavily in my discussion throughout the study (see for example, section 2.1, 2.2 and sections 4.1 to 4.3).

#### *Book V*

Book V begins with a discussion of the status of women and family in the ideal city. For example, according to Socrates, guardian women must do the same work as their male counterparts (451c-d) because this is for the best of the city, and the ruling class should not have a family in the traditional sense (see for example 457d-e). In addition, Socrates discusses his theory of eugenics<sup>52</sup>: the idea that the best women should procreate with the best men to produce the best possible offspring (459d). However, most importantly he goes on to argue that for the ideal city to come into existence, philosophers must rule (473 c-d). He proceeds to give a definition of philosophers (i.e. that they have a rational desire for wisdom, 475 b-c). He also draws a very significant distinction between the knowledge of the Forms that philosophers have and the opinions of the non-philosophers (476c-d). Socrates' definition of philosophers will feature heavily throughout the discussion of this study. This is because philosophers who have reached an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good are Plato's truly virtuous agents. His definition of philosophers in the *Republic* is a very strong indication of the presence of both the motivational and the success components of intellectual virtues in the Platonic corpus (See chapter 2).

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<sup>52</sup>I am not going to discuss Socrates arguments for the equality of men and women, his proposal that the ruling class should not have a family nor will I discuss his theory of eugenics. This is because all of these topics are somewhat irrelevant to the theme of this thesis. Nevertheless, numerous scholars have written on these topics. See for example Huby, 1972, p. 20 (equality amongst the sexes in the *Republic*), p. 34 (the abolition of the family and private property in the *Republic*) and p. 24 (Population control in the *Republic*).

*Book VI*

The sixth book starts with Socrates giving a list of natural abilities that philosophers possess and with the argument that they are best suited to rule the city because of these abilities (484a-487a). Then, answering to Adeimantus objection that philosophers are useless for society and/or bad (487c-d), Socrates provides several arguments to defend philosophers. For example, he argues that some people claim to be philosophers when they are not (495b). In addition, he argues that philosophers, due to their natural abilities, if corrupted by education become exceptionally bad (491b-e). The discussion then turns to Plato's epistemological views. Socrates argues, through the Simile of the Sun, that the Form of the good is the unhypothetical first principle from which all other objects of *episteme* originate (505a-b). He goes on to present and discuss his theory of the Divided Line which depicts some of his main epistemological arguments (e.g. the difference between the intelligible realm and the visible realm, the four different mental states: *eikasia*, *pistis*, *dianoia*, *noesis*, and their corresponding objects, etc.) (509d-511e). I will discuss the Simile of the Sun, the theory of the Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave (Book VII) in much more detail at section 3.5.

*Book VII*

Socrates proceeds to present the Allegory of the Cave (514a-517c). This allegory is important for understanding how Plato's epistemological ideas, his theory of education and his political philosophy (amongst other branches of philosophy) are interrelated. This leads Socrates and his interlocutors to a discussion of how the philosopher-king should be educated. The philosopher-king's education is a central theme of the *Republic*. The guardians' education starts with literary and physical education. Then, those few guardians who show the natural abilities and virtues of philosophers will receive education in the five mathematical studies: arithmetic (524e-526c), plane geometry (526d-527c), solid geometry (527d-528e), astronomy (529a-530c) and harmonics (530d-531c). Those who have excelled in their studies will now be introduced to the final stage of Plato's educational program: the study of the dialectic (531d-534e) which leads the few who excel intellectually to reach an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good (532a). I will show at a later stage that Plato uses the five mathematical studies in order to educate philosophers in the cognitive virtue of abstraction and that through the study of the dialectic Plato's philosophers acquire the cognitive virtue of debate (see section 4.2).

*Book VIII*

In Book VIII, Plato repeats very briefly some of the characteristics of the just city (aristocracy) and moves on to discuss the four imperfect societies and associate each one with a specific type of individual. His discussion starts with the timocratic society and individual (545d-550c) which deviate the least from the just city and individual. He then proceeds to discuss oligarchy and the oligarchic individual (550e-555a) and democracy and the democratic individual (555b-561e). He concludes with tyranny and the tyrannical individual (562a-IX 576b) which deviate the most from the just city and the just individual. Although scholars have studied meticulously the political and ethical implications of Plato's arguments in this part of the *Republic*, not much attention has been given to the important educational arguments presented in it (See section 5.2 for such a discussion).

*Book IX*

In Book IX, Socrates continues his discussion of the tyrannical individual showing that she is the unhappiest of individuals (576c). He then moves on to summarize his first proof as to why being just is always to the benefit of the individual by ranking the happiness of the five types of individuals he has discussed (580b-d) (with the individual corresponding to the just city being the happiest and the tyrannical individual being the unhappiest). Socrates' second proof comes from his discussion of the three types of men. Some men, according to Socrates, pursue wisdom, some pursue honor and some profit. Nevertheless, we should trust the judgement of the wise men for they are able to consider all three types of lives clearly (579d-583a). According to Socrates' third proof, the only truly fulfilling pleasure comes from understanding the Forms since they are eternal and unchanging (585b-d).

*Book X*

In the final book of the *Republic*, Socrates argues again that certain kinds of poetry (such as dramatic poetry) are bad for the citizens of the just city (605d-607a) and therefore such kinds of poems should be banned (607b). The only poems that should be allowed are the ones that depict the goodness of the gods and praise good men (607a). Socrates goes on to argue for the immortality of the soul (608e-610e) and to conclude the discussion with the myth of Er (614a-621a).

Overall, one can find in the *Republic* a tremendous variety of topics such as epistemology, ethics, politics, education, metaphysics and human psychology. Most importantly, however, one can see in the *Republic* that these topics are interrelated. This is especially true for his theory of education which incorporates elements of epistemology (e.g. his conception of epistemic virtues) and has a number of consequences at the level of the society as well as at the level of the individual. Although all topics are entangled, in my thesis I will mainly discuss the following topics: In chapter 2, I will discuss Plato's conception of human motivation and ethics. In chapter 3, I will discuss his epistemology and in chapters 4 and 5 his theory of education.

## 1.2 A SUMMARY OF THE ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPTION OF VIRTUE<sup>53</sup>

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Before I move to discuss some of the strongest indications of the presence of the concept of intellectual virtues in Platonic thought, a brief overview of Aristotle's conception of moral and intellectual virtues is in order. This brief summary will help me identify elements of intellectual virtues in Plato's philosophical work since I will be using the Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian conceptions of intellectual virtues as a guide for what I will be looking for in Platonic dialogues<sup>54</sup>.

One of the first arguments Aristotle makes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is that Eudaimonia is the chief human good and the ultimate aim in life. He gives three reasons as to why he thinks this is the case. Firstly, according to Aristotle, Eudaimonia is most final because "we always choose it for itself and never for the sake of something else" (*EN*, 1097b1-2). Secondly, Eudaimonia is self-sufficient because "it is not lacking in anything" (*EN*, 1097b16-17). Lastly, Eudaimonia is most desirable because it cannot be made more desirable by the addition of any kind of good (*EN*, 1097b20-b21). Aristotle proceeds to link the chief human good with the human function. He uses the *ergon* argument in order to find the human good through the human function. He considers that everything in the world has a reason for existence and hence a particular function, and accordingly that the good of each thing lies in the effective performance of its function. Aristotle argues that the human function is "the activity of the soul that exhibits virtue" (*EN*, 1098a16-a17).

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Aristotle argues that the chief human good is connected with the human function to act in accordance with virtue (*αρετή*), he does not explain why the human function has to be unique to humans. Moreover, he does not spell out why he chooses "the activity of the soul that exhibits virtue" as the function

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<sup>53</sup>This section is based on arguments from my discussion of Aristotelian virtue ethics in my MSc dissertation - Kotsonis, A. (2014). *Can Aristotle's Virtue Ethics Provide Explicit Moral Action Guidance?* MSc Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

<sup>54</sup>The translation used in this section is by William David Ross and Edited by Lesley Brown (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 2009).

of humans, rather than any other distinctive human ability, such as the pursuit of honor and wealth or the ability to make a fire. Still, Aristotle quite probably believed that most would agree with him that the human function consists in “the activity of the soul that exhibits virtue”. Broadie notes that “One might have expected Aristotle to attempt to cover this sort of gap in his argument...in any case, whether because this seems a fruitless dialectic or for some other reason, Aristotle makes no effort to strengthen his starting point” (Broadie and Rowe, 2011, p. 13).

Aristotle proceeds to discuss his conception of the virtuous agent. He argues that the virtuous agent acts from a position of knowledge, chooses the right action for its own sake and acts from a firm and stable character (*EN*, 1105 a30-1105b). This passage shows that, according to Aristotle, the virtuous agent does not act out of chance, does not act because of someone else’s encouragement nor does she chooses the right act for any reason other than for its own sake.

Besides giving a description of the virtuous agent, Aristotle also defines the concept of virtue. According to him, “virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (*EN*, 1107a1-a3). Aristotle argues that the mean where the virtue lie is not to be determined mathematically since some virtues are closer to some vices than others are. It has to be determined rather by the particulars of each case. According to Aristotle, the *phronimos* (i.e. the person who possesses the virtue of practical wisdom) is always able to determine the good in each specific case and to identify the appropriate feeling or course of action.

Aristotle proceeds to draw a distinction between moral and intellectual virtues. He argues that there are two parts in the human soul: the intellect, which has reason in the full sense, and the appetitive, which is responsive to reason (*EN*, 1102b13-15). This comes in contrast to the Platonic theory of the tripartite division of the soul where the appetitive part of the soul is not responsive to reason (*Rep.*, IV, 439a-440e). For Plato, the rational part must, with the help of the spirited, sometimes use force in order to rule

over the soul.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Aristotle argues that since the human soul has two different parts, there are also two distinct kinds of virtue: moral (*τῶν ἠθικῶν*) and intellectual (*τῆς διανοίας*) (*EN*, 1139a1-5)<sup>56</sup>.

According to Aristotle, the locus of the moral virtues is the appetites (*EN*, 1103a5-10). In addition, intellectual virtues are (similarly to the moral) needed to attain the best life and include practical wisdom which is essential in aiding the virtuous agent determine the mean where the moral virtues lie (*EN*, 1141b20-25). According to Aristotle, both moral and intellectual virtues are states of the soul which are worthy of choice because

“...they are virtues of the two parts of the soul respectively, even if neither of them produces anything. Secondly, they do produce something, not as the art of medicine produces health, however, but as health produces health so does philosophic wisdom produce happiness; for, being a part of virtue entire, by being possessed and by actualizing itself it makes a man happy” (*EN*, 1144a1-a5).

Aristotle further divides the part of the soul which grasps rational principles into two parts, one part which contemplates things whose originative causes are invariable (scientific) and one part which contemplates variable things (calculative) (*EN*, 1139a5-a10). According to Aristotle, the work of both parts of the soul which grasp rational principles is truth. Aristotle, argues that there are “three things in the soul which control action and truth – perception (*αἴσθησις*), reason (*νοῦς*) and desire (*ὄρεξις*)” (*EN*, 1139a17-18). For Aristotle, “the origin of action is choice and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end” (*EN*, 1139a31-32).

According to Aristotle, “the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial” are five in number: art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophical wisdom and intuitive reason (*EN*, 1139b15-18). Out of these, scientific wisdom (*ἐπιστήμη*) and intuitive reason (*νοῦς*) are parts<sup>57</sup> of philosophical

<sup>55</sup>See for example *Rep.*, IV, 439c “Is it not that there is something in the soul that bids them drink and a something that forbids, a different something that masters that which bids?” “I think so.” “And is it not the fact that that which inhibits such actions arises when it arises from the calculations of reason...”.

<sup>56</sup>“We divided the virtues of the soul and said some are moral virtues and others virtues of the intellect” (*EN*, 1139 a1-a5).

<sup>57</sup>“It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore, wisdom must be intuitive reason

wisdom (*σοφία*), while art (*τέχνη*) is not strictly an intellectual virtue<sup>58</sup>; thus the principal states by virtue of which the soul possess truth are two: philosophical wisdom and practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*). Practical wisdom involves an awareness of the particulars while philosophical wisdom involves the highest objects of knowledge which are not human affairs (*EN*, 1141b1-7). The aim of theoretical reasoning is that of truth while the aim of practical is that of truth in agreement with the right desire - *τῆ ὀρέξει τῆ ὀρθῆ* (*EN*, 1139 a20-a30).

### **Subsection: Aristotle’s function Argument**

Before I move on to discuss the requirements that an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous, I want, in this short section, to draw briefly the attention of the reader to some significant implications that Aristotle’s function argument has for this study. As I have already mentioned, questions regarding Aristotle’s conception of the human function and the human good have troubled contemporary scholars: Do humans have a function? Is the human function activity of the soul in accordance with virtue? How is the human function connected to the human good? How are the moral and intellectual virtues, which Aristotle introduces later on in the *Nicomachean ethics*, instrumental in helping the agent reach the human good? For different interpretations and answers to these questions see for example Williams (1985), Nussbaum (1995), MacIntyre (2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and Scaltsas (1996).

Still, although a fascinating topic of discussion, presenting and discussing all these interpretations is outside of the scope of this study. The reason I bring this topic up is because I want to point out in this section that Scaltsas’ (1996) interpretation of Aristotle’s conception of the human function and the human good has some interesting implications for this study. Very briefly and roughly put, Scaltsas (1996) argues that, according to Aristotle, the human function, when performed well, secures that the agent pursues real goods which cohere with each other and result in a harmonious soul rather

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combined with scientific knowledge – scientific knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its proper completion” (*EN*, 1141a19-a21).

<sup>58</sup>“It is clear that at least one of these—craft knowledge—is considered only in order to provide a contrast with the others. Aristotle is not recommending that his readers make this intellectual virtue part of their ultimate aim” (Kraut, 2014).



than phenomenal goods which are at conflict with each other and lead the agent's soul into a constant state of strife (see for example *EN*, 1099a1-15 and 1113a20-22).

This interpretation, which is strongly supported by quotes such as the ones above, links the Aristotelian theory back to Platonic philosophy. For both Plato<sup>59</sup> and Aristotle, human flourishing consists in virtuous activity of the soul which leads to the pursuit of the real good. On the other hand, activity of the soul which is not excellent condemns agents in the pursue of the phenomenal good (i.e. something that appears to us as good but is not) and in a life of constant strife and imbalance (see for example Plato's account of the five societies and their corresponding individuals – Books VIII and IX of the *Republic* – which I discuss in section 5.2). For both Plato and Aristotle, reason plays an essential role in guiding the soul's pursuit of the real good. In addition, both of them believe that the virtuous agent is able to discern the real good from the phenomenal one. I will discuss the phenomenal/real good distinction in much more detail in section 4.1. I will also discuss later on (in sections 2.1, 2.3 and 4.2 to 4.4), Plato's arguments for the importance of rational desires for the pursuit of the real good.

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<sup>59</sup>See for example Plato's account of the three different pursuits of men (*Rep.*, IX, 580d- 583a). According to this account, only philosophers pursue the real good.

## 1.3 THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL OF THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE

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### Contemporary Virtue Ethics<sup>60</sup>

Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre are two leading scholars who played a major role in the revival of virtue theories in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Up until 1958, and Elizabeth Anscombe's article "Modern Moral Philosophy", deontology and utilitarianism were the two most influential ethical theories while virtue ethics were somewhat neglected by scholars working in the field. In her article, Anscombe urged for a return to the Aristotelian understanding of ethics and for the need to develop an "adequate philosophy of psychology" (1958, p. 1). Anscombe's call for a return to Aristotelian virtue ethics was successful and influenced to a great extent the revival of virtue ethics.

It was MacIntyre's "After Virtue" book in 1981 that paved the road for the development of modern theories of virtue. In his book, MacIntyre strongly criticizes modern theories of ethics and also urges for a return to the Aristotle's ethics. Nevertheless, MacIntyre also argues that the Aristotelian conception of virtue has some features which need to be updated and brought up to speed with the demands of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His call for the modernization of virtue ethics is to a large extent responsible for the blooming of contemporary theories of virtue ethics.

Anscombe and MacIntyre are not the only ones responsible for the revival of Aristotle's virtue ethics and the development of modern theories of virtue ethics. Amongst others, Philippa Foot for example, is often also accredited for being one of the founders of modern virtue ethics<sup>61</sup>. However, it should be noted that Plato's conception of moral

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<sup>60</sup>This section is based on arguments from my discussion of the contemporary revival virtue ethics in my MSc dissertation - Kotsonis, A. (2014). *Can Aristotle's Virtue Ethics Provide Explicit Moral Action Guidance?* MSc Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

<sup>61</sup>See for example Philippa Foot's work "Virtues and Vices" (1978), which can be found in Foot, P. (2002). *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

virtues has been somewhat neglected in the recent revival of virtue ethics. This could perhaps be one of the reasons why the strong indications of intellectual virtues throughout Plato's philosophical work have also been neglected.

### **Contemporary Virtue Epistemology: Responsibilists and Reliabilists**

This contemporary revival and development of virtue ethics did not leave the field of epistemology unaffected. This aretaic turn in ethics led epistemologists to investigate the importance of a virtue approach to epistemology. Virtue epistemology is a wide collection of approaches to epistemology and thus its members have some very important conceptual differences and pursue a wide variety of different projects. However, there are two fundamental commitments that unite and define them as virtue epistemologists (Greco and Turri, 2011).<sup>62</sup>

The first commitment of virtue epistemologists is their commonly shared belief that epistemology is a normative discipline. This comes in direct opposition to the views expressed by authors, such as Quine (1969), who argue that epistemologists should stop working on questions about what is reasonable for an agent to believe and should only preoccupy themselves with questions about cognitive psychology (Greco and Turri, 2011).

The second commitment of virtue epistemologists is that “intellectual agents and communities are the primary source of epistemic value and primary focus of epistemic evaluation” (Greco and Turri, 2011). In the same manner that contemporary virtue ethics focus on the agent's (moral) character and not on specific action-guiding rules, virtue epistemology likewise focuses on the (intellectual) character of the agent and considers her as the primary source of value (Greco and Turri, 2011). Unlike standard epistemologists, who evaluate justified beliefs with no regard to the properties of the person that holds such beliefs, virtue epistemologists argue that a justified belief is one arising out of an intellectual virtue that the agent possesses (e.g. it could be the product of good vision or the outcome of epistemic conscientiousness).

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<sup>62</sup>Much of the discussion in this section relies on Greco and Turri's (2011) “Virtue Epistemology” article.

One can rather roughly divide contemporary virtue epistemologists into virtue responsibilists and virtue reliabilists. For example, Ernest Sosa, who was the first to introduce the concept of intellectual virtues into contemporary epistemology<sup>63</sup>, is a prominent virtue reliabilist. Sosa argues that epistemology should be person-based rather than following the belief-based position that traditional epistemology focuses on (1991). Memory and vision, for example, are some of the faculties that Sosa and other virtue reliabilists have in mind when they talk of intellectual virtues. For Sosa, an intellectual virtue is "a quality bound to help maximize one's surplus of truth over error" (1991, p. 225) and a belief "... is justified, just in case it has its source in an intellectual virtue" (1991, p. 189). Greco, who is also a virtue reliabilist, defines intellectual virtues as "...innate faculties or acquired habits that enable a person to arrive at truth" (2002, p. 287). For Greco, a belief is objectively justified if it is produced by one's intellectual virtues.

On the other hand, virtue responsibilists conceive of intellectual virtues as good traits of character for which the agent is responsible. Some of the most common character traits that virtue responsibilists consider as intellectual virtues are open-mindedness, intellectual tenacity and attentiveness. One of the first contemporary scholars to discuss intellectual virtues and vices as character traits is Lorraine Code. For Code, intellectual virtues are "... a matter of orientation towards the world, towards one's knowledge-seeking self and towards other such selves as part of the world" (1987, p. 20). Code argues that the primary and chief intellectual virtue "...from which other virtues radiate" is epistemic responsibility (1987, p. 44).

James Montmarquet, who is also a prominent virtue responsibilist, believes that the chief intellectual virtue is epistemic conscientiousness. Montmarquet defines epistemic conscientiousness as "...a desire to achieve the proper ends of intellectual life, especially the desire for truth and the avoidance of error" (1993, p. 21). But for Montmarquet, a desire for truth is not sufficient for an agent to be intellectually virtuous. This desire has to be regulated by three additional sets of virtues: impartiality, intellectual sobriety and intellectual courage (1993, p. 23).

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<sup>63</sup>See Sosa, 1980.

Lastly, Linda Zagzebski is a virtue reliabilist who develops a Neo-Aristotelian<sup>64</sup> theory of intellectual virtues arguing for a unified account of moral and intellectual virtues<sup>65</sup>. She argues that her theory of virtues and vices include intellectual virtues as forms of moral virtues and that a pure virtue theory can provide the foundations for both epistemic and moral evaluation (1996, p. 258).

For Zagzebski, a virtue is a “...deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and a reliable success in bringing about that end” (1996, p. 137). She identifies two main components that every intellectual virtue has: a motivational and a success component. She argues that an intellectually virtuous agent is motivated by and is reliably successful at achieving certain intellectual ends (1996, p. 270).

Overall, although my categorization of modern virtue epistemologists into virtue responsibilists and virtue reliabilists is very simplistic (not capturing the dynamic of the discussion of intellectual virtues), it is still sufficient for the purposes of this study. I will show at a later point (section 3.4), that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of value for scholars working in contemporary virtue epistemology irrespectively of whether they have a reliabilist or a responsibilist understanding of intellectual virtues.

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<sup>64</sup>Other virtue epistemologists have also drawn inspiration from Aristotle – see for example, Greco, 2002, p. 311 and Sosa, 2009, p. 187.

<sup>65</sup>“I argue that intellectual virtues are forms of moral virtue and that the many logical and causal connections among the moral and intellectual virtues make it important for a virtue theory to be broad enough in scope to account for the entire range of intellectual and moral virtues in a single theory” (Zagzebski, 1996, p.78).

## 1.4 THE CRITERIA THAN AGENT MUST MEET IN ORDER TO BE INTELLECTUALLY VIRTUOUS

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In this section of my thesis, I proceed to identify and present some of the most important conditions that an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous. The conditions I will discuss come from the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian understandings of the term of intellectual virtues. I believe that this list of conditions is a good starting point for my thesis since a potential Platonic conception of intellectual virtues would be rather close to the Aristotelian. What I will be looking for in Plato's dialogues is textual evidence of theories and/or terms that come close to the conditions I identify in this section.

First of all, one important feature of intellectual virtues is that they are enduring acquired traits (or dispositions) of the mind (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 137). As Aristotle puts it, they are states by which the soul comes to possess truth (*EN*, 1139 b14-b16). They are not a tendency to act in accordance to a specific set of formal rules. This is related to the idea that there can be no complete set of rules that gives a conclusive answer to the question of what an agent should do in order to acquire the objects of her rational desires. For example, no set of rules can successfully tell us when to place our (intellectual) trust in another agent (e.g. believe her testimony). Since virtue epistemology, and especially the Neo Aristotelian conception of intellectual virtues, is modeled after virtue ethics, the inability of a specific set of rules to reliably lead the agent reach the rational ends she desires, relates to one of the basic arguments of virtue ethics: that no specific set of rules can successfully lead the moral agent do what is morally good<sup>66</sup>. This is one of the reasons why Zagzebski argues that "Virtue-based epistemology is preferable to a belief-based epistemology for some of the same reasons that a virtue-based moral theory is preferable to an act-based moral theory" (1996, p. XV).

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<sup>66</sup>See for example McDowell (1979, pp. 347-348): "It is sometimes complained that Aristotle does not attempt to outline a decision procedure for questions about how to behave. But we have good reason to be suspicious of the assumption that there must be something to be found along the routes he does not follow". Similarly, Broadie (1991, p. 102) argues that "no kind of natural response neutrally described is either right or wrong in itself. This always depends on the particulars".

Secondly, intellectual virtues have a motivational component; they involve motivations. Zagzebski argues for the importance of motivation propelling the development of intellectual virtues. She argues that “an act of intellectual virtue A is an act that arises from the motivational component of A” (1996, p. 270). For her, having a motivation for knowledge is a necessary condition for the agent’s development of intellectual virtues (p. 267). Zagzebski<sup>67</sup> argues that the motivational component Aristotle identifies in moral virtues (EN, 1139a30-32) is also a component of intellectual virtues. According to Greco and Turri (2011), Zagzebski proposes that:

“Just as all moral virtues can be understood in terms of a general motivation for the good, all intellectual virtues may be understood in terms of a general motivation for knowledge and other kinds of high-quality cognitive contact with reality. Individual intellectual virtues can then be specified in terms of more specific motivations that are related to the general motivation for knowledge. For example, open-mindedness is the virtue according to which a person is motivated to be receptive to new ideas, and is reliably successful at achieving the end of this motivation. Intellectual courage is the virtue according to which a person is motivated to be persevering in her own ideas, and is reliably successful at doing this” (section 5.6).

Another important condition that an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous is that they must be reliably successful at reaching the object of their rational desires. Reliability entails that an intellectually virtuous agents will reach in the vast majority of cases the object of her desires. For example, as I have already noted, Aristotle argues that intellectual virtues are the state by which the soul acquires truth (NE, 1139 b14-b16). It is thus through the development of intellectual virtues that, according to Aristotle, agents are able to reach the truth. Zagzebski also argue for the importance of the reliability of intellectual virtues in leading the agent to the objects of her rational desires. She argues that “An act of intellectual virtue A is an act that arises from the motivational component of A, is something a person with virtue A would (probably) do in the circumstances, is successful in achieving the end of the A motivation...” (1996, p. 270).

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<sup>67</sup>Zagzebski is not the only scholar to have argued that intellectual virtues have a motivational component. Indicatively, see Baehr (2016b, p.87) and Roberts and Woods (2007, p. 307).

Furthermore, yet another important condition for intellectual virtues is that the characteristic activities of each intellectual virtue are activities that one can become better at performing. These intellectual activities are analogous to the activities performed by an athlete who through training becomes better at performing them. For example, an archer needs to train a lot before she is reliably successful at hitting the center of the target and through repeated practice and experience she becomes a better archer. This condition is also related to the idea that intellectual virtues are acquired traits developed gradually through time. One is not born possessing intellectual virtues or intellectual vices: “Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them and are made perfect by habit” (*EN*, II, 1103A19-25). One must develop intellectual virtues through practice and experience. According to Aristotle, for example, scientific knowledge “...proceeds sometimes through induction and sometimes by deduction” (*EN*, 1139 b27-28). The intellectual activities related to intellectual virtues, such as induction and deduction in the case of Aristotle’s conception of scientific knowledge, are gradually developed through practice and experience. One is not born with the ability to use induction and deduction successfully, but one acquires these intellectual abilities and slowly becomes better at them through practice. The fact that the activities related to intellectual virtues are something that one can become better at is a major reason why scholars working in virtue epistemology see education as a very important part of an individual’s life. For virtue epistemologist, education plays also a key role in fostering motivations that help students develop both moral and intellectual virtues.

Lastly, another significant characteristic of the Aristotelian and a Neo-Aristotelian conception of intellectual virtues is that they aim always at what is valuable. This is quite an important condition for intellectual virtues. Aiming at what is valuable is part of the definition of intellectual virtues. They are excellences of the mind because they help us acquire goods, such as knowledge and wisdom, which are a necessary ingredient for the best life (still, this is not by any means the end of this discussion – one could challenge the final value of knowledge– see section 3.1). For example, Zagzebski argues that intellectual virtues aim at knowledge which “puts the knower in a cognitive contact with reality or connects her cognitively to the truth, and it does so in a manner that could be called good, desirable or important” (1996, p. 267). For her the ultimate goal of intellectual virtues is knowledge (p. 270).



To sum up, intellectual virtues, according to the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian conceptions, are acquired enduring excellences of the mind through which we come to acquire rational goods such as wisdom, truth and knowledge. Such intellectual excellences arise from the agents' motivation to acquire rational goods. Moreover, one can become better at the activities characteristic of such excellences in the same manner that one can become better at archery through practice. Furthermore, intellectual excellences also have a success component according to which intellectually virtuous agents are reliably successful at reaching the object of their rational desires. Lastly, intellectual virtues always aim at what is finally valuable. I have noted that this last condition requires further clarification and towards that end, I will discuss it again in section 3.1 where I argue that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue. I would also like to point out that the significance of all these conditions for intellectual virtues will become clearer the more I proceed with my discussion in the chapters that follow. In addition, the list I have drawn up in this section is by no means supposed to be exhaustive of all the conditions<sup>68</sup> that an agent must meet in order to be intellectually virtuous; it is just a crude shortlist of some of the things that I ought to be looking for in Plato's dialogues. This list will prove quite useful in the chapter that follows.

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<sup>68</sup>For example, Baehr (2016b, p. 89-91) argues that intellectual virtues also include an affective component which is closely connected to the motivational component but distinct. I have decided not to include this component in my list for two reasons. First of all, I am not entirely convinced that the affective component of intellectual virtues is distinct from the motivational component. Nevertheless, even if I am wrong, Plato's conception of philosophy and philosophers – as I am going to show – entail that the two features (i.e. motivation and affection) necessarily go together. Plato does not have a conception of a person who pursues rational goods for reasons other than out of her affections for such goods.

## CHAPTER 2: THE PLATONIC CONCEPTION OF INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

### Outline

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Now that I have presented the conditions that an agent must satisfy in order to be intellectually virtuous (according to the Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian understandings of virtue), I will proceed with the primary aim of this thesis which is to show that there are strong indications in Plato's philosophical corpus showing that he had a conception of intellectual virtues. It is important at this point to stress out that Plato did not provide a definition of the term intellectual virtues. It would also be rather futile if one were to search for the explicit use of the term "intellectual virtues" in Platonic dialogues. However, my aim is **not** to show that Plato was the first philosopher to **fully** develop the concept of intellectual virtues. Rather my aim is to show that he was the first to conceive and to have started developing this concept. Once this has been established, it becomes evident that Aristotle was not the first philosopher to develop the concept of intellectual virtues. Aristotle was building on Plato's understanding of intellectual excellences. Still, as I have mentioned before, Aristotle developed a much fuller (in detail and argument) account of both, the concept of 'virtue' and the concept of 'intellect', metaphysically, epistemologically and psychologically.

In the first section of this chapter (section 2.1), I present Plato's tripartite division of the soul and the desires corresponding to each part (as described in the *Republic*). I then move on (section 2.2) to present and discuss the contemporary debate on Plato's method for tripartition. Having laid out and discussed the necessary background information, I move on (section 2.3) to argue that the desires corresponding to the rational part of the soul (i.e. rational desires) satisfy the motivational component of intellectual virtues. At this point, I discuss various passages from the *Republic*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* in which Plato highlights the importance of rational desires for the intellectual success of the agent. In the last section of this chapter (section 2.4), I proceed to argue that Plato's dialectic is both a virtue developer and the only reliable method philosophers have at their disposal for reaching the objects of their rational desires. I conclude that both building blocks of the conception of intellectual virtues - the motivational and the success component - can be found in the Plato's dialogues.

## 2.1 THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION OF THE SOUL

The three parts and the objects of their desires

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It is very important for the purposes of this thesis to briefly present and discuss the way Plato deduces, in the *Republic*, the three different parts of the human soul from their corresponding desires. This is because I will later argue (section 2.3) that the desires attributed by Plato to the rational part of the soul (i.e. rational desires) is the strongest indication that Plato had conceived and had started developing the concept of intellectual virtues. Moreover, the relationship of the three parts of the soul (i.e. whether they are in harmony or not) is of great importance for understanding the Platonic educational program (which aims at strengthening the rational part of the soul in order to make it the leader of the human soul) as well as Plato's understanding of the concept of virtue and human psychology.

Plato does not take it for granted that there are three parts of the soul. On the contrary, he deduces the three parts from their corresponding desires. Plato firstly discusses the conflict of rational and appetitive desires. He gives the example of a thirsty man. If a man desires to have a drink, part of him (i.e. the appetitive part) does not care if the drink in front of him is good or bad, he simply desires to drink it. Still, there is also a part in the man (i.e. the rational part) that may be urging him against such an action because, for example, the drink is a bad one (e.g. poisonous) or the person has had already too many. According to Plato, this conflict of desires shows that there are (at least) two parts in the human soul – the rational (*to logistikon*) and the appetitive part (*to epithumetikon*):

“Now, can we say that men are sometimes unwilling to drink even though they are thirsty?” ‘Oh yes; that is often true of many people’ he said. ‘Then how are we to describe such cases?’ I asked. ‘Must we not say that there is one element in their minds which bids them drink, and a second which prevents them and masters the first? And isn't the element of prevention, when present, due to our reason, while the urges and impulses are due to our feelings and unhealthy cravings?’ ‘It looks like it.’ ‘Then we shan't be without justification if we recognized these two elements as distinct. We call the reflective element in the

mind the reason, and the element with which is feels hunger and thirst, and the agitations of sex and other desires, the element of irrational appetite- an element closely connected with satisfaction and pleasure” (*Rep.*, IV, 439c-d).

After deducing from conflicting desires that the human soul has a rational and a appetitive part, Plato goes on to deduce a third part in the soul: the spirited (*to thumoeides*). According to Plato, there are certain kinds of desire that do not correspond to either the rational or the appetitive parts of the soul and must therefore belong to a third part:

“There must be a third element’ ‘Yes there must,’ I said, ‘if spirit can be shown to be distinct from reason, as it is from appetite.’ ‘But that’s not difficult to prove,’ he answered. ‘You can see it in children, who are full of spirit as soon as they’re born; but some never seem to acquire any degree of reason and most of them only at a later stage’ (441a3-10).

According to Plato, the spirited part of the soul is the natural ally of the rational part, and also naturally opposes the appetitive part. Still, if not properly trained, the spirited part of the soul can be corrupted by the appetitive part and turn against the rational part:

“The state was made up of three classes, businessmen, auxiliaries and governors; is the mind like it in having spirit as a third element, which, unless corrupted by bad upbringing, is reason’s natural auxiliary?” (441a1-3).

In order to explain how different parts can constitute a single organism Plato discusses the mythical examples of the Chimaera, Scylla and Cerberus in which different parts co-exist. According to Plato, the human soul should be understood as a single organism that is made up of three different parts: the appetitive part which is portrayed as a large many-headed beast, the spirited part which is portrayed as a lion and the rational part which is portrayed as a man. According to Plato, this organism may have the appearance of a man but it is actually a composite organism (IX, 588c-d<sup>69</sup>). The

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<sup>69</sup>“Let us construct a model of the human personality...like one of those composite beasts in the old myths, Chimaera and Scylla and Cerberus and all the rest, which combine more than one kind of creature in one.’ ‘I know the stories.’ ‘Imagine a very complicated, many-headed sort of beast, with heads of wild and tame animals all round it, which can produce and change at will.’ ‘Quite a feat of modelling,’ he replied ‘but fortunately it’s easier to imagine that it would be to make’ ‘Add two other sorts of creature, one lion, the other a man. And let the many-headed creature be by far the largest, and the lion the next largest.’ ‘That’s rather easier to imagine.’ ‘Then put the three together and combine them into a single creature’ ‘Done’ ‘Then give the whole the external appearance of one of the three, the man, so that to eyes unable to see anything beneath the outer shell it looks like a single creature, a man”.

question of which part of the soul will lead the soul depends on factors such as education and upbringing. Unless assisted by the lion, the man will not be able to overcome on his own the large many-headed beast; the man is after all portrayed as the smallest part of the soul. If that is the case, and the lion does not help the man, then the soul will be led by the large many-headed beast (i.e. the appetitive part of the soul) and that will have catastrophic consequences for the individual. In order for the man (i.e. rational part) to lead the soul the lion needs to assist him, and the part which constitutes the man should grow and flourish through the right training and education (588e- 589b<sup>70</sup>).

### **The Desires of the Three Parts**

Not only is the soul made up of three different parts, but more crucially, as we have already seen from the method Plato used in order to deduce them, these different parts have different kinds of desires:

“Each of the three elements has its own particular pleasures, and similarly its own desires and its own governing principles” (*Rep.*, IX, 580d5-7).

The appetitive part has appetitive desires, the spirited part has spirited desires and the rational part has rational desires. By appetitive desires, Plato has in mind desires of bodily nature such as the desire to eat, drink, and sexual desires. He also considers the desire for money and the acquisition of physical goods as a desire of the appetitive part of the soul<sup>71</sup>:

“The third shows itself in too many forms for us to be able to describe it in a single word. We accordingly called it after its most salient characteristics, “desire”, because of the violence of the desires for food and drink and sex and the like, or “acquisitiveness”, because wealth is the means for satisfying desires

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<sup>70</sup>“...give the many-headed beast a good time, and to strengthen it and the lion and all its qualities, while starving the man till he becomes so weak that the other two can do what they like with him...On the other hand, to say that it pays to be just is to that we ought to say and do all we can to strengthen the man within us, so that he can look after the many-headed beast like a farmer, nursing and cultivating its tamer elements and preventing the wilder ones growing, while he makes an ally of the lion and looks after the common interests of all by reconciling them with each other and with himself.”

<sup>71</sup>The fact that Plato considers the desire for acquisition and money as an appetitive desire is also evident earlier on in *the Republic* where, in his discussion of timocracy, Plato notes that “Once internal strife has started, the two elements pull in different directions: the iron and bronze towards profit and property in land and houses...” (VIII, 544b1-5).

of this kind...Now if we want, for purposes of clarity to settle on a single heading under which to refer to this third element in mind, would it not be best to say that its pleasures and affections were centered in gain? So we could correctly describe it by saying that its motive was love of profit or gain” (580e-581a10).

According to Plato, the spirited part of the soul desires honor and reputation:

“Similarly the element of spirit is entirely devoted to the achievement of success and reputation.’ ‘Certainly’ ‘Could we therefore appropriately say that its motives are ambition and love of honor?’ ‘Very appropriately” (581a10-15).

While the rational part desires knowledge, truth and wisdom:

“And of course it is obvious that the element of understanding is solely directed to the discovery of the truth, and is least concerned with wealth of reputation.’ ‘That’s absolutely clear’ ‘And so we may say that the corresponding motives here are love of knowledge and wisdom’ ‘I agree” (581b).

However, this is not the end of Plato’s classification of human desires. Desires are also further classified as either necessary or unnecessary ones. Plato makes this distinction in his description of the democratic character:

“Then do you think that, if we are to avoid arguing in the dark, we had better define the difference between necessary and unnecessary desires? Desires we can’t avoid, or whose satisfaction benefits us, can fairly be called necessary, I think. We are bound by our very nature to want to satisfy both, are we not? But we can call ‘unnecessary’ all desires which we can be got rid of with practice, if we start young, and whose presence either does us no good or positive harm” (VIII, 558d10-559a).

Therefore, each of the three kinds of desires, which have been associated with each part of the soul, can be divided further into necessary and unnecessary ones. We, therefore, have: (i)necessary appetitive desires, (ii)unnecessary appetitive desires, (iii)necessary spirited desires, (iv)unnecessary spirited desires, (v) necessary rational desires and (vi) unnecessary rational desires.

Following Reeves’ (1988) analysis of the classification of desires in the *Republic*, this is not the end of Plato’s classification of human desires. For an appetitive desire to be necessary it does not have to be the case that it is both (a) a desire that we can’t avoid

because it is indispensable to life and (b) a desire whose satisfaction will benefit us. It can simply be the case that it is only (b) a desire whose satisfaction will benefit us:

“Would you say that the desire to eat enough for health and fitness, and the desire for bread and meat requisite for the purpose was necessary? – Yes I think so – And the desire for bread is necessary on both counts, because it benefits us and because it is indispensable to life... and the desire for meat so far as it conduces to fitness” (559b1-10).

The above passage from the *Republic* shows that necessary appetitive desires can either be necessary both because they are indispensable to life and because their satisfaction will benefit us - a desire for bread - or only because their satisfaction will benefit us (without being a desire essential for life) – a desire for meat.

Still, the appetitive desires that are not necessary for the individual can be further classified into lawless or ‘not-lawless’ ones. Lawless desires are desires that violate even the most sacred of things leading the individual to commit acts such as homicide or cannibalism:

“I think that some of the unnecessary pleasures and desires are lawless and violent. Perhaps we are all born with them, but they are disciplined by law and by a combination of reason and the better desires till in some people they are got rid of altogether, or rendered few and feeble, though in some they retain their numbers and strength... The sort that wake while we sleep, when the reasonable and humane part of us is asleep and its control relaxed, and our fierce bestial nature, full of food and drink, rouses itself and has its fling and tries to secure its own satisfaction. As you know, there’s nothing too bad for it and it’s completely lost to all senses and shame. It doesn’t shrink from attempting intercourse with a mother or anyone else, man, beast or god, or from murder or from eating forbidden food. There is, in fact, no folly nor shameless it will not commit” (IX, 571c-d).

Through the different arguments made in the *Republic*, the classification of desires we end up with amounts to the following eight (Reeves, 1988): 1. Unnecessary lawless appetitive desires, 2. Unnecessary ‘not-lawless’ appetitive desires, 3. Necessary appetitive desires which we cannot avoid and whose satisfaction will benefit us, 4. Necessary appetitive desires which are not essential for life but whose satisfaction will benefit us, 5. Necessary spirited desires, 6. Unnecessary spirited desires, 7. Necessary rational desires, 8. Unnecessary rational desires.

Still, the eighth group is an empty one. There are no unnecessary rational desires: there are no rational desires whose satisfaction either does us no good or positive harm. The satisfaction of rational desires benefits us necessarily. Reaching to an understanding of the Form of the Good is by definition beneficial for the agent.

### **The Three Different Pursuits of Men**

As we have seen, the three parts of the soul are fighting for which part will lead the soul<sup>72</sup>. According to Plato, depending on the part that gets to rule the soul, the individual will be led to pursue the leading part's corresponding desires. In Book VI of the *Republic*, he makes this explicit when he discussed the hydraulic image of a person's desires:

“But we know that if a man's desires set strongly in one direction, they are correspondingly less strong in other directions, like a stream whose water has been diverted into another channel...So when the current of a man's desire flow towards the acquisition of knowledge and similar activities, his pleasure will be in things purely of the mind, and physical pleasures will pass him by – that is if he is a genuine philosopher (i.e. lover of wisdom) and not a sham” (485d).

Furthermore, Plato, in Book IX, classifies men into three distinct types depending on which part of the soul leads their souls (580d-583a). Some men, according to Plato, desire and find pleasure in wisdom (*philosophers*), some men desire and find pleasure in honour (*honour-loving*) and some men desire and find pleasure in profit (*money-loving*). For Plato, however, we should trust the judgement of philosophers because they are wise and thus the most qualified to answer which life is the most pleasant (583a).

After all, it is also evident in Plato's discussion of the five political regimes and their corresponding individuals in book VIII and IX of the *Republic*, that timocracy (honour),

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<sup>72</sup>“In Books II-IV of the *Republic*, these elements – later vividly personified as tiny images of human, lion and beast all struggling for dominance (588-589) – are portrayed as ideally organized in a hierarchy in which reason, with spirited indignation as its ally, governs appetite.” (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. xxiv)



oligarchy (money), democracy (freedom) and tyranny (which arise out of freedom and ends in slavery) are less than virtuous city-states brought about by the society's pursue of unnecessary desires (See section 5.2). It is the individual who does not pursue unnecessary desires that corresponds to the virtuous state of aristocracy (The term aristocracy should not be confused with the modern negative connotations that it has acquired nowadays. Aristocracy in ancient Greek is translated as the state of the *ἀριστοί*: the excellent). This is yet another reason why Plato, throughout the *Republic*, is so preoccupied with the right education that will bring about harmonious souls in the students.

To sum up, Plato deduces the three parts of the soul from their corresponding desires that are often in conflict with that of the other two parts (in the case of the spirited part whether its desires conflict with the rational desires or the appetitive desires depends on the upbringing and education of the agent). According to Plato, the rational part of the soul desires wisdom, knowledge and truth; the spirited part desires honor and reputation and the appetitive part desires wealth and all kinds of bodily pleasures. For Plato, the part of the soul that will lead the individual's soul is of paramount importance. The part best suited for this role– the rational – must not be enslaved by the worst – the spirited – because this will result in disastrous, for the individual, consequences<sup>73</sup>. The rational part must rule the soul.

According to Plato, the harmonious coexistence of the three parts of the soul is a prerequisite for an agent to be morally and intellectually virtuous and in order to live a life without internal strife. Only those who are led by the rational part of their soul can be successful in epistemic matters - reaching to an understanding of the forms - and in moral matters - doing what is morally right.

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<sup>73</sup>“Can it possibly pay anyone to make money by doing wrong, if the result of his so doing is to enslave the best part of himself to the worst (i.e. the rational to the appetitive)? No one would say it paid to sell his son or daughter as a slave to harsh and wicked masters, however high the price; if one ruthlessly enslaves the divinest part of oneself to the most godless and abominable, is it not a miserable piece of bribery, with results far more fatal than Eriphyle's tale of her husband's life for a necklace?” (IX, 589e-d).

### ***Republic*, Book I: A Discussion of Desires**

The discussion on the importance of appetitive and rational desires starts quite early on in the *Republic*. In book I, in a speech that Socrates agrees with, Cephalus draws the contrast between appetitive and rational desires. In this early section of the *Republic*, appetitive desires are depicted as a frenzied master from which one has to escape:

“I was once present when someone was asking the poet Sophocles about sex, and whether he was still able to make love to a woman; to which he replied, ‘Don’t talk about that I am glad to have left it behind me and escaped from a fierce and frenzied master.’ A good reply I thought then, and still do. For in old age you become quite free of feelings from this sort and they leave you in peace; and when your (appetitive) desires lose their intensity and relax, you get what Sophocles was talking about, a release from a lot of made masters...’ (Socrates)I was delighted by what he said...” (329c-d5).

Cephalus had already explicitly stated that the desire for rational activities, such as the desire to have a conversation and the pleasure one gets from it, grows stronger as one gets older while one’s enjoyment of appetitive desires, such as sex and food, are blunted (328d1-5). This is of course something that Plato himself believed and this is why he thought that philosophers should reach a specific age (they should be at least 30) before they are allowed to study the dialectic (see for example VII, 539b – also see section 5.1 for a more detailed discussion of this point). It would be at least inconsistent of Socrates not to agree with Cephalus when he later on expresses the exact same opinion (i.e. Socrates talks of the importance of character and education for the control unnecessary appetitive desires, the importance of age for controlling one’s appetitive desires, that appetitive desires are not responsive to reason, etc.).

Still, a question that arises from the above quote is the following: Is old age the only way that one can escape from these “frenzied masters”? Are those who are not of old age unable to escape their unnecessary appetitive desires? As I am going to discuss later on, age does play a significant role, but the strongest safeguard against such desires is the right upbringing and education (see for example sections 4.2 to 4.4). Even in this early stage of the *Republic*, Cephalus talks of the importance of character (which one could argue also points to the importance of education for developing a good one):

“In all this, and in the lack of respect their families show them, there is only one thing to blame; and that is not their old, Socrates, but their character. For if men are sensible and good-tempered, old age is easy enough to bear; if not, you as well as age is a burden” (329d).

Overall, it is important to note that there is a discussion of rational and appetitive desires in book I of the *Republic* which, even at this early stage, points to the importance of character education. This becomes much more significant when one considers that book I is (most probably) an early dialogue written quite some time before the other nine books. This shows that Plato had conceived of the distinction between appetitive and rational desires early in his philosophical work.

## 2.2 THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE ON THE PLATONIC METHOD OF TRIPARTITION

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Recently, there has been a debate amongst scholars on whether Plato's theory of the tripartition of the soul is problematic or not. Scholars seem to agree that Plato's method of identifying the three parts of the soul is not exhaustive. For example, Murphy argues that "The method Plato has chosen for distinguishing the various components of the soul could not be exhaustive, since it depends on discovering seriatim cases of opposition between conflicting motives" (1951, p. 29).

If his method for distinguishing parts in the soul is not exhaustive, why did Plato only identify three parts? What is worse, Plato's method seems to produce an infinite number of soul parts. Consider the following example: What if someone has a desire to eat tomatoes but at the same time does not like their texture? Do these two conflicting desires show there are more than three parts of the soul? (i.e. a tomato-loving one and a tomato-hating one?) What if one likes running but also hates sweating? Do these two conflicting desires also show there are more parts of the soul (a part which loves to run and a part which hates to run because of the sweat)? One can go on and end up with an infinite number of soul parts.

Murphy has tried to justify and explain Plato's reasons for stopping at three parts: "There are reasons for this limitation of interest to three factors only in the soul, and Plato does not pretend that he divided it exhaustively. He is looking, as he tells us (435e) for just those factors in the soul that will explain the three kinds of character (*τρία γένη φύσεων*) which enable different men to fill successfully the three vocations necessary for the efficient working of the state; his method discovers what is wanted for that purpose and he stops using it at that point" (1951, pp. 29-30). However, although I agree with Murphy's argument, it does not seem to solve the problematic nature of the method employed by Plato. Using such a method one still ends up with infinite parts of the soul. Why would Plato use a method that has obvious logical problems?

Christopher Shields has argued for a different conception of the Platonic soul that seems to solve the problem of infinite regression. According to Shields, “It is not easy, for anything composed of many parts and not put together in the very finest way to be immortal - yet this is how the soul appears to us (611 b4-6)” (2010, p. 147). Shield argues that Plato’s belief in the immortality of the soul comes in conflict with the tripartition of the soul: “If we suppose, as Plato has been inclined to suppose in the *Phaedo* (esp. 78 c1-4, 80 b2) that everything composite eventually resolves into its parts or more modestly that everything composite is at least liable to resolve into its parts then if the soul has parts it will eventually go out of existence” (p. 148). Immortality, then according to Shields, is incompatible with tripartition. He points out, that in light of Book X of the *Republic*, arguing that Plato may have held that a suitable unified composite soul might be immortal is not an adequate option (p. 149). Instead, Shields argues, that for Plato, the parts of the soul are not composite but aspectual: “...the parts of the soul introduced in Republic IV are not in any sense compositional parts. They are, rather, mere aspectual parts. For all that the argument for psychic division implies, then, the soul has parts in precisely the sense in which a point has parts...rather, we appreciate that points, like Platonic souls, are meredogical simple” (p. 167). This is because according to Shields, the argument used by Plato in Book IV does not establish essential divisions within the soul (p. 160).

David Sedley, on the other hand, has provided a somewhat different solution to this contemporary debate (2013, pp. 70-89). According to Sedley, Books V to VII of the *Republic* seem to digress from the model of the tripartite soul discussed in Book IV and come closer to Socratic intellectualism. His viewpoint is that Books V to VII of the *Republic*, and especially the section following Socrates’ cave allegory, show that “what morally wrecks a talented soul is simply the way it directs its intellectual gaze. No room is left here for the power of the two lower parts to drag the rational part down” (Sedley, 2013, p. 81). This digression in the *Republic*, according to Sedley, shows that Plato never meant to abandon Socratic intellectualism<sup>74</sup>: “Plato really does not believe that

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<sup>74</sup>For a discussion of Socratic Intellectualism and how according to this theory people always desire what is good for them see for example *Meno* 76 d-e: “(Meno) Well, in some cases, people think the bad things are doing them good, but in other cases, they know they’re doing them harm. (Socrates) And, in your view, do the people who think bad things are doing them good realize the bad things are bad? (Meno) No, I certainly wouldn’t say that”.

the tripartite analysis is an advance over his inherited Socratic psychology, at least to the extent that it is rooted in human nature and provides the best possible account of the incarnate human soul. However, tripartite psychology is of no particular help for understanding the moral and intellectual mindset that lifts the philosopher to a higher and more godlike plane..." (pp. 86-87). This is because, according to Sedley, the philosopher is not identified by his control of irrational and semi-rational drives but by his understanding of the Forms which makes the spirited and appetitive desires ‘...fade into the background, lose their relevance and have no more than a bare minimum of motivational purchase" (p. 87).

It should be noted that Sedley’s proposed solution to the debate is quite similar to the position Taylor put forward approximately one hundred years ago: “Hence it must follow that, as a description of the moral life of the philosopher, the doctrine of the distinct ‘parts’ of the soul becomes increasingly impossible as he makes progress towards the goal at which his activity is consciously directed” (1926, p. 282).

Overall, I agree with those authors arguing that Plato is aware that the method he uses to deduce the three parts of the soul is problematic. Plato never abandons his belief that the soul is immortal which seems to contradict the compositional structure of the soul. It also seems that Plato has not rejected Socratic intellectualism, despite its weakness to account for the akratic individual<sup>75</sup>, and uses tripartition only as a means to identify the four cardinal virtues in the human soul. Plato is torn between Socratic intellectualism and the tripartition of the soul theory.

Socratic intellectualism implies that there is a unity of virtue since knowledge is sufficient for virtue. In the tripartite division of the soul this is not the case: e.g. when I want a drink I do not want a good drink, I just have a desire for a drink. Therefore, non-rational desires are blind. However, in a sense, despite being torn between the two

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(Socrates) Well clearly these people don’t want bad things (the people who don’t realize that they’re bad). They want things that they thought, were good- it’s just that those things are, in fact, bad. That’s to say, if they don’t realize these things are bad, and think they’re good, then it’s clear that what they actually want is what’s good. Don’t you see?”

<sup>75</sup>According to Socratic intellectualism one will do what is right the moment they truly understand what is right. No room is left for an agent to know what is right and decide to do the opposite as a result of a weakness of the will. For example, according to Socratic intellectualism a thief will stop stealing he understands that what he is doing is wrong.

theories, Plato always believes in Socratic intellectualism. Ethics is the work of the rational part and all other parts contribute to ethics by obeying the rational part. This intellectualizes morality for Plato.

Nevertheless, the most important point I want to make regarding this recent debate is that whether Plato believed in aspectual or compositional parts of the soul does not affect the arguments I will be making<sup>76</sup>. This ongoing debate does not affect my demonstration in indications of the conceptualization of intellectual virtues by Plato. For example, rational desires, which as I am going to show are a very important indication of intellectual virtues in Plato's work, can very well be part of either an aspectual or a compositional soul. Whatever the outcome of the contemporary debate on Plato's method for tripartition, it does not affect the strong indications of intellectual virtues that can be found throughout Plato's middle dialogues.

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<sup>76</sup>See Hackforth (1952, p. 75) for a brief description of the various arguments Plato makes in different dialogues about the human soul: "The bare bones of the problem may be briefly set out: in the *Phaedo* we find simplicity of the soul and its restriction to nous; in *Rep. IV* tripartition, though with some expression of doubt (435d); in *Rep. X* a suggestion (tentatively enough expressed) that the soul in its "true nature" may be incomposite (611d-612a); here in the *Phaedrus* tripartition of the human soul, before and after its incarnation and composite souls of gods; in the *Timaeus* (69 cf.) tripartition again of the human soul, with local habitats for the three parts and restriction of immortality to reason, but again some expression of doubt (72d); in *Laws X* attribution to the world-soul (and by inference to the individual soul in its "true nature") of much besides reason, viz. "wish, reflection, forethought, counsel, opinion true and false, joy, grief, confidence, fear, hate, love and all the motions akin to these".

## 2.3 RATIONAL DESIRES IN MIDDLE PLATONIC DIALOGUES

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Rational desires are the strongest indication of the presence of the concept of intellectual virtues in Plato's philosophical corpus. Rational desires are constitutive of intellectual virtues: desires are dispositional; rational desires are dispositions to pursue rational goods. Intellectual virtues are such dispositions. In order to reach the object of rational desires one must excel intellectually; that means that one must develop intellectual virtues.

For Aristotle, the correct and appropriate course of action or feeling in any given situation is determined by the reason by which a man of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) would determine it (*EN*, 1107a2-a3). Therefore, in order for someone to be (morally) virtuous she needs to possess the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*. For Plato, in order for someone to be truly virtuous she must have reached an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good; and in order to acquire such understanding she must have developed first - through the right education - a desire for rational goods. Therefore, in the same manner that for Aristotle *phronesis* is a prerequisite for morally virtuous activity, so are rational desires, for Plato, a necessary condition for the development of the truly virtuous agent.

The rational desires, which Plato discusses in many sections of his dialogues, resemble the motivational component of intellectual virtues discussed by Neo-Aristotelian scholars. Zagzebski, for example, argues that "An act is an act of intellectual virtue I just in case it arises from the motivational component of I, is something a person with I would characteristically do in the circumstances, and is successful in leading to the immediate end of I and to the truth because of these features of the act." (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 175). For Zagzebski, all intellectual virtues arise out of the agent's motivation for rational goods such as knowledge (p. 269).

I want to show in this section that, for Plato, it is this rational desire for rational goods that motivates and leads the agent to develop intellectual virtues. According to Plato, if



an agent lacks rational desires, then they cannot excel intellectually. Consider for example, an agent who has no rational desires and all they do is pursue ways to satisfy their unnecessary appetitive desires. Such an agent cannot be intellectually virtuous; such an agent is not motivated to excel intellectually. On the other hand, consider an agent who has rational desires and has dedicated her life in trying to reach an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good. Such an agent is motivated to excel intellectually. Contrast, in other words, the lives of the philosopher-king and the tyrannical individual (IX, 571a-576b)<sup>77</sup>. However, one should keep in mind that this motivation, as I will show in the next section, although necessary, is not sufficient for an agent to be intellectually virtuous. For example, an agent may be motivated in her pursuit of rational goods but never manage to reach the philosophical truths she is after.

There are numerous sections discussing the importance of rational desires in Plato's work. Evidence of rational desires which motivate the agent to develop intellectual virtues in order to reach the objects of her rational desires, can be found amongst other Platonic dialogues, in several passages of the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus* and in Plato's use of the words philosophy and philosopher. These are by no means the only passages and dialogues one can find a discussion of rational desires but I believe that these dialogues/textual evidence will suffice for me to show that such desires are a major indication of Plato's conception of intellectual virtues. Still, before discussing such evidence, I want briefly to give an idea of what Plato considered the true objects of rational desires.

### 2.3.1 The Objects of Rational Desires

As I have already pointed out, what motivates agents to develop intellectual virtues is their desire for rational goods. For both Plato and contemporary virtue epistemologists what motivates agents to excel intellectually is their motivation to acquire rational goods such as knowledge, wisdom and truth. However, one important difference between the contemporary and Platonic understanding of the objects of rational desires is that Plato thought that rational desires ultimately aim at the Forms. According to

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<sup>77</sup>See section 5.2 for a detailed discussion of the character traits and life of the tyrannical individual.

Plato's theory of the Forms, as presented in the *Republic*, Forms are eternal, unchanging and indivisible (V, 479a1-3). Forms are the 'absolute reality':

“We distinguish between the many particular things which we call beautiful or good, and absolute beauty and goodness. Similarly with all other collections of things, we say there is a corresponding to each set a single, unique Form which we call an “absolute reality” (VI, 507b).

Since the Forms are the 'absolute reality', it necessarily follows that the Forms are the true objects of *episteme* as well as the objects of philosophers' rational desires:

“And what about those who have eyes for eternal, unchanging things? They set their hearts on the field of episteme, while the other type set theirs on the field of opinion” (V, 479e).

As Mason (2010, p. 50) points out: “Within the *Republic*, he (Plato) is trying to show that as only forms are true objects of knowledge, it is only those who pursue knowledge of them who are rightly called lovers of knowledge, and so entitled to the name philosophers”. Plato makes this point abundantly clear in many passages of the *Republic*:

“One trait in the philosopher's character we can assume is his love of any branch of learning that reveals eternal reality, the real unaffected by the vicissitudes of change and decay...He is in love with the whole of that reality, and will not willingly be deprived even of the most insignificant fragment of it...” (485b).

Overall, the philosopher's rational desires ultimately aim at the Forms. For the rest of my thesis, I will be taking for granted whenever I speak of evidence of rational desires in Plato's dialogues that the object of such rational desires are the Forms. This is after all why the dialectic is such an important part of the philosophers' education (see sections 2.4 and chapters 4 and 5 for more on the Platonic dialectic). Through the dialectic, philosophers aim to reach an understanding of the Forms. The aim of the dialectic is for philosophers to acquire an understanding of the 'absolute reality'. I will discuss Plato's theory of the Forms in much more detail in section 3.4.

### 2.3.2 Evidence of Rational Desires in the *Republic*

Apart from Plato's discussion of the tripartite soul and the desires that correspond to each part of the soul (See sections 2.1 and 2.2), one can also quite clearly see the significance of rational desires for the development of intellectual virtues in the Platonic definition of philosophers.

One of the strongest textual evidence for the importance of rational desires for the acquisition of epistemic goods can be found in book V of the *Republic*; and more specifically in the passage where Socrates gives his definition of philosophers by explaining what he means when he calls someone a philosopher and what he expects from true philosophers (474c-487a). Socrates explicitly states a number of times in this passage that what defines philosophers, and sets them apart from the rest, is their unending love (i.e. desire) for wisdom, which includes a desire for learning, truth and knowledge: "A philosopher's passion is for wisdom of every kind without distinction..." (475b). Socrates goes on to explicitly state again that a philosopher is defined by their rational desires for rational goods; and that this desire never seizes in them: "the man who is ready to taste every branch of learning, is glad to learn and never satisfied – he's the man who deserves to be called a philosopher, isn't he?" (475c). And again, later on, Socrates argues that philosophers are "those who love to see the truth" (475e5). By 'seeing the truth' Socrates does not mean that philosophers acquire the truth through the faculty of vision, but has in mind a purely rational 'seeing' which comes close to the contemporary conception of understanding (See section 3.1 for more on this point).

According to Book V of the *Republic*, philosophers do not only desire rational goods such as knowledge, but also find true pleasure in them while disregarding all physical pleasures:

"So when the current of a man's desires flows towards the acquisition of knowledge and similar activities, his pleasure will be in things purely of the mind, and physical pleasures will pass him by – that is if he is a genuine philosopher and not a sham" (485e).

We also learn, in this book of the *Republic*, that what differentiates philosophers from sight lovers is that philosophers strive for reality (i.e. Forms) and are not satisfied until they have reached an understanding of it. I want to argue that this motivation for the acquisition of rational goods is instrumental in the philosophers' development of intellectual virtues:

“Then shall we not fairly plead in reply that our true lover of knowledge (philosopher) naturally strives for reality, and will not rest content with each set of particulars which opinion takes for reality, but soars with undimmed and unwearied passion till he grasps the nature of each thing as it is, with the mental faculty fitted to do so, that is, with the faculty which is akin to reality, and which approaches and unites with it, and begets intelligence and truth as children, and is only released from travail when it has thus attained knowledge and true life and fulfilment...” (490b).

Overall, one of the strongest indications that rational desires are the motivator behind the development of intellectual virtues can be found in Plato's use of the term philosopher and philosophy. Although it was Pythagoras who was the first to coin these terms (see for example Riedweg, 2008, p. 126), nonetheless, as it is made abundantly clear in book V of the *Republic*, Plato uses these terms with a full awareness of their roots and meaning. ‘*Φιλοσοφία*’ is a compound word deriving from the ancient Greek word ‘*φίλος*’ which means lover and ‘*σοφία*’ which means wisdom. Thus, for Plato, a philosopher is an agent driven by her rational desires for rational goods. She is a lover of wisdom who because of this love is greatly motivated in her epistemic endeavours. She finds pleasure in things of the mind; in learning and in acquiring wisdom and understanding and is completely uninterested in physical pleasures (see section 4.5 for more on this latter point).

For Plato, those who are to be the leaders of the city must be lovers of wisdom - they must be motivated by their rational desires. Those who excel in Plato's educational program and in the study of the dialectic will be the ones that are best suited to lead the city. As I will argue more extensively at a later chapter (chapter 4), Plato's education program aims at creating lovers of wisdom – philosophers – who are driven by their rational desires to acquire an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good. Rational desires for Plato come from the training to seek the rational. The educational program he describes in the *Republic* has precisely this as one of its most fundamental goal: the development of rational desires. According to Plato, one is never born

possessing fully developed rational desires. One develops rational desires through the right kind of education. The importance of rational desires for the acquisition of intellectual virtues will again be made clear in Plato's description of his educational program. I will discuss rational desires in conjunction with Plato's educational program in sections 4.2 and 4.3. I will also discuss the outcome of education when the training of desires fails in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

### 2.3.3 Evidence of Rational Desires in the *Symposium*

The *Symposium* is a middle Platonic dialogue on the topic of 'Eros' taking place during a 'drinking party' at Agathon's place in Athens. At the beginning of the dialogue, Eryximachus suggests (177a-d) in line with Phaedrus' complaint that poets have completely ignored the ancient Greek God of Love and Desire, that all participants of the party give a speech in praise of 'Eros'. Attendants such as Phaedrus, Aristophanes, Agathon and Socrates agree with Eryximachus' suggestion and enter into a "contest" of who will give the best speech. Socrates gives his speech last. He starts by scrutinizes Agathon's speech (who has given his speech right before Socrates) through his elenctic method and then moves on to recollect and present to the audience a dialogue he had in the past with a priestess called Diotima. Socrates' dialogue with Diotima starts up with an examination of the nature of erotic desires, but the discussion soon shifts to the intense rational desire for wisdom.

Through Socrates' speech with Diotima we learn that love is a desire for the good and the beautiful things that a person lacks (202d1-3); still the person who does not think he lacks something will not desire what he does not think he lacks (204a5-7). We also learn that 'Eros' must be a philosopher since he is concerned with beauty; and wisdom is actually one of the most beautiful things (204b2-4) and that the highest form of love is a desire for wisdom (211c6-8). Kraut has noted that Plato shows to us through Diotimas' speech that "a desire is a motivator; its role is to move us to do something" (2008, p. 289). Still, scholars have not made the correlation between Plato's discussions on the importance of rational desires for the epistemic success of the agent with his development of the concept of intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues arise out of the agent's motivation for rational goods (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 269).

According to Diotima, all men desire to possess the good permanently: “We can sum up by saying that love is of permanent possession of what is good’ (206a11-12) and in that sense, every person should be identified as a ‘lover’ (205a8-10). Love therefore is identified as the desire to possess the good forever “it is immortality, together with the good, that must necessarily be desired- if indeed love is of permanent possession of the good. Well, from this argument it necessarily follows that love is of immortality as well” (205a1-5). Still, being mortal, the only way for humans to achieve immortality is by leaving behind them something new in place of the old (207d3); by giving birth to something beautiful (206b7-9).

However, according to Diotima, despite the fact that all humans desire immortality, not all go about it the right way. According to Diotima, some humans seek immortality through procreation (208e5); some seek immortality through honour (208c5) while others seek immortality through wisdom and virtue (209a3). But only through the latter can one reach the real good, happiness and first rate immortality (209d1-e1).

But why are some men led astray? This is a point that connects the *Symposium* with the *Republic*: As we have seen in the *Republic*, rational desires must overcome appetitive desires with the help of the spirited part if we are to achieve what we really desire and not be lead astray (IV, 440 b.4-7). The three parts of the soul (the rational, the spirited and the appetitive) must be in harmony for an agent to excel both morally and intellectually (422d). The intense rational desire for wisdom, discussed in the *Symposium*, is what motivates men to develop intellectual virtues in order to reach the objects of their rational desires. Agents who do not have such rational desires, such as those who seek immortality through procreation (desires of the appetitive part of the soul) or agents who seek immortality through honor (desires of the spirited part of the soul) will not develop intellectual virtues.

Lastly, in the *Symposium* we see an education of desires that is very similar to the training of desires we will see in the Platonic educational program presented in the *Republic* (see chapters 4 and 5). Without such an education, men are lead astray and attempt to acquire immortality through honor or procreation. The ascent to beauty in the *Symposium* starts with the appreciation of the physical beauty of one body (211c4) and after many stages reaches the last, which is an appreciation of the Forms and

especially the Form of beauty (211c6-8). Like in the case of the educational program in the *Republic*, the ascent to beauty in the *Symposium* starts with appearances and ends up with Forms. Both the lover and the philosopher in training end up with a great discovery. Still, necessary for their success is the abandonment of the pursuit of unnecessary appetitive and spirited goods and their complete dedication on the acquisition of rational.

### 2.3.4 Evidence of Rational desires in the *Phaedrus*

*Phaedrus* is a middle Platonic dialogue in which Socrates and Phaedrus discuss primarily two topics: ‘*Eros*’ (in the first part of the dialogue) and rhetoric (in the second). I will focus here on Plato’s discussion of ‘*Eros*’ (often translated as love<sup>78</sup>). One can examine through this dialogue how the theories discussed in the *Republic*, which was written most likely after the *Symposium* and before the *Phaedrus*, has affected Plato’s views on the topic of love (Nehamas and Woodruff, 1995, p. xii). Most importantly for the purposes of this study, one can also find in Plato’s discussion of the topic of ‘*Eros*’, significant evidence for the importance of rational desires for living the best (human) life – that of the philosopher.

After listening to Phaedrus’ reproduction of Lysias’ speech on love (‘*Eros*’), Socrates goes on to give his own two speeches on the topic. In his first speech, Socrates portrays love as a kind of madness, as an irrational appetitive desire that destroys both one’s soul and body (237b-241d). However, soon after he has finished giving the first speech, Socrates realizes that ‘*Eros*’, being something divine, cannot possibly be something bad (242e). In order to make amends for his blasphemy he goes on in his second speech, often called the “Great Speech” (Nehamas and Woodruff, 1995, p. xx), to praise ‘*Eros*’ (244a-257b). At the beginning of his speech, Socrates presents the Chariot Allegory:

“With us men, in the first place, it is a pair of steeds that the charioteer controls; moreover one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has the opposite character, and his stock is opposite. Hence the task of our charioteer is difficult and troublesome” (246 b-c).

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<sup>78</sup>See for example, Nehamas and Woodruff, 1995.

The charioteer and the two horses symbolize Plato's conception of the tripartite division of the soul, which was presented and discussed extensively in the *Republic*. The charioteer represents the rational part of the soul and is the part that has rational desires. The noble horse represents the spirited part of the soul and is the natural ally of reason. The second horse, which has the opposite stock from the first, represents the appetitive part of the soul, which is not responsive to reason<sup>79</sup>.

According to the dialogue, the region above heavens<sup>80</sup> (247d) is where true being (i.e. the Forms) is apprehended by reason alone:

“What is in this place is without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to intelligence, the soul's steersman” (247c).

Gods can contemplate this vision (because both of their horses are of good stock) which is the “food” for both the souls of mortals and gods (247d)<sup>81</sup>. However, not all mortal souls are able to enter this realm: this depends upon the skills of the charioteer; it depends upon how well the rational part of the soul controls the spirited and the appetitive parts.

The mortal souls that are not nourished well, lose their wings, fall to earth, and enter bodies. According to Plato, out of all the souls that enter human bodies those who have ‘seen’ the most of the Forms will follow the life of the philosopher – they will be lovers of wisdom (248d). On the other hand, the souls that have ‘seen’ the least of the Forms will become tyrants (lead by unnecessary and lawless appetitive desires) (248e5). In between the life of the philosopher and that of the tyrant, in descending order depending on how much they have seen the Forms, are the lives of the lawful king or warlike

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<sup>79</sup>Taylor (1926) has pointed out that in the charioteer allegory we hear again that the appetitive part of the soul is not responsive to reason: “The good horse (i.e. spirit) is ‘a lover of honour together with self-control and a sense of shame, . . . needing no whip, but controlled by the word of command alone’ (253d6–e1), while the bad horse (i.e. appetite) is ‘deaf [sc. to the charioteer's commands], barely yielding to the whip and goad’ (e4–5). That is, while spirit is sensitive to reason, appetite is insensitive to it, and can only be suppressed forcibly.”

<sup>80</sup>“...of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily”

<sup>81</sup>“Now even as the mind of a god is nourished by reason and knowledge, so also is it with every soul that has care to receive her proper food; wherefore when at last she has beheld Being she is well content, and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers, until the heaven's revolution brings her back full circle”.



commander, statesman or manager, trainer or doctor, prophet or priest, poet, farmer and sophist (248d-249a).

Socrates proceeds to argue that when a philosopher sees the beauty of a boy, and is reminded of the true beauty (i.e. the Form of the beauty and the beauty of the rest of the Forms) his soul had caught a glimpse before falling to earth, he experiences a kind of madness: the madness of ‘*Eros*’ (249d). Love is portrayed again<sup>82</sup> as a kind of madness but not necessarily a bad one. If the philosopher’s rational part is able to control unnecessary desires, ‘*Eros*’ will be in its purest form (253c-256e). It will be the desire to reach an understanding of the Forms. According to Nehamas and Woodruff, this kind of ‘*Eros*’ is according to Plato the “moving force behind the best possible human life” (1995, p. xx).

To sum up, love in the *Phaedrus* is seen in its purest form as a strong desire to acquire an understanding of the Forms - a strong desire for rational goods – that leads to the best human life (that of the philosopher). In addition, the importance of the rational part of the soul leading the soul and controlling the two other parts in order to catch a glimpse of true reality (i.e. the Forms) is highlighted through the Chariot Allegory. According to Plato, one needs to have both the desire and the ability in order to ‘see’ this true reality (See section 2.4 for more on this point).

### **2.3.5 Rational Desires and the Motivational Component of Intellectual Virtues**

Plato’s rational desires satisfy one necessary and most important condition of intellectual virtues, namely that the intellectually virtuous agent is motivated by her rational desires to acquire epistemic goods. As far as I am aware, the significance of rational desires as evidence of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues has never been pointed out. In the *Republic*, Plato (through his theory of the tripartite soul) argues that action and decision derive from things that have an emotive grid for us either as values or as emotions. This is an important philosophical point, which goes against what has been understood as the great divide between emotions and rationality viz., that in order to act rationally one needs to leave her emotions aside (See for example Roeser

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<sup>82</sup>Socrates portrayed *Eros* as madness in his first speech too (237b-241d).

and Todd, 2014, p. 2). For Plato rationality and emotions go together: the rational part of the soul has emotions – i.e. if the person is a philosopher then, by definition, she loves wisdom and learning. The philosopher has strong feelings of attraction towards rational goods. Philosophers find pleasure in rational activity.

Nevertheless, rational desires, although necessary, are not sufficient for the possession of intellectual excellences. In order to be intellectually virtuous one must also be reliably successful at reaching the object of her rational desires. Therefore, in order to show that Plato had conceived of intellectual virtues, I must find indications in Plato's dialogues that satisfy all the conditions necessary for intellectual virtues. In the section that follows, I will discuss another very important and necessary (according to the Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian conception of the term) condition that an agent needs to satisfy in order to be intellectual virtuous: the success component.

## 2.4 PLATO’S DIALECTIC AND THE NECESSITY OF PRACTICE

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The scientific method of the dialectic<sup>83</sup>, which Plato describes in the *Republic* more extensively than in his other writings (Kahn, 1996), is another major indication of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. Plato’s dialectical method is the only<sup>84</sup> reliable method philosophers have at their disposal to reach an understanding of the Forms and to the ‘vision’ of the good (Taylor, 1926, p. 285). Plato’s dialectic method satisfies the success component of intellectual virtues, which contemporary scholars such as Zagzebski (1996) and Baehr (2016) have identified as a necessary condition for an agent to be intellectually virtuous. The dialectic is also a virtue developer. Through practicing the dialectic, philosophers develop virtues (such as the cognitive virtue of debate – see section 4.2) which are essential for the agents to reach an understanding of the Forms.

Plato never discusses the exact nature of the dialectic in detail<sup>85</sup>. Still, we learn in Book VIII of the *Republic* that it involves the abilities to give accounts and to ask and answer questions (534). The dialectic is a purely rational method (Mason, 2010) that leads to intellectual success:

“But isn’t this just the theme which dialectic takes up? It is of course an intellectual theme, but can be represented in terms of vision, as we said, the progress of sight from shadows to the real creatures themselves, and then to the starts themselves, and finally to the sun itself. So when one tries to get at what each thing is in itself by the exercise of dialectic, relying on reason without any aid from the senses, and refuses to give up until he has grasped by pure thought what the good is in itself, one is at the summit of the intellectual realm, as the man who has looked at the sun was of the visual real.’

‘That’s perfectly true.’

‘And isn’t this the progress what we call the dialectic?’

‘Yes.’” (*Rep.*, VII, 532a-b)

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<sup>83</sup>See Section 4.2.2.2 for further analysis of the study of the dialectic.

<sup>84</sup>See for example VII, 533a13-15: “And should we add it is only the power of dialectic that can reveal it (true reality), and then only to someone experienced in the studies we have just described? There is no other way, is there?” ‘We can claim that with certainty’”.

<sup>85</sup>“Plato does not profess to give here a full account of dialectic...but we learn some important things about it” (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 263).

Dialecticians strive through the dialectic to reach to the unhypothetical first principle (VII, 533d1-5) which, as we will see in the Simile of the Sun (507a-509c), is the Form of the good which illuminates all others Forms and from which all other Forms originate (see section 3.4 for a more detailed discussion of the Simile of the Sun).

The dialectic is a methodology, a system of success that leads to understanding<sup>86</sup>. However, this needs training. One is not born having rational desires nor is one born knowing how to acquire understanding of the Forms through the dialectical method. It is through the dialectical process, which is the spearhead of Plato's educational program that philosophers develop intellectual virtues to their fullest and it is also through the dialectical process that philosophers are able to successfully reach the object of their rational desires. Objections are anticipated as to the reliability of the dialectic but, like in the cases of pianists and athletes, we never have a guarantee of success.

So far, I have argued that the dialectic is a method that successfully and reliably leads to understanding: expert dialecticians are able to give an account of the good and to defend such an account from all possible objections (VII, 534c). I have also argued that the dialectic is a virtue developer since through its practice philosopher develop intellectual excellences. Still, in order to show that the dialectic is an indication of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtue I must also show that one can become better at it and that there are various degrees of appropriating it.

### ***Practicing the Dialectic***

A good indication that Plato understands the difference in the practice of the dialectic is that in many of his dialogues he makes comments on whether someone is strong or weak in dialectic. The dialectical process is more difficult when the opponent is strong in dialectic and this shows that someone can become better at it through practice. For example, in the *Protagoras*, Socrates, after hearing Protagoras' response to one of his arguments, makes the following remark: "Many of the audience cheered and applauded this (Protagoras' response to Socrates). And I felt at first giddy and faint as if I had

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<sup>86</sup>See Section 3.1 if you are wondering why I use the word understanding here instead of knowledge.

received a blow from the hand of an expert boxer, when I heard his words” (340a). The use of the boxer analogy shows that one can improve in the dialectic. In the same manner that one is not born an expert boxer, one is also not born an expert in the dialectic. Like in the case of boxing, one gets better in the dialectic through practice.

Moreover, in the *Protagoras*, Socrates argues that: “...But when one has a question to ask any of them, like books they can neither answer nor ask, and if one challenges the least particular of their speeches, they go ringing on in a long haranque... whereas our friend Protagoras cannot only make a good speech... but when he is asked a question he can answer briefly; and when he asks he will wait and hear the answer” (329a). This quotation from the *Protagoras* also shows that there are various degrees between being good or bad in the dialectic. Unlike others, Protagoras is able to make a good speech but most importantly is able to answer questions. This comes in contrast to other interlocutors who are not strong in the dialectic. For example, in the *Theaetetus*, young Theaetetus is not always in a position to answer questions in a satisfactory manner and is not bothered when Socrates points out his mistakes. At the very end of the dialogue, Theaetetus is thankful to Socrates: “I am sure, Socrates, that you have brought a great deal more out of me than ever was in me” (209d). Not only that, but not being an expert in the dialectic, young Theaetetus is sometimes unable to even attempt to give an answer to some of Socrates’ questions: “I am afraid to say, Socrates, that I have nothing to answer, because you rebuked me just now for saying that” (158a5). Strong opponents in the dialectic, like Protagoras, are never stuck in a position where they cannot answer a question. Questioning and answering is a very important part of the dialectical method. It is through definitions and consecutive questions and answers that dialecticians come to reach an understanding of the Forms.

The importance of having experience in the practice of the dialectic, and that there are different degrees of appropriating it, is also shown explicitly in a number of passages of the *Republic*. For example, in book V, Adeimantus challenges Socrates to show that philosophers are not bad and/or worthless. Still, he points out that:

“But whenever people hear you talking like this they have an uneasy feeling that, because they are not very experienced in this procedure of question and answer, each question in the argument leads them a little further astray, until at the end of it all their small admissions are added up and they come a cropper

and are shown to have contradicted themselves; they feel your arguments are like a game of draughts in which the unskilled player is always in the end hemmed in and left without a move by the expert” (487b-c).

The above quotation shows that there are experts and non-experts in this “procedure of question and answer” (i.e. the dialectical process). Those who are unskilled in the dialectic are led to contradictions and left without a move when facing an expert. In this case, Adeimantus sees himself as the non-expert and Socrates as the expert.

Yet another indication that Plato believed in the necessity of practicing, in order to become good in the dialectic, is that otherwise he would allow philosopher kings to rule from the age of twenty. However, throughout Plato’s dialogues, and especially in the *Republic* where he discusses his rigorous educational program, it is evident that for Plato, practice in the dialectic is necessary if one is to be good at it. In addition, as I am going to show in section 4.2, according to Plato, in order for someone to start practicing the dialectic, one must meet certain conditions (i.e. fully developed rational desires) and must have successfully undergone certain other studies (i.e. the five mathematical studies).

### ***The Operation of Division***

Another significant indication of the necessity to practice the dialectic is the fact that there are logical tools (collect and division) that dialecticians have at their disposal and use. The dialectic method of division is an excellent example of how one can become better in the dialectic. One is not born with the ability to divide concepts; one acquires it through practice. The aim of the operation of division is to “begin with a whole and to distinguish the parts within it” (Mason, 2010, 70)<sup>87</sup>. Later on, in the *Sophist*, Plato will directly connect the operation of division with the philosopher’s aim to reach an understanding of the Forms. Division allows philosophers to study the combination of Forms (*Soph.* 253d)<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup>The Method of division is not without problems. Indicatively, scholars such as Dascal (2008, p. 31), have pointed out that there are no guidelines on when an agent needs to stop dividing concepts.

<sup>88</sup>Mason, 2010, p. 70.

Evidence showing that one can become better in the division of concepts can be found in the *Phaedrus*. According to Socrates, being good in division entails the ability “to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints and not try to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do” (265e). This analogy is not random: In the same way that one can become a better butcher through training, one can become better in division through practice.

It is also in the *Phaedrus* that one can find evidence of the importance of division for the dialectic method. Socrates continues his speech saying “... God knows whether this is the right name for those who can do this correctly or not, but so far I have always called them dialecticians” (266c5). Dialecticians need to learn how to divide concepts properly. They are not born knowing how to do so; they acquire this operation of division through practice.

In summation, one is not born with the ability to divide concepts. One acquires it through training. The butcher analogy also shows that there can be various degrees of how successful one can be at dividing concepts. Furthermore, engaging in division reveals a motivation for the acquisition of rational goods. One is led to divide concepts because of her desire to acquire truth and knowledge. Lastly, those who are called dialecticians are fully trained at dividing concepts. This entails that the dialecticians are reliably successful at reaching philosophical truths through dialectical tools such as the division of concepts.

Overall, I have shown in section 2.3 and 2.4 that both the success and the motivational component of intellectual virtues can be found in the Platonic corpus. Rational desires satisfy the motivational component and Plato’s dialectic satisfies the success component. Therefore, I have shown that two of the most fundamental building blocks of the concept of intellectual virtues can be found in Plato’s dialogues.

### ***The Success Component and the Term Philosopher***

In book V of the *Republic*, in his definition of the philosopher and in his defense of why not all philosophers are bad and/or worthless, Plato argues that part of what makes someone a true philosopher is not only her desire for rational goods but also that she is

reliably successful at reaching the objects of her rational desires. For Plato, philosophers are by definitions successful in their epistemic endeavors. This is because if one experiences difficulty, pain and little success in their epistemic endeavors one will never come to love learning; one will never become a philosopher:

“There’s something else you won’t overlook (in the true philosopher’s character). Whether it learns easily or not. You can’t expect anyone to have much love for anything which he does with pain and difficulty and little success” (486c).

A few lines later, Plato argues again that for someone to desire rational goods, one must not struggle in vain for their acquisition; one must be reliably successful at apprehending them:

“He (the intellectually unsuccessful agent) will labour in vain and in the end be driven to hate himself and the whole business of learning” (486c10-15).

It seems, therefore, that Plato’s definition of the term philosopher does not only entail the motivational component of intellectual virtues but also necessarily includes the success component as well. For someone to desire rational goods one must also be reliably successful at apprehending them. This seems intuitively correct. How can a person who experiences learning and acquiring knowledge as a painful, difficult and unsuccessful process come to enjoy it? This point can be further illustrated through the archer analogy. If a person takes up archery but is, despite her best efforts and constant training, unsuccessful at hitting the target, then she will come to dislike archery and all the things it entails. She will eventually abandon archery and come to pursue different things. She will never be called an archer.

Overall, several sections from the *Republic*, such as the ones quoted above, highlight that Plato saw a very close connection between the motivational and the success component of intellectual virtues. A connection that has not thoroughly been explored by contemporary virtue epistemologists and which might be something worth looking into.



# CHAPTER 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLATONIC CONCEPTION OF INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES FOR CONTEMPORARY EPISTEMOLOGY

## Chapter Outline

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In this third chapter of my thesis, I discuss the importance of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues for contemporary epistemology. More specifically, I argue that the realization that Plato had conceived and had started developing the concept of intellectual virtues is not only of historic significance but can also be of merit for contemporary theories of virtue epistemology.

In the first section of this chapter, I argue that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue. I show that, although commonly translated as knowledge, *episteme* is closer to Prichard's (2010) conception of understanding and also that *episteme*, like Prichard's conception of understanding, is a cognitive achievement and therefore finally valuable. I conclude this first part of this chapter with a short section in which I briefly compare and contrast the Platonic intellectual virtue of *episteme* with the contemporary conceptions of epistemic virtues.

In the next section, I discuss the relationship between the Platonic conception of *episteme* and *sophia*. I argue that Plato uses the two concepts interchangeably and that there is no epistemological difference between them. To show this, I employ textual evidence from dialogues such as the *Euthydemus*, the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*.

In the third section of this chapter, I show that Plato, unlike Aristotle, does not draw a sharp distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom. I discuss the example of Zagzebski's virtue theory and show that her approach is much closer, and would benefit, if she were to follow the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues. This is one example of how the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be merit for contemporary theories of virtue epistemology.

In the last section of this chapter, I discuss three key points of Plato's theory of epistemology in the *Republic*: The Simile of the Sun (507a-509c), the theory of the Divided Line (509d-511e) and the Allegory of the Cave (514a-521b). Through their study I discuss (amongst other) Plato's unhypothetical first principle (the Form of the good) and his two-world theory. Most importantly, however, I show that for Plato, his theory of epistemology and his educational program (as presented in the *Republic*) are very tightly linked and interrelated. This leads me to the next chapter (chapter 4) where I analyse the Platonic educational program and examine Plato's approach for educating moral and epistemic virtues

### 3.1 EPISTEME, UNDERSTANDING AND VALUE

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Plato, in many of his dialogues, discusses the concept of *episteme*. *Episteme* is commonly translated as knowledge<sup>89</sup>; and we learn from Platonic dialogues, such as the *Republic* (e.g. V, 479e) and the *Phaedrus* (e.g. 247c), that the true objects of *episteme* are the Forms. Still, as I am going to show in this section, although commonly translated as knowledge, to have *episteme*, one must not simply have knowledge of the Forms; one must have understanding<sup>90</sup>.

So far in my thesis I have shown that there are strong indications of rational desires in Plato's work and I have discussed how these desires are necessary for the epistemic success of the agent. I have also shown that, according to Plato, the dialectic is the only reliable method that philosophers have at their disposal in order to reach the objects of their rational desires. Now I want to argue that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue. If I can show that Plato's *episteme* always aims at what is finally valuable, then I will be further supporting my claim, since virtue always aims at the valuable.

At first, one might be inclined to use some of the argument made by robust epistemologists<sup>91</sup> according to which knowledge has final value in order to argue that Plato's *episteme*<sup>92</sup> has final value too. However, this could prove problematic. One of the problems of attempting to resolve the issue of *episteme* and value in such a way is that one has to overcome the objections and criticisms faced by robust epistemologists. Duncan Prichard (2010), for example, has argued that knowledge does not have final

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<sup>89</sup>See for example Lee, D. (ed. and transl.) and Lane, M. (intro) (2007). *Plato: The Republic*. Second Edition, Penguin Classics.

<sup>90</sup>“Julius Moravcsik (1979) tells us that the central epistemological aim of the Greek thinkers was to give an account of what it means to understand something” (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 46)

<sup>91</sup>See Pritchard 2010, p. 26: “This is the sort of virtue-theoretic account of knowledge that is offered by, for example, Ernest Sosa (1988; 1991; 2007), Linda Zagzebski (1996; 1999), and John Greco (e.g. 2003; 2007a; 2007b; 2009). What makes such a virtue-theoretic proposal robust is the fact that it attempts to exclusively analyse knowledge in terms of a true belief that is the product of epistemically virtuous belief-forming process”.

<sup>92</sup>If you are thinking that *episteme* being a virtue cannot possibly have final value in itself – and that it is the objects that it enables the agent acquire that must have final value - see the next section (3.2).

value. If one agrees with Pritchard's view, then it seems that Plato's *episteme* does not have final value either. Thus, a careful examination of Pritchard's arguments is in order.

Pritchard (2010) begins his discussion by identifying three value problems for knowledge. If one were to tackle successfully these three problems, one would show that knowledge is finally valuable. The primary value problem, according to Pritchard, is showing why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief (2010, p. 6). The secondary value problem is showing why knowledge is more valuable than what falls short of knowledge (2010, p. 7). Lastly, the tertiary value problem is the need to explain not only why knowledge has just a greater degree but also a different kind of value than whatever falls short of knowledge (2010, p. 9). I agree with Pritchard that one needs to answer all three of these problems in order to show that knowledge is finally valuable.

Pritchard, in order to further illustrate his arguments, cites the Larissa example discussed by Socrates in the *Meno* (2010, p. 7). According to Socrates, knowing the way to Larissa is preferable than having true belief, because knowledge has stability:

“A man who knew the way to Larissa, or anywhere else you like, and went there and directed others would surely lead them well and correctly...What if someone had had a correct opinion as to which was the way but had not gone there nor indeed had knowledge of it, would he not also lead correctly? Yes... but then man who has knowledge will always succeed, whereas he who has true opinion will only succeed at times. For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind... That is why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion, and knowledge differs from correct opinion in being tied down” (*Meno*, 97a-98a)<sup>93</sup>.

The stability that knowledge has could prove important if one were to travel to Larissa. On the one hand, an agent who has mere true belief may doubt himself if it is taking too long to reach Larissa and might turn back. On the other hand, an agent who has knowledge will be confident that she is on the right path and will stay on course. Pritchard, however, argues that Plato has not shown that knowledge has final epistemic

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<sup>93</sup>See also: “My point is, it's the same with true opinions. True opinions, as long as they stay put, are a fine thing and do us a whole lot of good. Only, they tend not to stay put for very long. They're always scampering away from a person's soul. So they're not very valuable until you shackle them by figuring out what makes them true. And then, once they're shackled, they turn into knowledge, and become stable and fixed” (*Meno*, 97e-98a).

value. Socrates arguments in the *Meno* only provide an answer to the primary value problem of knowledge (2010, p.7).

Pritchard, in order to answer all three value problems, goes on to develop a new theory, which he calls anti-luck epistemology, and argues that this view can provide answers to the primary and secondary value problems. However, Pritchard argues that epistemic luck and knowledge acquired by testimony undermine the position of robust virtue epistemology that knowledge has final value (2010, p. 50). Therefore, he rejects the argument that knowledge has final value on the basis that it is not a cognitive achievement. He argues that final value comes from achievements that are the result of ability, where the success in question either involves the overcoming of a significant obstacle or the exercise of a significant level of ability (2010, p. 66). Still, Pritchard argues that understanding, which is distinct from knowledge, is a form of cognitive achievement and therefore finally valuable<sup>94</sup> (2010, p. 67). For him, understanding is both factive and resistant to epistemic luck (2010, p. 82).

Pritchard, in order to explain his conception understanding and how it differs from knowledge, gives the example of the burned house (2010, pp. 81-84). According to Pritchard, for someone to understand, and not simply know, that a house burned down due to faulty wiring, one must have a conception of how faulty wiring could cause the fire (thus, for Pritchard, understanding involves explanatory connections). Yet, a kid may know that a house burned down due to faulty wiring, if for example her parents tells her so. However, the kid does not have understanding, because she has no conception of how faulty wiring could do this.

### *Plato's Episteme as Understanding*

Pressingly for the purposes of my study, if Pritchard is right then it seems that Plato's *episteme* has no final value. However, although I agree with Pritchard's arguments, I am going to show that this is not necessarily the case: Plato's *episteme*, although

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<sup>94</sup>See also Pritchard, 2013, p. 242 "Acquiring an understanding of anything remotely complex will often be difficult and make a number of cognitive demands on the subject. In gaining that understanding one is thus either displaying great cognitive skill (if one gains the understanding effortlessly), or overcoming significant obstacles to cognitive success (if a great deal of effort is required to gain the understanding)."

commonly translated as knowledge, is closer to Pritchard's conception of understanding.

Evidence of this can be found in several sections of Plato's dialogues. For example, in Book X of the *Republic*, Socrates discusses how the bridle maker lacks *episteme* and how he has to rely on the horseman's instructions to craft the bridle:

“The painter, we say, will paint both reins and a bit...But the maker will be the cobbler and the smith” “Certainly” “Does the painter, then, know the proper quality of reins and bit? Or does not even the maker, the cobbler and the smith, know that, but only the man who understands the use of these things (ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνος ὅσπερ τούτοις ἐπίσταται χρῆσθαι) the horseman?” “Most true” (601 b-c).

Then, a few lines later, he argues:

“Then in respect of the same implement the maker will have right belief (πίστιν ὀρθήν) about its excellence and defects from association with the man who knows and being compelled to listen to him, but the user will have true *episteme* (ὁ δὲ χρώμενος ἐπιστήμην)” (601e-602a).

One can see from such sections of the *Republic* that knowledge is not an accurate translation of Plato's *episteme*. The bridle maker is like the kid in Pritchard's example. He has to rely on the user in the same way that the child has to rely on her parents. The maker knows how to make the bridle but not why it has to be made in a specific way. It is only the horseman who has understanding of why the bridle ought to be made in a specific way that has true *episteme*.

One could argue at this point that Plato has made a mistake. How is it possible that the user has understanding while the crafter, who actually creates the artifact, simply has right belief? It seems counterintuitive to argue, for example, that someone who works in manufacturing mobile phones has true belief of how the phone operates while the users have true understanding.

Nevertheless, such an objection rests on a false assumption: there was no mass production at the time Plato is writing. Everything was custom-made. In that sense, the user was also the designer since they asked for e.g. the bridle to be in a specific way for

reasons that only the user truly understood. The bridle maker simply followed the instructions of the user on how the bridle ought to be. Nevertheless, even if one disagrees and still believes that Plato has made a mistake, this does not affect my overall argument. I do not want to show that Plato was right in believing that the user has true *episteme*. What I want to show is that Plato's conception of *episteme* is very close to Pritchard's conception of understanding.

Another example showing that Plato's conception of *episteme* is similar to Pritchard's conception of understanding can be found in Plato's analogy of the knowledge of Form and letters. According to McDowell (1973, p. 250), Plato uses the knowledge of letters as a model of the knowledge of the Forms (see for example *Theaetetus* 205c4-206c5). Knowledge of the Forms, like the knowledge of letters, is holistic: "Like the subject matter of a man who knows letters, the subject matter of the dialectician, viz. Forms or Kinds, can be exhibited in a systematic body of theory. And it is essential of his knowledge, that he knows which kind can and which cannot combine" (McDowell, 1973, p. 250). This, however, goes beyond the modern conception of knowledge; it involves a kind of understanding. Simply 'knowing' forms x or y, for example, is not enough. One also needs to understand how the Forms are interrelated in order to have true *episteme*.

A third example showing that Plato's *episteme* is similar to Pritchard's conception of understanding can be found in Book VII of the *Republic* where Socrates argues that:

"So you would agree in calling the ability to give an account of the essential nature of each particular thing Dialectic; and in saying that anyone who is unable to give such an account of things either to himself or to other people has to that extent failed to understand them." "I can hardly do otherwise" "Then doesn't that apply to the Good? If a man can't define the Form of the Good and distinguish it clearly from everything else, and then defend it against all comers, not merely as a matter of opinion but in strict logic, and come through his argument unshaken, you wouldn't say he knew what Absolute Good was, or indeed any other good. Any notion such a man has is based on opinion rather than *episteme*, and he is living in a dream from which he is unlikely to awake this side of the grave, where he will finally sleep for ever" (534 b-c)<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup>For a similar (but significantly simpler) argument, see *Phaedo* 76b: "How about this question? You can choose and you have some opinion about it: When a man knows, can he give an account of what he knows or not?" "Certainly he can, Socrates".

It is evident from the above quotation that the dialecticians can give an account of the being of each thing. Based on this passage McDowell argues that: “But giving an account of something evidently involves not only saying what it is, but also displaying its relation to a first principle... It seems reasonable to identify this first principle with the form of the Good” (1973, p. 229). He goes on to say that: “The dialectician’s knowledge of a thing, then seems to involve the ability (1) to say what that thing is and (2) to explain, in terms of the notion of goodness, why that is so” (p. 230). Thus, Plato’s conception of *episteme* entails more than simply saying what a thing is. It involves displaying its relation to a first principle – it involves explanatory connections. This relates back to Pritchard’s example of the burned house: the kid is able to say that the house burned down but she cannot explain why. The philosophers, on the other hand, give an account of something by displaying its relation to the first principle – they can explain why.

There are plenty of other passages in Plato’s dialogues showing that *episteme* is more accurately translated as understanding rather than knowledge. Of course, it is important to note that I am far from being the only one to have argued that *episteme* is more suitably translated as understanding. For example, amongst others, scholars such as Mason (2010)<sup>96</sup> and Burnyeat and Barnes (1980) have already argued in similar lines. For example, according to Burnyeat and Barnes (1980, p. 188): “We ought not to say that Plato is discussing knowledge at all; rather he is discussing the distinct phenomenon of understanding. For, it is said, understanding, but not knowledge, requires explanation and interrelated accounts...A more moderate version of this general sort of view claims that Plato is discussing knowledge – but an older concept of knowledge, according to which knowledge consists in or requires understanding, in contrast to “knowledge as knowledge is nowadays discussed in philosophy”.

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<sup>96</sup>See for example, p. 75: “I think the kind of knowledge Plato has in mind is indeed one that involves understanding: that in coming to know Forms we come to see why they are as they are, not just that they are as they are”.

### *Plato's Episteme is a Cognitive Achievement*

Pritchard argues that understanding is finally valuable because it is a cognitive achievement. Is this however also the case for Plato's conception of *episteme*? I want to show in this section that this is indeed the case: Plato's *episteme* is a cognitive achievement. This is especially evident in the *Republic*. For Plato, in order for one to reach an understanding of the Forms, one has to undergo the entire educational program that he describes in the *Republic*. According to Plato, reaching an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good is the most important and valuable human endeavor; it is a cognitive achievement that requires agents to dedicate their whole lives in this rational pursuit. One cannot reach an understanding of the Forms either by chance<sup>97</sup> or by the testimony of others.

However, the strongest evidence, showing that, for Plato, *episteme* is a cognitive achievement is that philosophers must move from hypothesizing<sup>98</sup> to the first principle. This relates to Socrates' first and second sailing (*πλοῦς*). According to Socrates in the *Republic*, the hypothetical method is second best to a teleological account (see 511b and 508e-509a – see also section 3.5). This move to the first principles, which yields true *episteme*, cannot be achieved either by luck or by testimony - the two reasons why Pritchard (2010, p. 50) argues that knowledge is not a cognitive achievement.

Overall, I have shown in this section that Plato's conception of *episteme* is very close to Pritchard's conception of understanding. I have also shown that for Plato *episteme* is

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<sup>97</sup>The dialectic safeguards against epistemic luck. It is true that one might give a correct definition of a piece of knowledge by sheer luck. Still, philosophers who practice the dialectic are after the first principle. Only those who reach the first principle will possess true *episteme*. And reaching the first principles cannot be achieved by sheer luck (or testimony). It is a cognitive achievement.

<sup>98</sup>A discussion about the value and use of making hypotheses can be found in the *Meno* where Socrates introduces the concept: "And when I say 'on hypothesis', I mean the way mathematicians often look at problems, when someone asks them a question... about an area, for example...like "Can this area here be inscribed, as a triangle, in this circle?" A mathematician might say, "Well, I don't know yet; maybe it can, maybe it can't, but I think I have a hypothesis that might help with the problem... So, on that hypothesis, I'm prepared to tell you the outcome – whether or not it's possible for the area to be inscribed in the circle." We can do the same thing with our question about being good: since we don't know what it is, or what sort of thing it is, let's first find a hypothesis and then use that to look at whether or not it's teachable" (86e-87b).



a cognitive achievement since it cannot be achieved by luck or by testimony. This conclusion allows me to argue that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue. It involves a motivational component (rational desire to have *episteme* of the Forms) a success component (dialecticians are reliably successfully at reaching the objects of such rational desires through the dialectic), one is not born possessing *episteme* of the Forms but needs to acquire it through the dialectic and *episteme* aims at what is finally valuable.

## 3.2 EPISTEME AND CONTEMPORARY INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

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In this short chapter, I want to discuss something that might be puzzling - or even though as a mistake on my part - for some of the readers: Why is *episteme* an intellectual virtue for Plato? If *episteme* is an intellectual virtue, then how does one reconcile it with the ones that contemporary virtue responsibilists identify as virtues such as intellectual humility, inquisitiveness or the ones that virtue reliabilists identify as virtues such as good memory and vision?

I believe it is quite clear that the Platonic, as well as the Aristotelian, conception of intellectual virtues differ quite a lot from modern conceptions of the term. For example, modern virtue epistemologists think that concepts such as understanding, practical wisdom, and theoretical wisdom are the objects of intellectual virtues - what the virtues ultimately aim at - rather than intellectual virtues. Some virtue responsibilists, such as Zagzebski, even accuse virtue reliabilists, such as John Greco, of using the term virtue incorrectly without paying any attention to the ancient roots of the conception of the term:

“The sense in which Greco’s examples can be considered virtues then, is misapplied if it is intended to reflect the way the concept of virtue has been used in ethics. In fact, it has little connection with the history of the concept of intellectual virtue, although that history is quite sparse, as already noted. Aristotle’s examples of intellectual virtue include theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and understanding or insight (*nous*). Hobbes’s list includes good wit and discretion; Spinoza’s primary intellectual virtue is understanding” (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 10-11).

While I agree with parts of Zagzebski’s criticism against the reliabilists’ conception of virtue, I believe that one could use the exact same arguments against virtue responsibilists - even against Zagzebski herself. When Aristotle talks of his chief intellectual virtues, he talks of theoretical (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). He does not talk of intellectual humility and inquisitiveness. Zagzebski, and other virtue

responsibilists such as Code (1987), have given a major ethical spin to intellectual virtues. Therefore, one could also accuse virtue responsibilists themselves of having come up with a concept that has little connection with the history of the concept of intellectual virtues, despite the fact that some of them claim to build upon this history.

The best way to show that *episteme* is (for Plato) a virtue and to point out that the contemporary understanding of the term intellectual virtue has deviated a lot from the ancient one, is to go back to Aristotle's conception of the term. For Aristotle, as I have already noted, intellectual virtues are "the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial" and these are five in number: art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophical wisdom and intuitive reason (*EN*, 1139b15-18). In the same manner that for Aristotle theoretical and practical wisdom are states by which the soul acquires truth, likewise for Plato *episteme* is the most powerful faculty:

"Tell me, do you think *episteme* is a faculty? Could you classify it otherwise?"  
No; it is the most powerful of all faculties" (*Rep.*, V, 477e).

Being a faculty (i.e. an aptitude for a special kind of action<sup>99</sup>), *episteme* is a "power" (*δύναμις*) which aims at a specific object – viz., the forms – understanding that which exists:

"Each of them, then, since it has a different power, is related to a different object." "Of necessity." "Episteme, I presume, to that which is, to the condition of that which is (*ἐπιστήμη μὲν γέ που ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι, τὸ ὄν γινῶναι ὡς ἔχει*)" (478a).

Overall, *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue. In the same way that, according to Aristotle, *sophia* and *phronesis* are faculties (powers) of the soul by which the soul comes to acquire the truth (and therefore intellectual virtues), likewise for Plato *episteme* is the aptitude to act in such a way as to acquire understanding of the 'absolute reality' - the Forms. In addition, by aiming at the forms, *episteme* necessarily aims at what is finally valuable – its objects are by definition finally valuable.

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<sup>99</sup>Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 397, note number nine.

This shows that contemporary virtue epistemologists have deviated from the ancient Greek conception of intellectual virtues. While Aristotle talks of *sophia* and *phronesis* and Plato talks of *episteme*, contemporary virtue epistemologists identify certain traits (such as intellectual bravery) or capacities (such as good memory) as intellectual virtues. Still, it is debatable whether this is something for which one should accuse contemporary scholars. My point in this chapter was rather to show that the ancient and the contemporary understandings of intellectual virtues differ.

### 3.3 SOPHIA

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*Sophia* (commonly translated as Wisdom) is one of Plato's four cardinal virtues (*Rep.*, IV, 428b–429a). The just city's *sophia* is to be found with the city's leaders (428d5) and is described as the type of knowledge which enables them to act "...not on behalf of any particular interest but on behalf of the city as a whole, in such a way as to benefit the state both in its internal and external relations" (428c10-15). Out of the four cardinal virtues identified by Plato in the *Republic*, *sophia* is the only one whose features resemble those of the intellectual virtues discussed by Aristotle and neo-Aristotelians scholars<sup>100</sup>. According to Plato, one does not become wise by luck or testimony<sup>101</sup>. In order to become wise, one needs to be deeply dedicated, as well as reliably successful, in her intellectual endeavors to reach a 'vision' of the Forms. It is only through successfully undergoing Plato's rigorous educational program that the few chosen ones become philosopher-kings. They are to rule the city-state because of the wisdom they have acquired.

This leads me then, in this section, to consider the following questions: What is the difference between *sophia* and *episteme* according to Plato? Is there an epistemological difference between the two? If yes, what is the difference? If no, why not? Is *sophia* a different virtue to that of *episteme*?

As I have already shown, the dialectic is the method through which philosophers acquire understanding. Philosophers are not simply after knowledge, they are not asked to report a single point/finding; they are rather after acquiring understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good. Through the dialectic, philosophers try to examine everything and to see how the different pieces of reality (Forms) are interrelated. As I have shown in chapter 3.1, *episteme* entails understanding.

If one were to argue that *episteme* and *sophia* have a different epistemological value, then one would have to show why that is the case. However, I do not believe this is a

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<sup>100</sup>Although Plato did not explicitly identify *sophia* as an intellectual virtue.

<sup>101</sup>Otherwise, the philosopher-kings would not have to undergo his rigorous educational program.

plausible option: one could not possible argue that *sophia* has a higher epistemological value than *episteme*, or vice versa. According to Plato, the objects of *sophia* and *episteme* are the same: the Forms. I have already shown why this is the case for *episteme* (see for example section 3.1). It is also quite straightforward that this is the case for *sophia* as well. *Sophia* is to be found in the philosopher-kings and is the kind of knowledge that allows them to deliberate well about the general good of the city-state. And as it is pointed many times in the *Republic*, it is because philosopher-kings have “seen” the Forms and the Form of the Good that they are wise and therefore best suited to rule the city-state.

There is no higher epistemological achievement than reaching an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the Good, and this intellectual accomplishment makes philosophers wise in both practical and theoretical matters. Therefore, Plato does not differentiate *episteme* and *sophia* on an epistemological level. I want to suggest rather that *episteme* and *sophia* have contextual differences and that in many passages Plato uses them interchangeably. Of course, I am not the first to have noted this. Guthrie (1986), for example, has already pointed this out<sup>102</sup>.

In the *Republic*, for example, Plato points out many times in various passages that philosophers (i.e. lovers of *sophia*) ultimately aim at acquiring *episteme* of the Forms and the Form of the good. It is this intense rational desire for acquiring *episteme* of the Forms that identifies them as philosophers. For example, in Book V, Socrates argues: “Each of them, then, since it has a different power, is related to a different object.” “Of necessity.” “*Episteme*, I presume, to that which is, to the condition of that which is” (478a) – while a few lines later on Socrates argues: “And those whose heart are fixed on the true being of each thing are to be called philosophers and not lovers of opinion” (V, 479e-480a). These two quotes, taken together, show that the Forms are the object of *episteme*. However, they also show that the Forms are what lovers of *sophia* (philosophers) are after.

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<sup>102</sup>Guthrie, 1986, p. 265: “Sophia (Wisdom) and episteme are similarly interchangeable”.

There are plenty of other examples (more explicit/direct than the one discussed above) in Plato's dialogues showing that Socrates identifies the pursuit of *sophia* with the acquisition of *episteme*. For example, in the *Euthydemus* he argues:

“We ended by agreeing that one ought to pursue wisdom (*ἐνθένδε ποθέν φιλοσοφητέον*), did we not?  
 ‘Yes’ he said  
 ‘Then this pursuit – called philosophy – is an acquiring of *episteme*. Is it not so? I asked.’  
 ‘Yes’ he said” (288d-e).

From the above quotation, we learn that philosophy, which is the pursuit of *sophia*, is an acquiring of *episteme*. Therefore, this passage shows that acquiring *sophia* is the same as acquiring *episteme*.

Elsewhere, in the *Protagoras*, Socrates leads Protagoras to agree with him and admit that:

“It would be an especial disgrace to me of all people not to maintain that *sophia* and *episteme* is the mightiest of human things” (*Prot.* 352 c-d).

From this passage, one can see that for Socrates, *sophia* and *episteme* are the same: that which is the mightiest of human things. This quote can also be understood as providing evidence for my argument that there is no epistemological difference between *episteme* and *sophia*: One is not mightier than the other - they are both the mightiest of human things.

One can also find evidence showing that Plato uses *episteme* and *sophia* interchangeably in other dialogues such as in the *Hippias Minor* and the *Apology*. For example, in the *Hippias Minor*, Socrates, while debating with Hippias on whether a man who lies on purpose is better than a man who does it by mistake, argues that:

“And knowing (*epistamenoι*) what they know (*epistantai*), are they ignorant or wise? They are wise...” (365e10-15).

The above quote shows that Socrates believed that having *episteme* is what makes a person wise. Likewise, in the *Apology*, Socrates, in his main speech in front of the Athenian jury, argues:

“You have seen this yourself in the comedy of Aristophanes, a Socrates swinging about there, saying he was walking on air and talking a lot of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing at all. I do not speak in contempt of such knowledge (*episteme*), if someone is wise (*sophos*) in these things – lest Meletus bring more cases against me- but gentlemen...” (19c).

Again, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates states in the most explicit manner that *sophia* and *episteme* are the same thing:

“And does this differ at all from episteme?’ ‘Does what differ?’ ‘Wisdom. Or are people wise in that which they have episteme?’ ‘Of course’ ‘Then episteme and wisdom are the same thing?’ (*ταὐτὸν ἄρα ἐπιστήμη καὶ σοφία;*) ‘Yes’” (145e).

Still, one could outright disagree with me that the quotes I have listed show what I intend them to demonstrate. Moreover, one could argue that I need to provide more than a couple of examples from Plato’s dialogues in order to prove that he uses the concepts of *episteme* and *sophia* interchangeable. This would be indeed quite a fair objection raised against my view and a very difficult one to answer. It would be difficult to answer it because in order to prove my argument I would have to analyze every instantiation (or at least the majority) of the words *sophia* and *episteme* in the *Republic*. What is more, one might even argue that perhaps Plato uses the words *sophia* and *episteme* differently in different dialogues. This would entail then that I would have to analyze all the uses of the two words not only in the *Republic* but also in all early, middle and late Platonic dialogues in order to settle the issue in a definitive manner.

Still, for the purposes of this study, there is no reason for me to go into a lengthy analysis of the two terms; and this is because Plato does not give an explicit account (in any of his dialogues) of how to acquire *sophia* or how it differs from *episteme* (assuming that it does). For an account of how one becomes wise (assuming that it is an epistemologically different concept than *episteme*) one would therefore necessarily have to rely on Plato’s account of *episteme*. For Plato, the philosopher-kings are wise because they have acquired *episteme* of the Forms. By focusing on the intellectual virtue of



*episteme* and how it is acquired, I am also focusing on the only account given to us by Plato that we can use in order to understand how he might have thought that one is to acquire *sophia*. Therefore, even if one is not convinced by the textual evidence showing that Plato uses the two terms interchangeable that is not a problem for my overall position. *Episteme* is our only way to studying *sophia*.

### 3.4 BUILDING UPON THE PLATONIC CONCEPTION

*The example of Zagzebski's virtue theory*

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As I have already highlighted in a previous section (1.2), Aristotle clearly differentiates between moral and intellectual virtues. He argues that there are two parts in the human soul: the intellect, which has reason in the full sense, and the appetitive, which is responsive to reason (*EN*, 1102b13-15). He goes on to argue that since the human soul has two different parts, there are also two distinct kinds of virtue: moral (*τοῦ ἠθικοῦ*) and intellectual (*τῆς διανοίας*) (*EN*, 1139a1-5). According to Aristotle, the locus of the moral virtues is the appetites (*EN*, 1103a5-10). In addition, intellectual virtues are (similarly to the moral) needed to attain the best life and include practical wisdom which is essential in aiding the virtuous agent determine the mean where the moral virtues lie (*EN*, 1141b20-25).

Plato does not draw such a sharp distinction between moral and intellectual virtues. For example, in his account of the four cardinal virtues in the *Republic*, *sophia* is listed besides justice, courage and temperance. For Plato, *sophia* entails both theoretical and practical wisdom. This is evident from the fact that philosophers, according to Plato, have to hold offices to help the city-state with practical issues, and are best suited to do so because of the understanding of the Forms – and most crucially of the Form of the good - they have acquired through the dialectic (*Rep.*, VII, 540a-b). According to Taylor (1926, p. 281) “The account of that supreme goodness which is indistinguishable from knowledge is absolutely necessary in any presentation of Socratic ethics”.

These significant differences in the two philosophers' conception of virtue lead me to argue (in this section) that contemporary scholars of virtue epistemology who believe that moral and intellectual virtues are not as neatly separated as Aristotle thought them to be, are better off following the Platonic conception of virtue. In what follows, I briefly discuss again (see section 1.3) Zagzebski's (1996) position and argue that her virtue theory, and any contemporary theory that does not draw a sharp distinction between moral and intellectual virtues, would be much better off having as a starting point the Platonic conception of virtue than the Aristotelian. Doing so allows me to

illustrate one way in which Plato’s conception of intellectual virtues can be of merit for contemporary virtue epistemologists.

### *Zagzebski’s Virtue Theory*

As I have already discussed, Zagzebski recently developed what she calls a neo-Aristotelian theory of virtue. According to her, a virtue is a “...deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and a reliable success in bringing about that end” (1996, p. 137). She argues that an intellectually virtuous agent is motivated by certain intellectual ends and is reliably successful at achieving these ends (1996, p. 270).

Unlike Aristotle, Zagzebski does not differentiate intellectual virtues from moral, considering them all to be part of virtue ethics<sup>103</sup>. She proposes a theory of “virtue and vice that includes intellectual virtues as forms of moral virtue” (1996, p. 258). As I have shown, Plato, unlike Aristotle and similarly to Zagzebski, also does not differentiate between intellectual and moral virtues, at least not as clearly and to such a large extent as Aristotle does. It is for such reasons that I believe that Plato’s conception of virtue is a more suitable starting point for contemporary scholars (like Zagzebski) who want to argue that intellectual virtues are but a subpart of moral.

In fact, scholars such as MacAllister (2012) have criticized Zagzebski for labelling her theory Neo-Aristotelian given that she clearly deviates from the Aristotelian position in important topics such as the relationship of moral and intellectual virtues<sup>104</sup>. I agree with Zagzebski’s critics on this point. Her theory, I believe, is much closer to the Platonic conception of virtue than is to the Aristotelian.

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<sup>103</sup>“I will argue that the intellectual virtues are so similar to the moral virtues in Aristotle’s sense of the latter that they ought not to be treated as two different kinds of virtue. Intellectual virtues are in fact, forms of moral virtue. It follows that intellectual virtue is properly the object of study of moral philosophy” (Zagzebski, 1996, pp. xiv).

<sup>104</sup>See, for example, MacAllister, 2012, p. 259: “Zagzebski (1996) is of course aware of the distinction that Aristotle draws between the moral and intellectual virtues, but in considering this to be unimportant, and in merging the two together, I believe she has greatly underplayed the extent to which Aristotle perceived essential differences between the intellectual and moral virtues”.

Surprisingly enough, Zagzebski makes a very similar point to the one I made at the beginning of this section (3.4). She argues that “Plato's enumeration of the virtues in the Republic includes wisdom alongside temperance, courage and justice and Plato shows no interest in separating intellectual from moral virtues. In fact, Julius Moravcsik (1992) has recently argued that Plato makes no sharp distinction between moral and non-moral virtues, whether in terms of the source or of its function (p. 300). Aristotle, however, does make such a division...” (1996, p. 139). However, although she acknowledges the fact that Plato holds a similar position to her, she nevertheless goes on to label her theory Neo-Aristotelian.

I believe that the reason Zagzebski does not use the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues as the starting point for her theory is simply because she is unaware of its existence. This conclusion is compatible with some of the arguments she makes in her book. For example, in her brief summary of the history of the concept of virtue, no mention is made to Plato's contribution to the development of the concept of intellectual virtues<sup>105</sup>. She also lists other contemporary scholars, who similarly to her, think that the history of the concept of intellectual virtues begins with Aristotle's conception of the term<sup>106</sup>. Still, if I am wrong, and Zagzebski is aware of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues, then she obviously does not deem it has anything important to offer to her theory. Otherwise, there is no reason why she would label her theory Neo-Aristotelian when in fact it is obviously much closer to the Platonic theory of virtue.

Still, Zagzebski's theory is not only more compatible with the Platonic rather than the Aristotelian, but the former can also help her answer some of the criticisms raised by scholars against her theory. For example, according to both Pritchard (2005) and MacAllister (2012), one problematic feature of Zagzebski's virtue theory is her suggestion that an agent has knowledge when able to consider the evidence that grounds

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<sup>105</sup>“The sense in which Greco's examples can be considered virtues, then, is misapplied if it is intended to reflect the way the concept of virtue has been used in ethics. In fact, it has little connection with the history of the concept of intellectual virtue, although that history is quite sparse as already noted. Aristotle's examples of intellectual virtues include theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and understanding or insight (*nous*). Hobbes's list includes good wit and discretion; Spinoza's primary intellectual virtue is understanding” (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 10-11).

<sup>106</sup>“Even when Kvanvig traces the roots of virtue epistemology to Aristotle, it is to Aristotle's epistemology that he briefly turns, not to Aristotle's theory of virtue” (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 11).

his beliefs. This view, however, categorizes those who cannot do so, such as for example young children, as non-knowledgeable (Pritchard, 2005, 281). For MacAllister the problem of this implication for Zagzebski's theory is that Aristotle "...is clear that the young can become knowledgeable in the full sense about some matters at least. Furthermore, it will become apparent that Aristotle did not think knowledge (*episteme*) required reflective engagement on the part of the knower either." (2012, p. 259).

Contra-Aristotle, and similarly to Zagzebski's virtue theory, Plato does not believe that children could become knowledgeable in the full sense. An agent, in order to acquire true *episteme*, has to undergo the whole of Plato's rigorous educational program. Moreover, as I have shown in a previous section (3.1), Plato's conception of *episteme* does require reflective engagement on the part of the agent. This is another reason why I believe Zagzebski's virtue theory would be better off having the Platonic rather than the Aristotelian theory of virtue as a starting point.

Overall, in this section I have argued that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of significant value for scholars working in contemporary virtue epistemology. I have discussed the example of Zagzebski's virtue theory and have argued that philosophical endeavors, such as her virtue responsibilist theory, can be formulated in a much more efficient manner if they were to build upon the Platonic conception of virtue rather than the Aristotelian. Still, I believe that even if a contemporary scholar does not want to build upon the Platonic conception of virtue (because say she disagrees with an important feature of it) she still has a lot to gain (in terms of inspiration or by "borrowing" something from it) when aware of the options it provides.

### 3.5 PLATO’S EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE *REPUBLIC*

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In Books VI and VII of the *Republic*, Plato presents some of his most central epistemological arguments through the Simile of the Sun (507a-509c), the theory of the Divided Line (509d-511e) and the Allegory of the Cave (514a-521b). Through the Simile of the Sun, Plato discusses the Form of the good as the ultimate object of *episteme* – the unhypothetical first principle – which is the origin of all knowledge and truth, although itself superior to them. Through the theory of the Divided Line, he discusses his two-world theory: the physical realm and the intelligible realm, as well as the four different states of mind, starting from the one having less clarity to the one having the most (*eikasia, pistis, dianoia and noesis*). Lastly, through the Allegory of the Cave, Plato gives an overall illustration of his epistemological position and discusses the consequences that such a position has for the educational system and the political regime that should be in place for the idea city to come about.

Presenting and discussing the Simile of the Sun, the theory of the Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave is of vital importance for the purposes of this thesis. Plato’s conception of the Form of the good does not only play a significant role in his epistemology but also relates it to his ethical views and educational theory. It is through the discussion of the Simile of the Sun that the readers of the *Republic* find out that the ultimate object of *episteme* is the Form of the good; and that the Form of the good is the unhypothetical first principle (which philosophers try to discover through the dialectic). The theory of the Divided Line illustrates the different states of mind, as well as the activities Plato associates with each one of them. This again influences a lot his philosophy of education and how one should go about to acquire intellectual virtues (e.g. one acquires true *episteme* through the dialectic). Lastly, the Allegory of the Cave connects Plato’s epistemology, virtue ethics and educational theory together and shows the importance of education and the value of having an understanding of the Form of the good for practical matters.

This section serves as a bridge in my thesis: it connects everything that I have discussed up to now with the last two remaining chapters that deal primarily with Plato’s educational theory.

### 3.5.1 The Form of the Good

Socrates, in Book VI of the *Republic*, having argued against the idea that philosophers are either useless or bad people - and sometimes even both – (487b-496e) and having shown that having philosophers ruling the state is not impossible (497a-502c), goes on to discuss the ultimate object of *episteme*: the Form of the good. The *Republic* is the only dialogue in which the Form of the good as such plays a leading role (Rowe, 1984, p. 89):

“...You have certainly often been told that the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the form of the Good, from which things that are just and so on derive their usefulness and value” (505a2-5).

Being asked by Glaucon to explain what the Form of the good is in a more detailed manner (506d), Socrates admits that giving such an account is beyond him and that the best he can do is to give an account of something which “seems to be the child of the good” (506e5). According to Plato’s conception of the good, no one could tell another person what the good is. The good can only be understood by the most incommunicable and intimate personal insight (Taylor, 1926, p. 289). Therefore, Socrates proceeds to present the second best alternative: the thing that resembles the Form of the good the most.

### 3.5.2 The Simile of the Sun

<i>The Sun (Visible World)</i>		<i>The Good (Intelligible World of the Forms)</i>
<i>Source of growth and light</i>		<i>Source of reality and truth (other Forms)</i>
<i>Gives visibility to objects of the senses</i>		<i>Gives intelligible to objects of thought</i>
<i>Gives sight to the eye</i>		<i>Gives the power of knowing to the mind</i>
<i>Faculty of sight</i>		<i>Faculty of knowledge</i>

*Diagram 1 (Taken from Lee, D. (ed. and transl.) and Lane, M. (intro) (2007). Plato: The Republic. Second Edition, Penguin Classics. – Slightly modified*

Plato's epistemological theory is greatly influenced by his fascination of mathematics and geometry (Vlastos, 1988). His epistemology is a system of foundations and axioms, and the most fundamental and basic axiom from which all other Forms originate, is the Form of the good.

Plato was one of the first philosophers to give a teleological explanation of being and to give an account of a divine design. According to Plato, the Form of the good is the blueprint from which all other forms are designed. The Form of the good is the cause of *episteme* and truth although it is itself ranked even higher; it is the unhypothetical first principle from which all other objects of *episteme* originate. Therefore, strictly speaking, one should not call the good a Form any more than we call the sun a colour; the other Forms are manifestations or expressions of it (Taylor, 1926, p. 286):

“Then what gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the knower's mind the power of knowing is the form of the good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth, and you will be right to think of it as being itself known, and yet as being something other than, and even more splendid than, knowledge and truth, spending as they are. And just as it was right to think of light and sight as being like the sun, but wrong to think of them as being the sun itself, so here again it is right to think of knowledge and truth as being like the good, but wrong to think of either of them as being the good, whose position must be ranked still higher” (508e-509a).

A few lines later, Socrates repeats in an even more explicit manner that the Form of the good gives intelligibility to the objects of *episteme* (i.e. other Forms) and is also the source of their being and reality:

“The sun, I think you will agree, not only makes the things we see visible, but causes the processes of generation, growth and nourishment, without itself being such a process... The good therefore may be said to be the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their being and reality yet it is not itself that reality, but is beyond it, and superior to it in dignity and power” (509b).

An immediate criticism to Plato's conception of the Form of the good as the unhypothetical first principle is that, although geometrical and mathematical axioms are self-evident (e.g. the quickest way of getting from point A to point B is through a straight line), Plato's epistemological axioms are not self-evident. Acquiring an understanding of the Form of the good is, unlike any mathematical and geometrical axiom, a cognitive achievement rather than a starting point. It is a huge cognitive task



that only the few chosen ones, that have successfully completed the rigorous educational program that Plato has developed for the philosopher-kings, can undertake. Unlike the axioms in geometry and maths, the process of reaching an understanding of the Form of the good involves a long and difficult discovery process.

Nevertheless, one should always keep in mind that Plato was one of the first philosophers ever to attempt to give an account of the origin of knowledge and truth. Even if we are to criticize parts of his theory of epistemology, one cannot help but be filled with awe at one of the very first attempts to give a teleological explanation of being.

### 3.5.3 The Theory of the Divided Line

*Intelligence (noesis) → Forms (Intelligible realm)*

*Mathematical reasoning (dianoia) → Mathematical Objects/Forms (Intelligible realm)*

*Belief (pistis) → Physical Things (Physical realm)*

*Illusion (eikasia) → Shadows and Images (Physical realm)*

*Diagram 2 (Taken from Lee, D. (ed. and transl.) and Lane, M. (intro) (2007). Plato: The Republic. Second Edition, Penguin Classics. – Slightly modified)*

Plato, after the Simile of the Sun, proceeds to further discuss his epistemological ideas further through the theory of the Divided Line. The primary aim of this theory is to show that there are two worlds – two realms: The visible world, which we perceive through our senses, and the intelligible world, which is only reachable through pure reason. The theory of the Divided Line, also shows that while the objects of thought can be securely known (i.e. the Forms), the objects that correspond to the visible realm can only be objects of belief or illusion (Leshner, 2010, p. 173).

Plato argues that to each realm correspond two different mental states and that each of the mental states has a specific subject-matter. To the lower part of the first realm,

which is the visible realm, corresponds the mental state of illusion (*eikasias*) which deals with the subject-matter of shadows and images<sup>107</sup>. To the higher part of the first realm, corresponds belief (*pistis*) which deals with the physical things<sup>108</sup>. To the lower part of the intelligible realm corresponds the mental state of mathematical reasoning<sup>109</sup> (*dianoia*) which deals (inadequately) with some of the Forms<sup>110</sup> and to the higher part of the intelligible realm corresponds the mental state of intelligence (*noesis*) which deals (successfully) with all the Forms<sup>111</sup>. Plato summarizes the theory of the Divided Line in the following passage:

“So please take it that there are, corresponding to the four sections of the line, these four states of mind; to the top section intelligence, to the second reason, to the third belief, and to the last illusion. And you may arrange them in a scale, and assume that they have degrees of clarity corresponding to the degree of truth possessed by their subject-matter” (511e).

Plato, through the theory of the Divided Line, distinguishes between a lower and a higher way of getting to the intelligible realm: mathematical studies and the dialectic (Robison, 1953, p. 194)<sup>112</sup>. According to Plato, the main difference between

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<sup>107</sup>“This gives you... one sub-section of images (D): by “images” I mean first shadows, then reflections in water and other close-grained, polished surfaces, and all that sort of thing, if you understand me” (VI, 510a1-5).

<sup>108</sup>“Let the other sub-section (C) stand for the objects which are the originals of the images- the animals around us, and every kind of plant and manufactured object” (VI, 510a5-10).

<sup>109</sup> “In one sub-section (B) the mind uses the originals of the visible order in their turn as images, and has to base its inquiries on assumptions and proceed from them not to a first principle but to a conclusion” (VI, 510b3-10).

<sup>110</sup>There seems to be a disagreement amongst scholars as to whether Plato believed that mathematical reasoning (*dianoia*) deals with mathematical objects or with the Forms. According to Leshner (2010, p. 171) “whether each of the forms of awareness has its own set of objects and if so, what objects correspond to dianoia” has been a lost lasting debate. See for example Lee and Lane (2007, p. 237): “It is sometimes claimed that Plato implies that there are special mathematical objects in sub-section B; but his language at 510d suggests rather that the mathematicians deal with forms, but in a not fully adequate way”. According to 510d: “You know too that they make use of and argue about visible figures, though they are not really thinking about them, but about the originals which they resemble; it is not about the square or diagonal which they have drawn that they are arguing, but about the square itself or diagonal itself, or whatever the figure might be. The actual figures they draw or model, which themselves cast their shadows and reflections in water – these they treat as images only, the real objects of their investigation being invisible except to the eye of reason”. See also Mason (2015, pp. 85-86): “There is evidence from Aristotle that Plato did at some point in his career believe in special objects with which mathematics deal (Ar. Metaph. A987b14-18). However, here Socrates seems to say that mathematical reasoning is concerned with Forms”.

<sup>111</sup>“In the other (A) it moves from assumption to a first principle which involves on assumptions, without the images used in the other sub-section, but pursuing its inquiry solely by and through forms themselves” (VI, 510b10-15).

<sup>112</sup>See also Cross and Woolzley (1964, p. 226) for a similar point.

mathematical sciences and the dialectic is the following: mathematical sciences use certain assumptions, which they never challenge, to start their investigations. Contrary to such sciences, the dialectic treats assumptions in the true sense, constantly challenging them and using them only as means to reach to the unhypothetical first principle (see section 4.2.2.2 for more on this point):

“Then when I speak of the other sub-section of the intelligible part of the line you will understand that I mean that which the very process of argument grasps by the power of dialectic; it treats assumptions not as principles, but as assumptions the true sense, that is, as starting points and steps in the ascent to something which involves no assumption and is the first principle of everything; when it has grasped that principle it can again descend, by keeping to the consequences that follow from it, to a conclusion. The whole procedure involves nothing in the sensible world, but moves solely through forms to forms, and finishes with forms” (511b).

Plato, in the above passage, draws a very important distinction between mathematical sciences and the dialectic<sup>113</sup>: Mathematical sciences start with hypotheses, which they do not challenge, treating them as known and self-evident when they are not, and thus are not adequate for the study of the Forms. Contrary to the mathematical sciences, the dialectic treats hypotheses as assumptions in the full sense. It is for precisely this reason that in his rigorous educational program those who excel in the study of the mathematical sciences will move on to study the dialectic; it is only through the study of the dialectic that philosophers will reach an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good. Through the study of the mathematical sciences, one can reach *dianoia*, but it is only through the study of the dialectic that one can reach *noesis*.

### 3.5.4 The Allegory of the Cave

The Allegory of the Cave is probably the “most famous analogy in the history of philosophy” (Silverman, 2014). In it, Plato summarizes his entire theory of epistemology, as presented in the *Republic*, while at the same time discusses the numerous implications that this theory has for his pedagogical, ethical and political

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<sup>113</sup>See also (VI, 511d) ““But you want to distinguish that part (A) of the real and intelligible (A+B) which is studied by the science of dialectic as having greater clarity than that (B) studied by what are called “sciences”. These sciences treat their assumptions as first principles and, though compelled to use reason and not sense-perception in surveying their subject matter, because they proceed in their investigations from assumptions and not to a first principle, they do not, you think exercise intelligence on it, even though with the aid of a first principle it is intelligible...’ ‘You have understood me very well’ I said”.

arguments. The philosophical significance of not developing a theory of epistemology in isolation but relating it to other aspects of life (e.g. political, ethical, psychological) is enormous.

The Cave Allegory (514a-521b), briefly and crudely summarized, reads as follows: Socrates asks his interlocutors to imagine that some people are being kept as prisoners in a cave. These prisoners have been there since children and are chained in such a way as to be unable to turn their heads. They only see the shadows of the objects projected on the wall of the cave by the fire located behind them. The prisoners believe that the shadows of the objects casted on the wall is the whole truth<sup>114</sup>.

Then, Socrates asks his interlocutors to imagine that one of these prisoners is set free<sup>115</sup>. The former prisoner now sees the objects while before she could only see their shadows. Socrates portrays this change in perception as a dazzling and painful process<sup>116</sup>. Then, if dragged out of the cave onto the surface, and therefore undergoing again what is described as a painful and difficult process, the former prisoner would be able to see what is real (the Forms) and study them (516a). The last thing she would do is look directly at the sun (i.e. Form of the good) because she will have to do so “without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself” (516 b5-10).

The agent who has undergone all this and has seen the Sun, will stop being interested in things such as wealth and honor<sup>117</sup>. She will want to stay on the surface contemplating this ‘absolute reality’. Still, were she to return to the cave, she would find it difficult to see: she is not used to darkness anymore, she is used to light, and therefore she will need some time to adjust (516e). This ‘semi-blindness’ will make her

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<sup>114</sup>“And so in every way they would believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were the whole truth” (515 c1-3).

<sup>115</sup>This bit implies that there is an agent of liberation. Someone who freed the prisoner. This is presumably the teacher (i.e. the person who frees the prisoner from their belief that the shadows they see are real). Again, this is evidence for the central role that education has in Plato’s philosophical thought.

<sup>116</sup>“...all these actions would be painful and he would be too dazzled to see properly the objects of which he used to see the shadows” (515 d1-2).

<sup>117</sup>“Will our released prisoner hanker after these prizes or envy this power or honor? Wont he be more likely to feel, as Homer says, that he would far rather be “A serf in the house of some landless man” or indeed anything else in the world, than hold the opinions and live the life that they do?” (516 d-c).

look like a ‘fool’. The other prisoners will mock her and will try to kill anyone who tries to convince them that what they see is mere shadows (517a<sup>118</sup>).

After presenting the allegory, Socrates proceeds to discuss his interpretation of it. He connects the world of perception (related to the states of *eikasia* and *pistis*) with the cave and the upward journey to the surface as the upward process of the mind to the intelligible world (reached only by the mental states of *dianoia* and *noesis*). He argues that the Sun, which is the last object to be perceived in the intelligible world (illuminating all others), represents the Form of the good. Here Socrates is repeating his belief that the Form of the good is the unhypothetical first principle and the source of all truth and knowledge. Moreover, he goes on to argue that anyone who has ‘seen’ the Forms and the Form of the good, is truly wise not only in theoretical but also in practical things:

“But in my opinion, for what it is worth, the final thing to be perceived in the intelligible region, and perceived only with difficulty, is the form of the good; once seen, it is inferred to be responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it” (517c).

The allegory of the cave, as already discussed, does not only depict the epistemological position of Plato, but also shows the implications that his theory of epistemology has for other related topics such as education and politics. For example, philosophers should rule the city-state because, having “seen” the Forms and the Form of the good, they are wise in both theoretical and practical matters.

### ***Why Philosophers are best suited to rule and the requirement to do so***

One of the most important arguments made by Plato in the *Republic* is that in order for the ideal state to come about the city should be ruled by philosophers:

“...there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we

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<sup>118</sup>“And they would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him”.

now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands...there is no other road to real happiness either for society or for the individual” (473d-e).

Philosophers are best suited to rule because having ‘seen’ the Forms, and most importantly the Form of the good, they will now try to imitate their patterns in their ruling. In his defense of why philosophers are best suited to rule the city, Socrates argues:

“Then if the philosopher is compelled to try to introduce the standards which he has seen there, and weave them not into himself only, but into the habits of men both in their private and public lives, will he lack the skill to produce self-discipline and justice and all the other ordinary virtues? Certainly not. And if the public discover that we are telling the truth about philosophers, will they still be angry with them and disbelieve us when we say that no sate can find happiness unless the artists drawing it use a divine pattern? If they do make that discovery, they will stop being angry...” (500d-e).

This again shows that philosophers are practically wise because of the *episteme* they have acquired through their philosophical studies. Having acquired an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good, philosophers imitate and try to copy the harmonious and perfect nature of the Forms in their own society:

“Our artist will, I suppose, as he works, look frequently in both directions, that is, at justice and beauty and self-discipline and the like in their true nature, and again at the copy of them he is trying to make in human beings, mixing and blending traits to give the colour of manhood, and judging by that quality in men that Homer too called godly and godlike...He will sometimes delete and draw again, of course, but will go on till he has made human nature as acceptable to God as may be” (501b).

Socrates in this part of the *Republic* calls the philosophers ‘artists’ because he sees them as creating something out of a divine pattern, they are imitating in their ‘art’ something perfect; the Form of the good. Overall, it is those who have seen the Forms and the Form of the good (i.e. those who have acquired the intellectual virtue of *episteme*) that should rule the city. Only the agent who has seen the Forms is qualified to rule because she is the only one who can achieve the aim of true statesmanship: a truly and perfectly harmonious and virtuous city-state. Science, morality and true statesmanship here merge (Rowe, 1984, p.66).

### *Allegory of the Cave and Education*

The position of the Allegory of the Cave in the dialogue of the *Republic* is not random; it comes right before Plato's account of the philosophers' higher education and is designed to smoothly lead into such an account (Rowe, 1984, p. 63). Therefore, my discussion of that will naturally lead me to present and elaborate on Plato's educational theory in the next two chapters. Along with the epistemological and the political implications of the allegory of the cave, the pedagogical ones are also of a great significance. From the start of his description of the Allegory of the Cave, Socrates stresses its important pedagogical features:

“Next, I said compare **the effect of education and of the lack of it** on our nature to an experience like this: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself...” (514a)<sup>119</sup>

Plato, in this section of the *Republic*, connects his epistemological position with his educational program in a direct and explicit manner. Education is seen in the Allegory of the Cave, as conversion; as the turning of the head:

“Suppose one of them were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head and look and walk towards the fire; all these actions would be painful and he would be too dazzled to see properly the objections of which he used to see the shadows” (515c).

This image of ‘descending’ into the cave in order to help the other prisoners was again portrayed in the very first words of the dialogue: “I went **down** yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon, son of Ariston” (I, 327a1). It seems therefore that in the same manner as the person who has escaped the cave and has ‘seen’ the Forms has to return to the cave, Socrates goes down to ‘the cave’ to try to free prisoners. The educator is the one who liberates the ‘prisoner’ and helps them through the difficult and painful process of ‘seeing’ what is real.

Education, therefore, is of the utmost importance. It is through education that the prisoners are ‘freed’ and it is through education that the former prisoners make the journey from the visible world (the cave) to the intelligible (the surface). Being freed

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<sup>119</sup>The translation used for this quote is from Cooper 1997. This is because the translation offered by Lee (2007) does not show as well the point I want to make.

and making the journey to the intelligible world are described as difficult and painful processes. Having presented the Allegory of the Cave, Socrates now moves on to discuss this difficult process. He is moving on to present and discuss the rigorous educational program that he has developed for the philosopher kings.

What we have seen in the Allegory of the Cave in a symbolic way, we will also come to see in Plato's educational program in an explicit manner (See Section 5.2). The breaking of the bonds of the cave-dwellers is the aim of the first stage of Plato's educational program (i.e. literary education and physical/military exercise) while the second stage (i.e. the five mathematical studies and the dialectic) enables the cave-dwellers to escape to the surface; to reach the intelligible realm of Forms. Lastly, the return to the cave of those who have been to the surface and have 'seen' the Sun, symbolizes the requirement that philosophers, after having reached an understanding of the Form of the good through the dialectic, have to hold office.



## CHAPTER 4: THE PLATONIC CONCEPTION OF INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES: ITS IMPORTANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY VIRTUE EDUCATION

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### Chapter Outline

In the first section of this chapter I argue that Socrates was the first epistemic character builder. Socrates trained young Athenians in one cognitive virtue: *desiring truth*, while refusing to offer them any knowledge-education. The training method he used for developing this epistemic disposition in them was the repeated exercise of his elenctic method.

In the second section of this chapter, I argue that Plato did the same in his educational program in the *Republic*, not because he refused to pass on knowledge, but because he considered knowledge of the Good as an ongoing research program. I show this by tracing the steps of the education of the Philosopher Kings in Plato's ideal state, to establish that the decades long educational regime aims at training them in three types of virtue: (i) Moral Virtue; (ii) the Cognitive Virtue of Abstraction; (iii) the Cognitive Virtue of Debate.

I move on to argue that although somewhat ignored by contemporary scholars, Plato's theory of education has much to teach us about intellectual character education today. The Platonic educational program does not advocate the direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner but rather focuses on building the learners' epistemic dispositions. Building upon the Socratic Method, Plato's educational program does not "spoon-feed" knowledge to the learners but rather fosters the growth of intellectual virtues through problem-solving.

I explain ways in which fostering intellectual virtues through problem-solving could be applied in classrooms today. I argue that Plato's rigorous education program is of definite merit for contemporary theories of education, especially given the fact that scholars in the field are looking for alternatives to the traditional methods of teaching.

I conclude this chapter with a comparison of the Socratic educational method and the Platonic educational program, as presented in the *Republic*, and with a discussion of two objections often raised against the Platonic program: (i) the ‘Noble Lie’ and (ii) the self-controlled individual. I also discuss the importance of virtuous exemplars for the education of the philosophers and argue that Plato’s problem-solving learning method is complemented by an exemplarist approach.

## 4.1 SOCRATES AS AN EPISTEMIC CHARACTER BUILDER<sup>120</sup>

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I want to argue in this section, which is very much influenced and based on an article I wrote with Professor Theodore Scaltsas and (my peer) Iliana Lytra<sup>121</sup>, that Socrates is the first epistemic character builder in the history of philosophy<sup>122</sup>. The Socratic Method has been the focus of numerous debates throughout the years but scholars have yet to agree on the purposes it ultimately serves. However, most scholars<sup>123</sup> seem to agree that Socrates is a teacher of moral philosophy, although there are also those<sup>124</sup> who argue that few elements in Socrates' philosophy can be described as concerning morality. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, no one has ever attempted to produce an epistemic reading of the Socratic Method.

In this section of my thesis, I argue that Socrates is not a teacher of moral philosophy but rather an epistemic character builder. I show that the Socratic Method is a tool for developing the cognitive dispositions of agents. I argue that the Socratic elenchus is the first attempt to develop a method for the training of the agents' epistemic character as opposed to a method for moral inquiry. I believe it is important to discuss the Socratic Method before I move on to discuss the Platonic educational program. This section will help me delineate the continuity of thought from Socrates to Plato on educational theory.

### *Is Socrates a Teacher?*

My first task in showing that Socrates is an epistemic character builder is to answer the following question: Is Socrates a teacher and, if he is, what is the object of his teaching?

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<sup>120</sup>Scaltsas, T., Lytra, I. and Kotsonis, A. (Forthcoming) "Socrates: The Very First Epistemic Character Builder" (tentative title). *Ancient Philosophy Today: Dialogoi*. Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>121</sup>I want to thank both of them for giving me permission to use our work in my thesis.

<sup>122</sup>I use a lot the pronoun "I" in this section (4.1). In the majority of cases, I should have used the pronoun "we" because the arguments listed in this section come from the article I wrote with Prof. Scaltsas and my fellow peer Lytra. Nevertheless, I decided to use the pronoun "I" for reasons of simplicity and clarity.

<sup>123</sup>See for example Gomez-Lobo, 1994, Parry, 2014 and Vlastos, 1991.

<sup>124</sup>See for example, Reshotko, 2006.

Scholars have not reach agreement on this matter. For example, Vlastos (1991) argues that Socrates was a teacher of moral philosophy and introduces the term ‘complex-irony’, an innovative reading of Socrates’ irony<sup>125</sup>. Nehamas (1999), on the other hand, objects to Vlastos’ reading arguing that it turns the Socratic method into a technic with merely pedagogical purposes. Vlastos’ reading, according to Nehamas, introduces a dogmatic Socrates who knows the truth and knows that he knows the truth<sup>126</sup>.

I do not agree with either of these two scholars. Firstly, I do not agree with Vlastos’ (1991) view that Socrates is a teacher of moral philosophy mainly because Socrates argues numerous times in the Platonic dialogues that he is not a teacher at all:

“I have never been anyone’s teacher [...] I offer myself to both rich and poor alike for questioning, and if anyone wishes to hear what I say, he may answer me. And whether any of them becomes an upright man or not, I would not justly be held responsible, since I have never promised or taught any instruction to any of them. If someone says that he has ever learned from me or heard privately anything that everyone else did not, know well that he does not speak the truth” (*Apology*, 33a–e).

Socrates’ own description of his method makes me question Nehamas’ (1999) position as well:

“For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons and your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. [...] This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine, which corrupts the youth, my influence is ruinous indeed. But if

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<sup>125</sup>“In ‘complex’ irony what is said both is and isn’t what is meant. Thus when Socrates says he is a ‘procurer’ he does not, and yet he does, mean what he says. [...] In the conventional sense, where to “teach” is simply to transfer knowledge from a teacher’s to a learner’s mind, Socrates means what he says. But in the sense *he* would give to “teaching” – engaging would-be learners in elenctic argument to make them aware of their ignorance and enable them to discover themselves *the truth the teacher had held back* – in that sense of “teaching” Socrates would want to say that he is a teacher, the only true teacher: his dialogue with his fellows is meant to have, and does have, the effect of evoking and assisting their efforts at moral self-improvement.” (Vlastos, 1991, pp. 86-87).

<sup>126</sup>“But the most important and the most controversial element in Vlastos’s interpretation of Socrates is his governing assumption that there are truths that Socrates knows and he knows that he knows. This Socrates is, in the ancient sense of that term, a dogmatist: he knows the truth. His ironic denial that he possesses knowledge and that he teaches it, once interpreted as Vlastos proposes, disappear into protreptic devices designed to get others to see that truth for themselves. Should we then allow irony to transform itself so quickly into an educational ploy?” (Nehamas, 1999, p. 102).

anyone says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth” (*Apology*, 33 a-b).

Socrates explicitly says he is not a teacher and repeatedly denies it, but also claims several times that he has a method, he has a teaching and his method is to make others improve:

“And therefore I am not myself at all wise, nor have I anything to show which is the invention or birth of my own soul, but those who converse with me profit” (*Theaetetus*, 150 d).

This leaves me with the following question: What is Socrates, if he is not a teacher and, more explicitly, not a teacher of moral philosophy? I want to show that he is an epistemic character builder. I will argue towards explaining and justifying this by decoding his method. Socrates knows the truth but he does not transfer knowledge or the truth to his interlocutors/audience directly. The ultimate aim of his method is to help his interlocutors develop the right cognitive dispositions.

### ***Socratic Intellectualism and Knowledge of the Good***

According to Socratic Intellectualism, everyone desires the good<sup>127</sup>. However, this does not entail that everyone will inevitably attain the good. Even if we take for granted that when desiring the good everyone works towards the direction that appears to lead to the good, it still remains a challenge whether they are following the right direction.

The origin of this doubt goes back to the differentiation between the phenomenal and the real good. There is a significant difference between the intended object of our desires and the actual object of those desires. For example, one may desire to have a drink, with the intention to satisfy their thirst not knowing that the actual drink is poisonous and will therefore end up hurting them. Likewise, according to Socrates, everyone’s intention is to go after the real good. Nevertheless, the actual objects of

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<sup>127</sup>This Socratic position has been widely criticized as one of Socrates Paradoxes “No one then wants what is bad, Meno, unless he wants to be such. [...] Were you not saying just now that virtue is to desire good things and have the power to secure them? – Yes, I was. – The desiring part of this statement is common to everybody, and one man is no better than another in this” (*Meno*, 77a-b).

one's desires<sup>128</sup> might be the phenomenal good instead of the real good. Therefore, one cannot tell if their actual object of desires is the real good and not what is phenomenally good, unless one knows the truth about the good and is thus able to distinguish the two. This is evident in the *Meno*:

“And, in your view, do the people who think bad things are doing them good realize the bad things are bad?”

‘No, I certainly wouldn’t say that.’

‘Well clearly these people don’t want bad things (the people who don’t realize that they’re bad). They want things that they thought, were good- it’s just that those things are, in fact, bad. That’s to say, if they don’t realize these things are bad, and think they’re good, then it’s clear that what they actually want is what’s good. Don’t you see?’ (76 d-e)<sup>129</sup>

Socrates does not need to generate in his interlocutors a desire for the good. According to Socrates: “...no one goes willingly towards the bad or what he believes to be bad, neither is it in human nature, so it seems to want to go towards what one believes to be bad instead of the good (*Prot.*, 358 c6-d2)”. Socrates does not need to generate in his interlocutors a desire to know the truth about the good either. It does not make sense for an agent to desire the good but not to care to know the truth about the good. If one desires the good, one also desires to know the truth about the good. Socratic Intellectualism might be the theory behind the claim ‘everyone desires the good’ but, after having a closer look, it inevitably leads us to the claim that everybody desires the good as well as to know the truth about the good. Still, the vast majority of people are not successful in acquiring the good, even though they desire it. As already stated, this is because, due to their ignorance, they go after the phenomenal good and not the real good:

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<sup>128</sup>Socrates, develop a Good-based theory of desires. According to such a theory, for an agent to desire p is for that agent to believe that p is good for them; an agent never knowingly desires what is not good for them. This entails that an agent will desire what is truly good the moment they know what is truly good.

<sup>129</sup>The following quote from the *Protagoras* also reflects the difference between the real and phenomenal: “appearances lead us astray and throw us into confusion, so that in our actions and our choices between great and small we are constantly accepting and rejecting the same things, whereas the metric art would have cancelled the effect of the impression and by revealing the true state of affairs would have caused the soul to live in peace and quiet and abide in the truth, thus saving our life” (*Prot.*, 356e).

“...but that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible? And if one of you disputes it and asserts that he does care, I will not immediately let him go, nor will I go away, but I will speak to him and examine and test him. And if he does not seem to me to possess virtue, but only says he does, I will reproach him, saying that he regards the things worth the most as the least important, and the paltrier things as more important” (*Apology*, 29e-30a).

Therefore, I have shown the two following points: Firstly, what is needed from Socrates is a method that will make his interlocutors realize their ignorance about the good and prepare them for their quest in finding the truth about it. Secondly, the above research justifies the claim that Socrates cannot be a teacher of moral philosophy, despite the various argumentations claiming that he is, because according to Socrates being good and being virtuous simply cannot be a subject of teaching. Socrates believed that everyone desires the good. Therefore, attaining the goodness eventually ends up being the process of attaining and implementing knowledge of the good<sup>130</sup>. Because we all desire the good but we end up being different and more or less virtuous compared to others, which means that the element that differentiates us is not the desire for the good but the knowledge of what the good is<sup>131</sup>. What really remains is for the agent to recognise the good.

### ***The Socratic Method***

The Socratic elenchus is a coherence test<sup>132</sup>; it is not a method for discovering the truth. Socrates' method helps his interlocutors weed out false beliefs about the good through developing a purification process that helps them discern the real good from the phenomenal. Socrates teaches his interlocutors how get rid of falsehoods through the elenctic method. His interlocutors desire the good; still they can attain the good if and only if they attain the truth about the good. But the elenchus most of the times verifies

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<sup>130</sup>“Surely, I said, knowledge is the food of the soul. [...] If, therefore, you have understanding of what is good and evil, you may safely buy knowledge of Protagoras or of any one; but if not, then, oh my friend, pause, and do not hazard your dearest interests at a game of chance” (*Prot.* 313d-e).

<sup>131</sup>“The desiring part of this statement is common to everybody, and one man is no better than another in this? – So it appears. – Clearly then, if one man is better than another, he must be better at securing them. – Quite so” (*Meno*, 77b).

<sup>132</sup>For a more detailed analysis of the elenctic method and its characteristics as a coherence test, see Scaltsas (1989).

their ignorance. Socrates' interlocutors are shown that their confidence in their beliefs about the good is unjustified:

“You certainly look like a numbfish, and you're just the same in other ways as well: because you know what a numbfish does? It makes anyone that gets too close and touches it, go numb; and that's pretty much what I think you've done to me. My mind and my tongue have literally gone numb. I've got no idea how to answer the question. And yet, damn it, I've talked about “being a good man” thousands of times. I've made countless claims about it, time and again, in front of loads of people, and perfectly good claims, too – or so I thought at the time, But now I can't even say what it is. I haven't got the faintest idea!” (*Meno*, 80 a-b).

The elenchus undoes one's unwarranted certainty and perpetuates one's desire to know the truth. Socrates' interlocutors desire to possess the good and to know the truth about the good. Through the Socratic elenchus, they are made aware of the fact that not only have they not attained the good, but that they are also on the wrong track; they are not even getting there. The Socratic elenchus leaves interlocutors wanting to get out of this uncertainty and of this faulty track.

There are several steps involved in the elenchus. The elenchus begins with Socrates asking questions and his interlocutors answering according to their beliefs. As the dialogue unfolds, Socrates leads the interlocutors to inconsistencies through his questions by having them agree inevitably on opposing views. He confronts the interlocutor, pointing out that the claims stated could not possibly be both true; either one belief is true or the other. At this point, his interlocutors are faced with a contradiction, which leads them to bafflement. This bafflement leads the interlocutors to question the validity of their own beliefs. Interlocutors are now in a state of *aporia*. At this point Socrates inserts irony. His ironic attitude has a unique characteristic. He acts as if he does not know the answers, asking his interlocutors to help him get to the truth. Some of them are not ready to accept this responsibility, they get angry with him and they end up embracing their original faulty beliefs or their ignorance<sup>133</sup>. Socratic

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<sup>133</sup>The fact that the Socratic Method is not successful in a catholic way (e.g. in many Platonic dialogues, especially the early ones, the protagonists do not always seem to have benefited from their interaction with Socrates) does not entail a failure of the method per se. It only implies the agent's failure to achieve the method's goals and targets. This paper suggests a reading of Socrates' technic that applies to virtue epistemology and introduces him as an epistemic character builder, the very first epistemic character builder. It would be unrealistic -or even



irony does not target this audience. Its uniqueness is that the abatement used by Socrates is never towards his interlocutors; it is always regarding himself and his own knowledge<sup>134</sup>. Socrates is a self-depreciator, who disavows his own knowledge, his own merits<sup>135</sup>. This stimulates further philosophical inquiry.

The elenchus leaves Socrates' interlocutors desiring because (as a coherence test) it shows them that they have false beliefs and they have not reached the truth yet. Socratic irony is used as a tool to stimulate further philosophical inquiry that will get them out of this bafflement, out of this state of aporia and will keep the motivation to get to the real good 'alive'. Overall, his method of abatement is the following: expose cognitive emptiness in the interlocutor and declare cognitive emptiness in himself. The revelation of cognitive emptiness in the interlocutor will trigger the desire to fill it by seeking truth and so does Socratic irony, Socratic disavowal of knowledge and his claim that he is not a teacher but can make others improve:

“At any rate, this should have helped him towards discovering the truth. Because now he'll be happy to try and find out what he doesn't know, whereas before, he thought he could easily make perfectly good claims, time and again, in front of loads of people, all about how you need a line of twice the length to get twice the area.

Yes, probably!

So do you think he would ever have tried to find out, or learn, what he wrongly thought he knew, before he tumbled into bafflement- before he sensed he didn't know and felt the need to know?

No, I don't think he would, Socrates” (*Meno*, 84 b-c).

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absurd- to expect an absolute success for all of Socrates' interlocutors with indubitable results from the very beginning.

<sup>134</sup>“And as for me – unless a numbfish feels numb itself when it makes other people feel numb, then I'm not like a numbfish. Because it's not as if I've got all the answers myself when I baffle other people. I only make other people feel baffled by being more baffled than anyone myself. Take our question about what exactly being good is: I certainly don't know the answer.” (*Meno*, 80c–d), and “And now I know not what virtue is, and you seem to be in the same case, although you did once perhaps know before you touched me. However, I have no objection to join with you in the enquiry.” (*Meno*, 80d), or “and I confess with shame that I know literally nothing about virtue” (*Meno*, 71b).

<sup>135</sup>Aristotle's theory also justifies the above claim: “Self-depreciators, who understate their own merits, seem of a more refined character, for we feel that the motive underlying this form of insincerity is not to gain but dislike of ostentation. These also mostly disown qualities held in high esteem, as Socrates used to do” (*EN*, 1127 b23-26).

Socrates uses epistemic tools as part of his method (i.e. the elenchus, the disavowal of knowledge, the Socratic irony). If one looks deeper into Socrates' arguments and follows the dialogues as they unfold, one would notice that Socrates is constantly trying to help his interlocutors improve<sup>136</sup>. The way Socrates does that is not by transferring knowledge to them directly, in the usual sense of teaching, but by showing them their ignorance. Socrates never teaches truths or gives definite answers. He is exposing his interlocutors' ignorance and in doing so he is developing their motivation and desire to seek for the truth<sup>137</sup>.

Still, despite its merits, the Socratic elenchus is a deficient cognitive instrument for the discovery of truth because it does not establish truths. The elenchus only reveals the inconsistencies in Socrates' interlocutors believe system. However, this is the insight of Socrates and the perpetual wrong interpretation of what he is doing. Socrates is not proposing a method for the discovery of truth. He has developed a method for training people in the search of the truth – developing their cognitive dispositions.

According to Socrates in the *Apology* “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being” (38a). This describes quite accurately Socrates' ultimate goal when conversing with others: He is trying to persuade everyone he meets of the immense value of inquiry, he is showing them their ignorance and he is training them to seek for the truth. He is an epistemic character builder.

If we think about a cognitive character builder nowadays, it would be a scientist conducting research in a laboratory where she takes in an assistant and teaches him. But this combines two in one: help the assistant in developing the right cognitive dispositions and help them discover truths. Socrates, in a philosophical lab, distinguished between the two procedures, and developed the elenctic method for the dispositional building only.

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<sup>136</sup>“...and the triumph of my art is thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol or a noble and true birth” (*Theaetetus*, 150 C).

<sup>137</sup>Presumably, this desire was created both in the direct and indirect audience (those being the audience that was present at the real time of the discussion and the readers of the Platonic dialogues).

The elenctic discussion prepares the mind for discovering the truth. Still, Socrates' interlocutors are left with a desire for something more than the elenchus. This is where the Platonic method of the dialectic comes in play: Having the philosophers employ the dialectic is the best method to discover the truth. This leads me to the next section where I discuss Plato's rigorous educational program.

## 4.2 THE PLATONIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN THE *REPUBLIC*

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In this section, I argue that although somewhat ignored by contemporary scholars, Plato's theory of education has much to teach us about virtue education today. Contemporary virtue-based approaches to education heavily rely and build upon the Aristotelian theory of education and conception of virtue while the Platonic educational program and the Platonic conception of virtue is somewhat ignored by scholars working in virtue education.

In sections 4.2 to 4.4, I will be presenting two main arguments. The first argument is that the Platonic educational program does not advocate the direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner; its primary purpose rather is the building of the *learners' epistemic dispositions* (Section 4.3). The second argument, which is closely connected to the first, is that the Platonic approach to educational program has something different to offer to contemporary virtue-based approaches to education than the Aristotelian approach and that is *learning through problem-solving* (Section 4.4).

I will show that the Platonic educational program aims at training learners in three types of virtue: (i) Moral Virtue; (ii) the Cognitive Virtue of Abstraction; (iii) the Cognitive Virtue of Debate (Section 4.2). My overall aim is to show that the Plato's rigorous educational program has much to offer to contemporary theories of virtue education.

### 4.2.1 The First Stage

It is vital for the purpose of the study that I proceed with an overview of Plato's rigorous educational program. Through the discussion that follows certain integral features of Plato's educational program are highlighted (i.e. the link between the education for moral and the education for intellectual virtues). Then, in the sections that follow (4.3-4-4), the significance of some of these features for contemporary approaches to education is shown. My discussion in these sections is going to focus on the Platonic theory of education as presented in the *Republic*. This is because Plato discusses his rigorous educational program extensively in the *Republic*.

To begin with, something that is not stressed as often as it should be is that Plato was the first to propose and to theorize a statewide educational program - the very first public educational system (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 67). Up to that point, education, with the exception of Sparta (which had a physical-oriented education), was the concern of the individual. In Athens, those who were of affluent families were educated by personal tutors (with the sophists being considered by the majority of Athenians as the best teachers<sup>138</sup>) in a variety of subjects such as rhetoric, philosophy and mathematic.

In the *Republic*, Plato divides his educational program in to two stages, with each stage having two parts. The first part of the first stage of Plato's education is literary education – viz. the study of poems and the music that accompanies them (III, 376c5-403c5). The second part of the first stage of Plato's educational program focuses on physical and military training (403c5-412a). The first stage of Plato's educational program has a very specific aim. It aims at producing a good character and a harmonious soul. It does not aim at transferring knowledge to the learners but rather prepares them for the second stage of Plato's educational program by fostering the growth of moral virtues such as the virtue of self-control:

“That...was the complement of their physical education. It gave a training by habituation, and used music and rhythm to produce a certain harmony and balance of character and not knowledge; and its literature, whether fictional or factual, had similar effects. There was nothing in it to produce the effect you are

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<sup>138</sup>See for example *Protagoras*, 311e-312d.

seeking (i.e. the transition from the phenomenal world to the reality of the Forms)” (VII, 522a5-b).

The first stage of Plato’s educational program is instrumental for the successful education of the guardians<sup>139</sup>. Without a harmonious soul and a good character, the guardians will be led astray. According to Plato, without proper education and character training, the appetitive part of the soul - being the largest one - is bound to lead the soul (See section 2.1). Therefore, if not properly trained and habituated in moral virtues, guardians will pursue the satisfaction of unnecessary appetitive desires. They will have no interest in pursuing epistemic goods. They will be forever trapped in the world of perception. This shows that, contrary to Aristotle who believed that intellectual virtues are necessary for moral excellence<sup>140</sup>, Plato thought that moral virtues are a prerequisite for the development of intellectual ones. According to Plato, an agent needs firstly to develop moral virtues before she is able to develop epistemic ones. This is why, according to the Platonic theory of education, virtue-based approaches to education should start with the development of moral virtues.

I proceed, in the two short subsections that follow (4.2.1.1 and 4.2.1.2), to examine in more detail each of the two part of the first stage of Plato’s educational program.

#### 4.2.1.1 Literary Education

According to Plato, the mind should be educated before the body, and thus guardians should start with the study of poems and the music that accompanies them before they begin their physical and military training (II, 377a10-12). Poetry and musical education is important for the education of all three parts of the human soul. Music and poetry were tightly linked together in ancient Greece<sup>141</sup>: poetry was accompanied by music<sup>142</sup>. According to Plato, the stories that the guardians will hear in such poems, and the music

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<sup>139</sup>For the importance of moral training for epistemic endeavors see for example *Rep.*, IX, 571e: “But a man of sound and disciplined character. Before he goes to sleep, has wakened his reason and given it its fill of intellectual argument and inquiry; his desires he has neither starved nor indulged, so that they sink to rest and don’t plague the highest part of him with their joys and sorrows, but leave it to pursue its investigations unhampered and on its own, and to its endeavours to apprehend things still unknown to it...”

<sup>140</sup>See the Aristotelian virtue of *phronesis*.

<sup>141</sup>See Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 67.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*

that accompanies them, will greatly affect their character. He argues that being of young age the guardians are quite impressionable:

“And the first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark” (377b).

Therefore, according to Plato, it is of paramount importance that students listen only to the right kind of stories. Right kind of stories<sup>143,144</sup> in the sense that they contribute to the atrophy of the guardians’ appetitive desires by showing them that excessive appetitive desires lead the person who pursues them to undesirable and harmful outcomes. According to Plato, stories that depict unjust behaviors<sup>145</sup>, such as stories of gods fighting each other, should be banned from the education curriculum: “Nor can we permit stories of wars and plots and battles among the gods...” (III, 378c1). Since young guardians are impressionable<sup>146</sup>, they will imitate acts from the stories they hear. If they hear stories that depict morally wrong acts, such as gods lying and betraying each other, they will imitate such acts. If on the other hand they only hear stories that depict morally commendable acts, such as being brave and honest, they will imitate such virtuous acts.

Allowing into the educational curriculum only the right kind of stories is also of major importance for the training of the guardians’ spirited part of the soul. For example, the stories that the guardians are taught should be about brave heroes and/or describing heroic deeds. Young guardians should not hear stories that will make them fear death:

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<sup>143</sup>“Shall we therefore readily allow our children to listen to any stories made up by anyone, and to form opinions that are for the most part the opposite of those we think they should have when they grow up? ...Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest” (*Rep.*, III, 377c).

<sup>144</sup>See for example *Rep.*, III, 389e-390d for the kind of stories that should be taught to the guardians and the kind of stories that should not be taught to them.

<sup>145</sup>See for example also *Rep.*, III, 391d1-3: “We must therefore neither believe nor allow the story of the dreadful rapes attempted by Theseus, son of Poseidon, and Peirithous, son of Zeus”.

<sup>146</sup>See for example *Rep.*, III, 409a5-b: “...On the contrary, the mind must, while it is still young, remain quite without experience of or contact with bad characters, if its condition is to be truly good and its judgements just. That is why people of good character seem simple when they are young, and are easily taken in by dishonesty, because they have nothing corresponding in themselves to give them a sympathetic understanding of wickedness”.

“But what if they are to be brave? Must we not extend our range to include something that will give them the least possible fear of death? Will anyone who in his heart fears death ever be brave?’ ‘Certainly not’ ‘And will anyone who believes in terrors in the after-life be without fear of death, and prefer death in battle to defeat and slavery?’ ‘No.’ ‘It looks, then, as if we shall have to control story-tellers on this topic too. We must ask the poets to stop giving their present gloomy account of the after-life, which is both untrue and unsuitable to produce a fighting spirit, and make them speak more favourably of it” (386b).

The argument that Plato is making in the above quotation relates to contemporary exemplarist theories<sup>147</sup> to educating moral virtues (see section 4.6 for a more detailed discussion of exemplarist theories). Having virtuous exemplars incorporated in poetry (as well as having virtuous exemplars physically present) for the young guardians to imitate is of vital importance at this initial stages of their education. By imitating virtuous agents, the young guardians will start developing a character of similar good nature to that of the exemplars’.

However, most crucially at this stage, musical education is important for the education and training of the rational part of the guardians’ soul. Through their musical education, guardians experience for the first time harmony and Beauty<sup>148</sup>.

“(This) is why this stage of education is crucial. For rhythm and harmony penetrate deeply into the mind and take a most powerful hold on it, and, if education is good, bring and impart grace and beauty, if it is bad, the reverse” (401d).

This appreciation of harmonious and beautiful poems and music is expected to naturally lead the students to an appreciation of what is morally beautiful and the outcome of a good character (Taylor, 1926. p. 280):

“And moreover the proper training we propose to give will make a man quick to perceive the shortcomings of works of art or nature, whose ugliness he will rightly dislike; anything beautiful he will welcome gladly, will make it his own and so grow in true goodness of character; anything ugly he will rightly condemn and dislike, even when he is still young and cannot understand the reason for so doing, while when reason comes he will recognise and welcome her as a familiar friend because of his upbringing” (401e-402a10).

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<sup>147</sup>See for example Annas, 2004.

<sup>148</sup>See also *Rep.*, III, 403c: “And that, I think,’ said I, ‘concludes what we have to say about this state of education, and a very appropriate conclusion too – for the object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful.’ ‘I agree’”.



Therefore, according to Plato, musical education is an invaluable initial stage in the rigorous education he has developed for the guardians. Literary education aims at training all three parts of the soul. The pursuit of unnecessary appetitive desires is discouraged through the right stories, poems that may hinder the guardians' courage are removed from the educational curriculum and musical harmony and beauty give to the young guardians their very first contact with what is good, harmonious and beautiful.

#### 4.2.1.2 Physical and Military Education

Another interesting aspect of the Platonic educational program, and of potential value for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education, is the role that physical and military education plays in Plato's program. The primary aim of physical and military education is not to train the body, but to foster the development of a good and steady character in the students:

“And that, my dear Glaucon... is why I say that the purpose of the two established types of education (mental and physical) is not, as some suppose, to deal one with the mind and the other with the body... I think that perhaps the main aim of both is to train the mind” (*Rep.*, III, 410c1-10).

According to Plato, physical education should not run parallel with literary education but should come after the latter has finished. Most probably, Plato had in mind that physical education should take place between the ages of eighteen and twenty – as that was the custom in Athens at his time (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 100). The Platonic theory of physical education includes both military and athletic components and stresses out the importance of appropriate diet<sup>149</sup> and health education<sup>150</sup> for the good health of both the guardians' body and soul.

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<sup>149</sup>See for example *Rep.*, III, 404a-d for what the appropriate diet for Guardians is. See also 403e1-5 where Plato argues that guardians should never be allowed to drink too much and get drunk.

<sup>150</sup>See for example *Rep.*, III, 405d: “And it's disgraceful too to need a doctor not only for injury or regular disease, but because by leading the kind of idle life we have described we have filled our bodies with gases and fluids, like a stagnant pool, and driven the medical profession to invent names for our diseases, like flatulence and catarrh”.

It is significant to note that Plato gives quite a clear justification as to why he is giving priority to the training and education of the mind over the training of the body. He argues that if the mind of the individual is in harmony - if it is properly trained - then it will be able to bring about the best outcome for the body and perhaps even train it on its own. Still, no matter how well trained the body might be, it is not in a position to produce a good mind and character:

“In my view physical excellence does not of itself produce a good mind and character: on the other hand, excellence of mind and character will make the best of the physique it is given... If the mind therefore has been adequately trained, we should do well then to leave to it the minutiae of physical training: all we need to do, for brevity’s sake is to give a rough outline” (403d-e).

Later on in the discussion, Socrates stresses once again how both types of education aim at training the character of the students. According to Plato, the individual who puts too much emphasis on the training of his body, and neglects the training of the mind, becomes “uncivilized and tough” (410d1)<sup>151</sup>. Yet, the individual who puts too much emphasis on literary education and neglects physical training becomes “indecently soft” (410e1-2)<sup>152</sup>.

According to Plato, a proper educational program should aim at incorporating both elements (i.e. physical and literary training) in a harmonious way. This will produce a character that is “self-controlled and brave” (411a2) and who is neither too soft nor uncivilized. In the end of his discussion of physical and military education, Plato summarizes the aims of the entire first stage of his educational program:

“What I should say therefore is that these two branches of education seem to have been given by some god to men to train these two parts of us - the one to train our philosophic part and the other our energy and initiative. They are not intended the one to train body, the other mind, except incidentally, but to ensure a proper harmony between energy and initiative on the one hand and reason on

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<sup>151</sup>According to Plato, such a kind of person is filled with confidence and courage (III, 411c) but due the lack of character education has become “... an unintelligent philistine, with no use for reasoned discussion, and an animal addiction to settle everything by brute force. His life is one of clumsy ignorance, unrelieved by grace or beauty” (III, 411d10-e5).

<sup>152</sup>Plato describes such a kind of person in the following way: “So when a man surrenders to the sound of music and lets its sweet, soft, mournful strains... be funnelled into his soul through his ears, and gives up all his time to the glamorous moaning of song, the effect at first on his energy and initiative of mind, if he has any, is to soften it as iron is softened in a furnace, and made workable instead of hard and unworkable; but if he persists and does not break the enchantment, the next stage is that it melts and runs, till the spirit has quite run out of him and his mental sinews are cut, and he has become what Homer calls “a feeble fighter” (411a5-b5).

the other, by tuning each to the right pitch...And so we may venture to assert that anyone who can produce the perfect blend of the physical and intellectual sides of education and apply them to the training of character, is producing music and harmony of far more importance than any mere musician tuning strings” (411e-412a).

#### 4.2.2 The Second Stage

Guardians who have demonstrated an apt for learning and have developed a harmonious soul and a good character will move on to the second stage of the Platonic educational program. While the first stage was primarily concerned with character training and the growth of moral virtues, the second stage seeks to train the epistemic dispositions of guardians in order to enable them to reach, as much as humanely possible, to an understanding of the Forms.

Plato discusses the higher stage of the Platonic educational program, which aims at educating philosophers, right after his discussion of the Simile of the Sun (507a-509c), the theory of the Divided Line (509d-511e) and the Allegory of the Cave (514a-521b). The way Plato presents his higher educational stage, as well as the position this has in the *Republic*, makes apparent that it should be understood in terms of the epistemological notions that were presented before it (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 249).

The aim of the second stage of Plato’s educational program is to train philosophers in such a way as to enable them to move from the world of perception to the intelligible world of the Forms. The lower educational stage, while necessary for successfully engaging in the studies of the higher educational stage, did not bring about this transition in the guardians’ minds (although it did pave the way for it):

“That...was the complement of their physical education. There was nothing in it to produce the effect you are seeking (i.e. the transition from the phenomenal world to the reality of the Forms)” (VII, 522a5-b).

Still, the value of the first stage of the Platonic educational program should not be downplayed. As I have already pointed out, the first stage prepares guardians for the second stage by fostering the growth of moral virtues, such as the virtue of self-control and bravery. It also gives guardians a first contact with what is beautiful and good. The first stage of the Platonic educational program produces a harmonious soul that enables

guardians to proceed to the higher stages of learning. It enables the rational part of the soul to pursue the objects of its desires without facing much hindrance from the other two parts:

“But a man of sound and disciplined character...his desires he has neither starved nor indulged, so that they sink to rest and don't plague the highest part of him with their joys and sorrows, but leave it to pursue its investigations unhampered and on its own, and to its endeavours to apprehend things still unknown to it...” (IX, 571e).

#### 4.2.2.1 The Five Mathematical Studies

The second stage of Plato's educational program is split again into two parts. The first part consists in the study of five mathematical sciences: i) arithmetic, ii) plane and iii) solid geometry, iv) astronomy and v) harmonics (VII, 524d10-531c).

Plato does not include the study of these five mathematic sciences out of an interest for the advancement of sciences. He is rather interested in training guardians to “think abstractly” (Cornford 1960, p. 241, cited in Lane and Lee, 2007, p. 259). For example, when discussing arithmetic and the role it plays within his educational program, Plato stresses out that he is not interested in its usefulness for commercial transactions (e.g. its usefulness for merchants) but rather:

“...for the easiest conversion of the soul from the world of becoming to that of reality and truth” (525c5-d).

He then goes on to explain how studying arithmetic produces this conversion of the soul:

“What do you think they would say, Glaucon, if one were to say to them, ‘This is very extraordinary – what are these numbers you are arguing about, whose constituents units are, so you claim, all precisely equal to each other, and at the same time not divisible into parts?’...’I suppose they would say that the numbers they mean can be **apprehended by reason, but that there is no other way of handling them**’ ‘You see therefore...that this study looks as if it were **really necessary** to us, since it so obviously compels the mind to use pure thought in order to get at the truth” (526a-b).

For Plato, the world of becoming is the world we perceive through the senses, while the world of reality and truth can only be reached by abstraction and through pure

reason. When discussing plane geometry, Plato points out that the reason he has included this mathematical science in his educational curriculum is to “...draw the mind to the truth and direct the philosophers’ reason upwards, instead of downwards” (527b10-c).

Plato is not interested in having his students study the physical world. According to him, there is no knowledge to be gained from perception. For example, in the case of the study of astronomy, Plato does not think that the students learn anything just from gazing at the stars and the planets:

“...but I can’t believe that the mind is made to look upwards except by studying the real and the invisible. If anyone tries to learn anything about the world of sense whether by gaping upwards or blinking downwards, I don’t reckon that he really learns – there is no knowledge to be had of such things – nor do I reckon his mind is directed upwards, even if he’s lying on his back or floating on the sea” (529b5-10).

According to Plato, one should study the stars in the same way one would study the design of a famous artist. She should admire the skill with which it was made but she should not seek to learn from it the truth about things such as size and proportion (529d10-e). For Plato, astronomy, like the previous mathematical sciences discussed, should be understood as posing problems (see section 4.4 for more on Plato’s problem solving method):

“We shall therefore treat astronomy, like geometry, as setting us problems for solution...and ignore the visible heavens, if we want to make a genuine study of the subject and use it to convert the mind’s natural intelligence to a useful purpose” (530c1-3).

Harmonics is yet another mathematical science that the guardians are going to study at this stage of their education. Harmonics is portrayed as a sister science to astronomy (530d15) and has the same purpose as all other four mathematical sciences that preceded it in Socrates’ presentation. According to Plato, guardians should not approach this study using their ear; they should rather approach it using their mind (531b). The reason Plato includes harmonics in his educational program is not because he wants guardians to be good at measuring notes against each other (531a3) but because he wants to help them develop the ability to think abstractly. According to Plato, Harmonics are useful when:

“The object is to discover what is valuable and good, though useless if pursued for any other end” (531c15).

In summation, for Plato, the five mathematic studies are of vital importance for the guardians’ education because they aim at:

“...leading the best element in the mind up towards the vision of the best among realities, just as the body’s clearest organ was led to the sight of the brightest of all things in the material and visible world” (532c10-d2).

Overall, the primary aim of the five mathematical studies is to train guardians in the cognitive virtue of abstraction. The objects of these mathematical studies are objects that cannot be perceived through the senses; they can only be ‘perceived’ through the mind’s eye (Taylor, 1926, pp. 290-291). The virtue of abstraction “...draws the mind to the truth and direct the philosophers’ reason upwards, instead of downwards” (527b10-c). Successfully engaging in the cognitive ability of abstraction (which is the activity characteristic of the specific virtue in question) allows guardians to move from the physical world of perception to the intelligible realm (which is only accessible through pure reasoning). It helps guardians move from the state of belief (*pistis*) to the state of mathematical reasoning (*dianoia*). The cognitive virtue of abstraction is a prerequisite for guardians advancing to the study of the dialectic.

#### 4.2.2.2 The Study of the Dialectic

Despite having explained its tremendous value for the education of the guardians, Plato argues that the study of the five mathematical sciences is not the end of his educational program. This is because mathematical sciences involve certain assumptions that do not allow the mind to reach an understanding of the Forms (*noesis*). According to Plato, these sciences are limited to helping the students move from the state of belief (*pistis*) to that of mathematical reasoning (*dianoia*). This is because they start with certain hypotheses that they leave undisturbed and unaccounted for. The method of hypothesis is an integral part of the mathematical studies; but it is also the reason why Plato does not think that one can reach an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good through their study:

“...geometry and the like, though they have some hold on reality, we can see that they are only dreaming about it; they can never wake and look at it as it is, so long as they leave the assumptions they used undisturbed and cannot account for them. For if one’s starting point is something unknown, and one’s conclusion and intermediate steps are made up of unknowns also, how can the resulting consistency ever by any manner of means become knowledge?” (*Rep.*, VII, 533c).

Therefore, those who have excelled in their education are now introduced to the study of the dialectic (531d-534e). Those who become experts in the dialectic acquire the cognitive virtue of debate. Having the cognitive virtue of debate entails that (i) they are able to give the account of “the essential nature of each thing” (534b2). (ii) They are able to “ask and answer questions with the highest degree of understanding” (534d10-15). And most importantly for Plato, (iii) they are able to reach to an understanding of the Form of the good because they are able to give an account of the Form of the good and reply to all objections and questions raised against them (534b).

Plato does not give a full account of the dialectic method<sup>153</sup> (533a<sup>154</sup>). Still, his discussion of the dialectic reveals some important features of it. According to Plato, the study of the dialectic is at the top of his educational program as no other study could possibly be placed above it (534d10-15) since it is the only study that enables guardians to move from mathematical reasoning (*dianoia*) to intelligence (*noesis*). This is because it is “...the only procedure which proceeds by the destruction of assumptions to the very first principle, so as to give itself a firm base” (533d1-5).

But what does Plato mean when he says that the dialectic is the only procedure which proceeds by “the destruction of hypotheses”? And what exactly is the very first principle that Plato refers to? The answer to the latter question can be found in Plato’s epistemological views as presented in the *Republic* (see section 3.5). Plato’s discussion of the Allegory of the Cave and the Simile of the Sun suggests that the unhypothetical first principle is the Form of the good (see section 3.5.2).

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<sup>153</sup>For this point see also Lee and Lane who note that “Plato does not profess to give here a full account of the dialectic...but we learn some important things about it” (2007, p. 263).

<sup>154</sup>“...you won’t be able to follow me further, not because of any unwillingness on my part, but because what you’d see would no longer be an image of what we are talking about but the truth itself, that is as I see it: one ought not at this point to claim certainty”.

In what concerns the former question, Plato does not explicitly state how dialecticians reach, through the dialectic, to the first unhypothetical principle. The interpretations offered by scholars on this vary. Still, perhaps the most wide-held interpretation is that after first reaching a hypothesis and after spending many years trying to disprove it without success, the dialectician can then reliably conclude that they have discovered the unhypothetical first principle (Robison, 1953, see also Mathews, 1972)<sup>155</sup>.

Overall, the study of the dialectic is instrumental in giving philosophers the cognitive tools to reach an understanding of the Forms and the Form of the good. The dialectic does not rely on assumptions; it goes towards the very first principle. Those who become experts in the dialectic acquire the cognitive virtue of debate: they are able to give an account of the essential nature of each thing and they are able to answer all questions and objections raised against them.

### 4.2.3 Holding Office

Guardians who have finished successfully the study of the dialectic are not yet ready to be philosopher-kings. They need to hold subordinate offices. Like the prisoner who has seen the Sun and is half-blind upon returning to the cave (VII, 516e), guardians who have seen the Forms and the Form of the good need time in order to adjust their vision again to the shadows. Holding subordinate offices also serves as a test of their character:

“After that (i.e. the study of dialectic) they must be sent down again into the Cave we spoke of, and compelled to hold any military or other office suitable for the young...And here again they must be tested to see if they stand up to temptations of all kinds or give way to them” (539e-540a2).

Only those who have successfully undergone both stages of Plato’s rigorous educational program and have held subordinate offices for fifteen years, are fully qualified philosopher-kings (Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 267). Yet, having experienced true pleasure in their contemplation of the Forms (see for example, IX, 585e), they will be reluctant to spend time ruling the city. Still, they need to be compelled to help the state

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<sup>155</sup>Nevertheless, even if one disagrees with this interpretation, this does not affect what I have been trying to show at this point of the study: Plato believes that the dialectic is far superior to the mathematical sciences because it is the only procedure that enables philosophers to reach an understanding of the Form of the good.



with practical matters because, having reached an understanding of the Form of the good, they are the most qualified to rule:

“...The good itself, which they can take as a pattern for ordering their own life as well as that of society and the individual. For the rest of their lives they will spend the bulk of their time in philosophy, but when their turn comes they will, in rotation, turn to the weary business of politics and, for the sake of society, do their duty as rulers...” (540a2-540b5).

Many scholars (such as Reeve 1988, Irwin 1977, 1995, and Kraut 1999) have pointed out that Plato’s argumentation in this section of the *Republic* is rather problematic. According to the dialogue, the just thing for philosophers to do is to rule the city-state. Still, this is not to their best self-interest. They are better off contemplating the Forms. Glaucon, probably sensing something is off with Socrates’ argument, asks whether this requirement (to rule the city) treats philosophers justly (519e). Socrates offers three reasons as to why this is a just requirement. Firstly, the ideal city must promote the good of the whole community and not just of the philosophers (519e-520a). Secondly, philosophers have been benefited by the education the city has provided them and therefore have to give back to the city (520a-d). Lastly, Socrates argues that philosophers will recognize the justice of this arrangement and accept it, however grudgingly (520e).

However, the problem arising from such an argument is the following: it seems that, contrary to what Socrates has been arguing for in the whole of the *Republic*, being just is not always to the best interest of the agent. By deciding to hold office, in order to do what is just, philosophers are actually acting against their self-interest. Philosophers seem to be far better off doing what is unjust: refusing to rule the city and wholly dedicating their lives in contemplating the Forms.

Various scholars have attempted to offer an interpretation of Plato’s arguments that would solve the problems that arises from this passage. White (1968), for example, argues that Plato is simply making an exception here: philosophers are indeed better off contemplating the Forms than ruling the city and therefore must be compelled to hold office. Other solutions to the problem include Reeve’s (1988) argument that ruling the city is to the best interest of the philosophers because if they do not do so the ideal city

will collapse and there will be civil strife which will not allow them to dedicate their time in contemplating the Forms. Lastly, Kraut (1999) has also offered his own solution to the problem. He argues that although in the majority of cases philosophical activity is better than political, this is not always the case. According to Kraut, by holding office and ruling, the philosopher safeguards the harmony in city and this constitutes an imitation of the Forms. Kraut's interpretation of the Platonic position is that it is always to the benefit of the individual to imitate the Forms and never beneficial to disassociate oneself from them (refuse to hold office).

I am not going to argue for one interpretation over the other, or even try to offer my own interpretation. I just wanted to highlight this significant problem that arises at this point in the *Republic*; a challenging problem that has been troubling contemporary scholars. Nevertheless, this problem does not affect my overall arguments.

### **Summarizing Plato's Educational Program**

In summation, Plato's rigorous educational program lasts for approximately fifty years. The first part of the first stage of Plato's education is literary education (i.e. the study of poems and the music that accompanies them) and lasts until the age of eighteen. The second part of the first stage of Plato's educational program is physical and military training and takes place between the ages of eighteen and twenty. The entire first stage of Plato's educational program has a very specific aim. It aims at producing a good character and a harmonious soul; it aims at fostering the growth of moral virtues such as courage and self-control. The first stage of Plato's educational program is crucial for the successful education of the guardians. Without a harmonious soul and a steady character the guardians will be led astray. Without proper education and character training the appetitive part of the soul, being the largest one, is bound to lead the soul. Therefore, if not properly trained, guardians will pursue unnecessary appetitive desires and will have no interest in acquiring an understanding of the Forms. They will be forever trapped in the world of perception.

The guardians who have demonstrated an apt for learning and have developed a harmonious soul and a good character will move on to the second stage. The second

stage of Plato's educational program is split again into two parts. The first part is the study of the five mathematical sciences and takes place between the ages of twenty to thirty. The primary aim of this study is to train guardians in the cognitive virtue of abstraction. It aims at enabling them to move from the world of perception to the world of reality (the world of the Forms). While the first stage was primarily concerned with character training, the second stage seeks to train the guardians in such a way as to enable them to reach, as much as humanely possible, to an understanding of the Forms.

Nevertheless, Plato argues that the study of these five mathematical sciences is not the end of his educational program because they rely on certain assumptions that do not allow the mind to reach to *noesis* (to reach an understanding of the Forms). Therefore, those who have excelled in their studies are to be introduced to the study of the dialectic. The dialectic, which lasts for approximately five years (from the age of 30 to 35), is the cornerstone of Plato's educational program. Those who become experts in the dialectic acquire the cognitive virtue of debate. They are able to give the account of "the essential nature of each thing" (VII, 534b2), to "ask and answer questions with the highest degree of understanding" (534d10-15) and to give an account of the Form of the good and reply to all objections and questions raised against them (534b). Those who finish successfully their study in the dialectic will need to hold subordinate offices for fifteen years.

After fifty years, those very few who have successfully completed all stages of Plato's educational program are fully qualified philosopher-kings.

### 4.3 FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF EPISTEMIC DISPOSITIONS

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Following Anscombe's 1958 article, in which she urges for a return to the concept of virtue, contemporary virtue based approaches to education started being developed side by side with contemporary theories of virtue ethics. At first, the aim of contemporary virtue-education was exclusively the fostering of moral virtues. Scholars, such as Carr (1991) and Lickona (1991), led this movement in philosophy of education arguing for the value of educating moral virtues in schools. For example, according to Carr (1991, p. 6):

“At any rate, in this work I have taken the view that some definite initiation into those virtues or qualities ordinarily acknowledged in the familiar human discourse of fundamental human association must lie at the heart of the moral education of all children and that parents and teachers who fail to acquaint their children with those fundamental dispositions of moral life are seriously renegeing on the full education implication of their roles as fathers and teachers.”

It is only very recently, years after Sosa (1980) re-introduced the concept of intellectual virtues, that contemporary scholars of educating started thinking of ways to incorporate epistemic virtues in virtue-based approaches to education.

The aim of contemporary epistemic virtue-based approaches to education is, in short, to nurture the growth of intellectual virtues. This educational goal unites the reliabilist and responsibilist traditions. For example, according to Pritchard (who is a virtue reliabilist): “We don't just want an education to provide children with a body of true beliefs that they can call upon, but also to provide children with the cognitive skills to be able to determine truths for themselves” (2013, p. 237). Similarly, according to Battaly (who is a virtue responsibilist) “We want our students to become skilled in deductive and inductive reasoning, to become open-minded, conscientious, and intellectually courageous, and to care about truth for its own sake. In short, we want our students to become intellectually virtuous” (2006, p. 191). Scholars, such as Baehr (2013), highlight the value of intellectual virtues and point out that incorporating them in contemporary educational programs is worth the effort. According to Baehr “conceiving of education as properly aimed at nurturing growth in intellectual character

virtues provides a much better way of capturing the putative meaning and purpose of teaching and learning” (2013, p. 112). My aim in this section is to show that this educational goal, although attributed to contemporary virtue theorists, originates from Plato and Platonic Socrates.

Plato questioned whether we can attain knowledge but nevertheless went on to develop his Socratically inspired theory of education according to which we can teach learning without knowing. Socrates proclaimed his ignorance numerous times<sup>156</sup>; nevertheless, he went on to educate the youth of Athens. This is what I suggest Plato’s notion of intellectual excellence highlights: we should teach children not by transferring knowledge to them directly but by building dispositions into them to seek and acquire epistemic goods. According to Plato’s theory of the tripartite soul (See sections 2.1 and 2.2), the soul has three parts: the rational, the spirited and the appetitive<sup>157</sup>. Plato argues that the rational part, with the help of the spirited, must overcome appetitive desires if we are to reach our full potentials. Plato’s educational program<sup>158</sup> aims at training the epistemic dispositions and character of the students; it aims at developing their rational desire to acquire epistemic goods.

The importance of having undergone the proper character training, and having therefore developed the right dispositions for acquiring epistemic goods, is evident throughout the *Republic*. For example, in Book VII of the *Republic* where the Allegory of the Cave is discussed (514a-520a), Socrates, after presenting the allegory, argues that “the eye cannot be turned unless the whole body is turned and likewise the intellect cannot be turned unless the whole soul is turned” (518c). According to Mason, this shows that “We must be motivated to pursue truth, and only if we have the right motives shall we discover it” (2010, p. 98). Later on in book VII of the *Republic*, Socrates argues that “Bodily exercise when compulsory, does not harm to the body, but knowledge, which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind” (536e). This shows that, according to Plato, the agent needs to desire knowledge in order to acquire it. It is this

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<sup>156</sup>See for example the *Apology*, 22c: “I am wiser than this human being. For probably neither of us knows anything noble and good, but he supposes he knows something when he does not know, while I, just as I do not know, do not even suppose that I do.”

<sup>157</sup>*Rep.*, IV, 439a-440e.

<sup>158</sup>*Rep.*, VII, 521d-540c.

desire for rational goods that motivates philosophers. This touches upon what Dewey says in *Democracy and Education*<sup>159</sup>:

“In schools, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as theoretical spectators, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect. The very word pupil has almost come to mean one who is engaged not in having fruitful experiences but in absorbing knowledge directly. Something which is called mind or consciousness is severed from the physical organs of activity” (1916, p. 164).

The Platonic rigorous educational program is in accordance with what Dewey is arguing for. According to Plato’s theory of education, students learn by being active inquirers. The development of rational desires, which is at the heart of the Platonic educational program, aims specifically at creating active inquirers who are motivated by their rational desires. It aims at creating lovers of wisdom. The Platonic educational program aims at developing the epistemic dispositions and the character of learners rather than transferring knowledge directly<sup>160</sup> to them. The Platonic approach to education is not only in agreement with what Dewey is arguing for, but is also in line with a general complaint raised by several contemporary philosophers of education:

“Furthermore, it seems to have been a regular complaint of past and present educational philosophers that education has too often been focused upon the transmission of such useless or mere facts to young people in schools” (Carr, 1991, p. 118).

This complaint is also in line with what Socrates is trying to achieve through his Socratic method. Most of the Socratic dialogues, for example, end in *aporia* – we do not get an answer to the question Socrates and his interlocutors are trying to find. This

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<sup>159</sup>This is despite the fact that Dewey’s and Plato’s theories of education are often portrayed as opposite. For example, according to Dewey: “Plato had no perception of the uniqueness of individuals.... they fall by nature into classes” (1916, p. 104). Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious differences in their theories, both Plato and Dewey are interested in creating, through their educational theories, active inquirers.

<sup>160</sup>This discussion relates to what has much later come to be known as the debate between constructivists and traditionalists approaches to education. The traditional conception understands teaching as a direct transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student and regards learning as the absorption of knowledge. On the other hand, the constructivist approach views teaching not as a direct transmission of knowledge but as facilitating the learning process (See Dewey, 1916).

lack of answer aims at building the epistemic character of the students rather than transferring knowledge to them directly (see section 4.1).

## 4.4 LEARNING THROUGH PROBLEM-SOLVING

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At this point, the obvious question one could ask is the following: What is the difference between the Aristotelian and the Platonic approach to education? Why should we opt for the Platonic educational program as the basis for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education? Isn't the Aristotelian way of educating virtues good enough? Contemporary virtue-based approaches to education, as I have already noted, heavily rely and build upon the Aristotelian conception of moral and intellectual virtues and his educational theory. There is already a movement in the world of education to unite educational methodology with virtue theory. I want to argue that the Platonic rigorous educational program has something different to offer to contemporary virtue-based approaches to education than the Aristotelian conception and that this is *learning through problem-solving*<sup>161</sup>.

Socrates, like Plato, also thought that teachers should develop the character of the learners instead of “spoon-feeding” them knowledge. In order to do so, Socrates developed a problem-solving teaching method: He would pose questions to his students/interlocutors and he would ask them to find the solution. Socrates would never transmit knowledge to his interlocutors (and wider audience) directly – he would never give them the answers though he had them. The slave boy demonstration (82a-86a) performed by Socrates in the *Meno* is an excellent example of this problem-solving teaching method<sup>162</sup>.

Following Socrates, Plato further developed and codified this problem-solving method into the dialectic. He focused on the dialectic as the most fundamental way of

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<sup>161</sup>The importance of developing problem-solving skills, such as asking the right question to a given problem, is not a new idea. For example, Blank and Covington showed back in 1965 that training children in asking the right questions when faced with a given problem resulted in students asking “significantly more questions on the criterion posttests” than students who did not receive training (1965, p. 21). They also showed that training children in problem-solving techniques also helped children “...received higher scores on a science achievement test, and to be rated superior to the other two groups (groups which did not receive such training) in terms of participation in class discussion” (1965, p. 21).

<sup>162</sup>In the slave boy demonstration, Socrates poses a geometry problem to the slave boy and asks him to solve it. Socrates does not give the slave boy the solution to this problem even when the slave boy gives him the wrong answers.



developing epistemic excellences. According to Plato, philosophers, in the *Republic*, practice with each other – they discuss and work on definitions together. The dialectic, which according to Plato is the only method at our disposal for searching for the truth, is a problem-solving method<sup>163</sup>. Philosophers encounter problems, usually in the form of trying to define x, and attempt through the dialectic to find out the truth. The Platonic educational program prepares philosophers for this. It develops their epistemic virtues through problem-solving techniques (e.g. being exposed to mathematical problems), with the aim to “produce” philosophers (i.e. lovers of wisdom) who are able to acquire truth and understanding through the dialectic (i.e. a problem-solving method for finding the truth).

But why is this problem solving learning method unique to Plato and Platonic Socrates? Surely, we can get a more contemporary account of problem solving from another philosopher rather than having to rely on the dialogues that Plato wrote more than 2500 years ago<sup>164</sup>. I argue that we cannot. Plato’s learning through problem solving account has something unique that sets it apart from any other problem solving approach to teaching: Plato promotes learning to learn in a ‘pure’ way, by which I mean a way that enables the teacher to teach, not only without directly transmitting knowledge to the students, which we promote nowadays, but without even knowing. This method, that Socrates “invented” and Plato fully developed, is a method through which we can teach the young to want to investigate. This is a meta-skill: not how to learn, by problem solving, but to love and seek problem solving.

I want to argue that such a problem-solving teaching method can be of significant value for contemporary education. It will help us develop the learners’ desire for epistemic goods as well as train them in acquiring such goods on their own. It will help us do what scholars in virtue-based approaches to education urge educators to do viz. create lifelong learners who love truth and knowledge and are also skilled and intelligent in their pursuit of these goods (Baehr, 2013, p. 108).

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<sup>163</sup>The mathematical studies that came before the dialectic are also problem-solving teaching methods: “We should therefore treat astronomy, like geometry, as setting us problems for solution” (*Rep.*, VII, 530c).

<sup>164</sup>I want to thank the reviewers of the PESGB 2018 Annual Conference, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, for bringing this potential objection to my attention.

#### **4.4.1 How Would Learning Through Problem Solving Look Today: Fostering the Growth of Intellectual Virtues**

It is often highlighted that virtue based approaches that promote the fostering of both moral and intellectual excellences is a new trend in philosophy of education. It is only to be expected therefore, that being a recent educational approach, there are still no accepted “best practices” for helping students acquire intellectual virtues (Baehr, 2016, p. 246). This is where what I have been discussing in this section (i.e. building the epistemic dispositions of learners through problem solving) can find application. Plato, building upon the Socratic method, has given us the method to cultivate epistemic excellences in his description of the ideal city. I argue that the core of his method can, and should be applied, in education nowadays.

In what follows, I give an outline of how applying such a method to classrooms nowadays would look like. Following the Platonic approach, the educator should not transfer knowledge directly to the learners – doing so “kills” the learners’ motivation to pursue rational goods. Traditional methods of teaching hand knowledge and truth to the learners; hence, the vast majority of learners are not motivated to pursue epistemic goods on their own. Instead, following the Platonic problem-solving technique, the educator should pose problems that challenge the learners to find the solution while never giving them the answer. According to Plato’s educational program, we should train students to want to seek the truth on their own. It is through this search for the truth and knowledge that they will develop intellectual virtues. I argue that setting problems to the students and challenging them to find the answer is a first rate method to motivate students to pursue epistemic goods. Even if the educator knows the correct answer to the problem, they should never give it to their students; the educator should only hint at where their learners’ mistakes lay and teach them the ways to solve the problem on their own. Again, the paradigm case for this is Socrates’ slave demonstration and the way the slave is led to the correct answer through Socrates’ questions.

The problems posed to the students can (and should be) be of a great variety of topics (e.g. mathematical problems, political problems, scientific problems, moral dilemmas, problems of an aesthetic nature, etc.). The difficulty of the problems should depend on

the age, ability and educational level of the learners. Problems should be presented both in a direct (e.g. how to double the area of a square) and in an indirect way (e.g. reading a story which involves a moral dilemma and discussing the solution to that dilemma). The problems should be challenging to solve. Being faced with a difficult, yet not impossible, problem and being challenged to solve it students will develop epistemic emotions<sup>165</sup>, such as the need to rise up to the challenge and/or the excitement to solve the problem, that will aid their pursuit of rational goods.

Leaving certain problems unanswered can be of great value; the aim of this approach is to foster the growth of epistemic virtues; and sometimes aporetic conclusions strengthen the learners' motivation to pursue epistemic goods. Whether learners find the correct answer to a specific problem is of secondary significance, what is important is that they develop, through this process, their epistemic dispositions and abilities to acquire truth and knowledge on their own; what is important is that they develop intellectual virtues. Educators should instill in their students a “thirst” for knowledge. Educators should help their students become lovers of wisdom (i.e. philosophers). I argue that one very good way to do so, given to us by Plato, is learning through problem-solving<sup>166</sup>. Such an approach promotes both virtue responsibilists and virtue reliabilists sets of intellectual virtues. It promotes, for example, epistemic conscientiousness<sup>167</sup> as well as various kinds of good reasoning<sup>168</sup>.

To sum up, I have argued in sections 4.2 to 4.4 that Plato's rigorous educational program could prove promising in contemporary virtue-based approaches to education and theories of education in general. I have shown that the demand for an educational program that builds the epistemic dispositions of learners instead of simply transferring knowledge to them directly originates from Plato and Platonic Socrates (see also section

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<sup>165</sup>Epistemic emotions are defined as “emotions that play an important role in our attempts to acquire beliefs correctly, beliefs that we have reason to continue holding and which serve the purposes for which we acquired them” (Morton, 2010, p. 385).

<sup>166</sup>I want to point out here that unlike any modern approach to learning through problem solving, Plato promotes learning to learn. This method that Socrates “invented” and Plato fully developed is a method through which we can teach the young to want to investigate. This is a meta-skill: not how to learn, by problem solving, but to love and seek problem solving.

<sup>167</sup>For Montmarquet epistemic conscientiousness entails “...a desire to achieve the proper ends of intellectual life, especially the desire for truth and the avoidance of error” (1993, p. 21).

<sup>168</sup>For Greco, intellectual virtues include “perception, reliable memory, and various kinds of good reasoning” (2002, p. 287).

4.1). The Platonic educational regime, as presented in the *Republic*, aims at training guardians in three types of virtue: (i) Moral Virtue; (ii) the Cognitive Virtue of Abstraction; (iii) the Cognitive Virtue of Debate.

Moreover, I have argued that the Platonic theory of education has something different to offer to virtue-based approaches to education than the Aristotelian. Plato, unlike Aristotle, emphasizes the importance of learning through problem-solving. This teaching technique creates lifelong learners who desire epistemic goods and are skilled and intelligent in their endeavors to acquire them. I have argued that adopting such a teaching method in schools nowadays can be of significant value and have also outlined ways in which it could be applied.

## 4.5 COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE SOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL METHOD AND THE PLATONIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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There are certain significant differences between the Socratic educational method (see section 4.1) and the Platonic educational program (see sections 4.2 to 4.4) that set them apart and turn them into two distinct educational theories with each having its own distinct ultimate aims and educational ‘tools’. By the term ‘Socratic educational method’, I have in mind the educational method employed by Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues<sup>169</sup>. This method includes pedagogical tools such as the Socratic elenchus, the Socratic irony, his disavowal of knowledge and the aporetic conclusions. By the term ‘Platonic educational program’, I have in mind the rigorous educational program presented in the *Republic* that Plato has developed for the education of the philosopher-kings.

In this section of the study, I want to argue that these two educational methods differ and I want to discuss two of their most important differences: (i) the different ultimate aim of each theory (i.e. what it aims at achieving), and (ii) their different conception of the human psyche and how the psyche needs to be educated.

Moreover, I want to argue that the Platonic program has certain features that help it steer away from certain objections raised against the Socratic. For example, it does not need an all-present powerful teacher and has no use for the pedagogical ‘tools’ that the Socratic method employs (i.e. Socratic irony).

One of the most important differences between the Socratic teaching method and the Platonic educational program is training the students to be reliably successful at reaching to the objects of their rational desires. Truth is undoubtedly the end goal of Plato’s educational program. The most important goal of the Platonic educational program is for the philosophers to reach an understanding of the Forms. This is why it fosters the growth of moral and epistemic virtues that are instrumental in helping

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<sup>169</sup>Again, I follow Vlastos (1991) taxonomy of early and middle dialogues. See the introductory section of this study for more information.

philosophers be successful in their epistemic endeavours. On the other hand, Socrates is solely interested in developing the epistemic character of his interlocutors/students (their cognitive dispositions); he is not concerned with developing their ability to be reliably successful at reaching the objects of their desires (See section 4.1). In other words, the success component of intellectual virtues is not a part of the Socratic teaching method. It is only later on, in the Platonic educational program that the success component of intellectual virtues is for the first time developed. Plato's philosophers are reliably successful at reaching the truth through the dialectic. And even if one were to disagree with the reliability of the dialectic (which I have argued for and defended in section 2.4), it is still the case that one of the most fundamental goals of Plato's educational program is to train its students at acquiring truth. Whether the truth-seeking method that Plato proposes (i.e. the dialectic) succeeds in helping agents reach their epistemic goals is another matter.

Another major difference between the two educational theories is that for the Socratic conception of the human psyche rational desires are innate. According to Socrates, everyone desires the good and this entails that everyone also desires to know the truth about the good (see section 4.1 for more on this point). This has major implications for his theory of education. It means that Socrates does not need to generate in his interlocutors a desire for the good. His interlocutors/students already desire the good. Socrates just needs to show to those who think they know the truth that they are ignorant (again, see section 4.1 for more on this point). However, this is not the case for the Platonic educational program. According to Plato, one is not born with completely developed rational desires. One needs to develop such desires through the appropriate character training. The first stage of the Platonic educational program aims at developing such rational desires (see section 4.2). Thus, another important difference between the two approaches is that the Socratic approach takes rational desires as granted while the Platonic approach fosters the growth of such rational desires in the students. This also relates to the educational failure examples that I discuss in the next chapter (chapter 5). The Socratic approach cannot account for such cases of educational failure. It should also be noted that the Platonic notion that the human psyche has not fully developed innate rational desires is closer to the contemporary understanding of human drives and motivations. One is not born with strong rational desires; one develops them through education and upbringing.

### ***Some Objections Raised Against the Socratic Teaching Method***

The Platonic educational program avoids certain problems that the Socratic teaching method has (or at least has been accused of having). First of all, in order to function successfully, the Socratic teaching method requires a powerful teacher who is always in possession of the truth and employs pedagogical techniques (such as abatement and Socratic irony). On the other hand, the Platonic approach does not need a teacher as powerful as Socrates (i.e. a teacher who knows the truth and uses complex techniques successfully). In the Socratic teaching method, there is a necessary expert-student relationship between Socrates and his interlocutors. Socrates is the expert who performs his elenchus **upon** his interlocutors. On the other hand, in the Platonic educational program dialecticians work **with** each other. However, what happens to the Socratic teaching method when Socrates is away? When nobody is around to correct the mistakes of the interlocutors? Who is to perform the elenchus then? The main problem with this is that in the Socratic educational approach we are always in need of a powerful teacher without whom education fails. Some contemporary scholars of education, such as Fullham (2015), have pointed out that because of this the Socratic teaching method produces the intellectual dependency of students to their teachers.

It is only in the Platonic educational program that we have true collaboration between interlocutors who are more or less of equal ability in the dialectic. In the Socratic educational program, we have an asymmetric relation between Socrates and (the vast majority of) his interlocutors. Socrates has power over the others and performs on them something like an interrogation (Fullham, 2005). Sometimes Socrates gives speeches about a given topic, stopping occasionally to ask his interlocutors whether they agree. In most cases, the interlocutors hesitantly say yes, and Socrates proceed with his talk. This is obvious in the slave boy demonstration (in the *Meno*) where the slave boy most of the time answers Socrates' questions with a simple yes:

*Socrates:* But what sort of line produces an area of eight square feet? Doesn't this line [AJ] produce a quadruple area?

*Slave:* I agree.

*Socrates:* And is this quarter\*19 area here [ABCD] produced by this half line here [AB]?

*Slave:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Very well. And isn't the area of eight square feet double this area [ABCD], but half this one [AJLN]?

*Slave:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Won't it be produced by a line longer than one of that 83d length [AB], but shorter than one of this length [AJ]? No?

*Slave:* I believe so" (83c-83d5).

There is no true cooperation in such asymmetric relationships. Socrates constantly manipulates the discussion. Socrates is like a philosophical police officer that goes around constantly checking the coherence of his interlocutors' beliefs with his elenchus. He is in a position of power in comparison to the vast majority of his interlocutors. He has a power similar to the power that physicians have over their patients. Socrates tries to 'cure' his interlocutors; he uses the elenctic method in order to make them realize their ignorance.

There are only few dialogues between Socrates and someone equally able in the dialectic. An example is the case of Socrates and Protagoras discussion in in the *Protagoras* dialogue: This is an example of a dialogue in which Socrates and his main interlocutor are more or less equally skilled in the dialectic. Both Socrates and Protagoras ask and answer with the highest of skill. They are both experts at the dialectic. They know the rules, the method, the logic, the practice. Novices, such as the slave boy, need to be taught such rules first before real collaboration between interlocutors can exist. Socrates admits, for example, in certain passages that he feels Protagoras' responses to his questions like punches (340a). In this dialogue, we see Socrates being 'pushed back' by Protagoras. Unlike in the case of the slave boy where Socrates has all the power, if Socrates was to make a mistake while talking to Protagoras we can be confident that Protagoras would point it out. Plato moves away from the asymmetric power relation of the Socratic teaching method.

Ranciere's (1991) recent book is quite relevant to the above discussion. In this book, Ranciere draws attention to some other problematic aspects of the Socratic educational method. His main argument is that the Socratic method does not liberate students but rather brings about their stultification. According to him, "there is stultification whenever one intelligence is subordinated by another" (p. 13). Scholars, such as Fullham (2005) and Ranciere (1991), have argued that Socrates' leading questions, his



Socratic irony and his feigning ignorance aim at the intellectual subordination of students.

Still, several scholars defend the Socratic educational method and attempt to show its value for contemporary education. Such scholars argue that Socratic pedagogical tools aim at challenging the students and it is through this challenge that they will realize their ignorance. For example, Reich (1999) has argued that the Socratic teaching method “cleanses students of the cobwebs of false beliefs” (p. 69). Miller (2017) has also defended the value of the Socratic method arguing that “philosophy, when understood properly, should make us unlearn much of what we believe, should make us uncomfortable, should make us uncertain and should ultimately, then, make us stronger and better” (p. 34).

Although I tend to agree with those defending the value of the Socratic educational method, my aim in this thesis is not to argue in favor or against it. My aim in this section was to show that the Platonic educational program avoids such debates and objections. However, this does not mean that the Platonic educational program does not have its own critics; and this is what I discuss in the next section of this study.

## 4.6 OBJECTIONS TO THE PLATONIC EDUCATIONAL THEORY

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In the previous section, I argued that Plato’s educational program avoids some of the objections raised against the Socratic teaching method. Still, the Platonic educational program faces some criticisms and objections of its own. In this section, I discuss two such objections: (i) the ‘Noble Lie’ and (ii) the Self-controlled Individual.

### ***4.6.1 The ‘Noble Lie’ Objection***

In the various conferences in which I have presented parts of my thesis, a particular objection has been raised repeatedly, each time by different scholars<sup>170</sup>, against my arguments for the value of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education. In this subsection, I want to present and discuss this objection in an attempt to provide a satisfactory answer to it. I will refer to this objection as the ‘Noble Lie’ objection.

The main argument behind this recurring objection is based on the controversial lie that Socrates discusses with his interlocutors in book III of the *Republic* (See for example 415a-415c). According to this ‘Noble Lie’, citizens should be told that God created people in three different metal compositions and therefore people are born into three different classes: the rulers have gold in their composition, the soldiers have silver and the artisans, the farmers and workers have bronze. According to this ‘Noble Lie’, most children resemble their parents and are thus born in the same class:

“We shall tell our citizens the following tale (which a few seconds before Socrates has called “fairy tale” 414c5): You are, all of you in this community, brothers. But when god fashioned you, he added gold in the composition of those of you who are qualified to be Rulers; he put silver in the Auxiliaries, and iron and bronze in the farmers and other workers. Now since you are all of the same stock... your children will commonly resemble their parents” (415a).

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<sup>170</sup>I want to thank all the people in the various conferences (i.e. Oxford 2018, Genoa, 2016, Liverpool 2016 – see footnotes 43, 46 and 48 on page 28 for their full description) who have kindly brought this objection/criticism to my attention.

It is very rare for children to be born having different metal composition than their parents but it is something that does happen (415b1-2 - e.g. a child of farmers with traces of gold in its constitution). Moreover, according to the lie, people cannot change their metal composition and should follow the job assigned to their class. Most importantly, however, the three classes created partly on the basis of this lie, have different kinds of education. The children belonging to the artisans/farmers/workers class are usually trained to become apprentices, i.e. working alongside experienced workers (see for example 456d<sup>171</sup>)<sup>172</sup>. The soldiers undergo the lower part of Plato's educational program while the philosopher-kings undergo all of it. Taylor (1926) attributes this position to Plato's beliefs that "heredity is a powerful force in the intellectual and moral sphere" and this is why he has argued earlier that procreation must be placed under a carefully designed eugenic system (p. 275).

Relying on this 'Noble Lie', the objection raised against my arguments that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of merit for contemporary theories is the following: Is it wise and/or appropriate to suggest that we should look into the Platonic educational program and see what it can offer to education nowadays given the fact that Plato thought (or at least argued that) people are born into classes and only those born in the philosopher class should be given the best education? Is this something that we want to be part of our educational program, viz., divide humans into classes educating only the 'elite'? Should our educational system be based on a lie? <sup>173</sup>

It is obvious that many people perceive Plato's educational theory as quite 'conservative' for modern standards<sup>174</sup>. I want to argue that this is not accurate. First of all, I hope that I have already raised some problems for those who hold such a view. As I have already showed and discussed, Plato did not advocate for the direct transfer of knowledge from teacher to student but rather for a 'problem-solving' educational program which is valuable for educational theories nowadays (See section 4.3).

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<sup>171</sup>"Then in our imaginary state which will produce the better men – the education which we have prescribed for the Guardians or the training our shoemakers get?"

<sup>172</sup>For more on the education of the third class see Hurani, 1949.

<sup>173</sup>See Page (1991) for an overview of the unsympathetic reception of the 'Noble Lie' by modern scholars.

<sup>174</sup>See for example Dewey: "Plato had no perception of the uniqueness of individuals.... they fall by nature into classes" (1916, p. 104).

Secondly, I believe that one should take what is useful from ancient philosophers, apply it to contemporary theories of philosophy and education and disregard what is of no use. Arguing that we should not examine what Plato's rigorous educational program has to offer to contemporary approaches to education because of his argument that men are born into three classes seems rather unfair. Following the same line of (faulty) reasoning, Aristotle, who is at the heart of almost all virtue theories, had a poor opinion of women<sup>175,176</sup>. Does that mean that we should disregard his monumental philosophical work because of this? Of course not<sup>177</sup>.

Therefore, I suggest that when applying parts of the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues to contemporary education (e.g. his problem-solving method) we should consider that all children in schools are meant to be philosopher-kings and therefore should all get the best possible education. This way we can disregard Plato's conception that men are born into classes (like we disregard Aristotle's ideas that men are superior than women) and move on into investigating what Plato's rigorous educational program has to offer to contemporary theories of education.

#### **4.6.2 The Self-controlled Individual**

According to Aristotle, both moral and intellectual virtues are necessary for an individual's character to function as a consistent single unified body without having conflicting desires<sup>178</sup>. On the other hand, Plato has based his conception of intellectual

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<sup>175</sup>See for example what Aristotle says in the *Politics* "The male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject" (1254b13–14).

<sup>176</sup>I am not suggesting that Plato had a much better opinion for women: "...and it is natural for women to take part in all occupations as well as men, though in all women will be the weaker partners" (*Rep.*, V, 455d10-15). Nevertheless, he did think, contra-Aristotle, that women should be educated: "to make a woman into a Guardian we need...the same education as we need to make a man into one, especially as it will operate on the same nature in both" (456c13-d1).

<sup>177</sup>I want to stress (in case it is not obvious) that I strongly and wholeheartedly disagree with the two philosophers on these matters (i.e. people being born in classes, the relationship between the two sexes).

<sup>178</sup>See for example what Aristotle says at (*EN*, 1099a7-15): "Pleasure is a state of soul, and to each man that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant; ... Now for most men their pleasures are in conflict with one another because these are not by nature pleasant, but the lovers of what is noble find what is pleasant things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature" According to Scaltsas (1996, p. 300) "What he (Aristotle) is taking about are the type of conflicts that we have already

and moral virtues on his tripartite division of the soul theorem. Plato believed that the self-controlled individual is the best possible outcome of virtue-education. Education, for Plato, should aim at developing individuals who have a steady and disciplined character; individuals who can control and bracket unnecessary desires (see for example sections 4.2 and 5.2). Contrary to Plato, Aristotle believed that a self-controlled individual is second best. For him, the truly virtuous person is the agent who does not have to control her desires but whose desires are aligned with what is objectively good for her. Such a person does not need to exert control over her desires; being truly virtuous the person desires only what is truly good and never what is harmful/bad (See *EN*, 1151b34-1152a3<sup>179</sup>).

The difference between the two philosophers is that Aristotle believed that appetitive/desiring element<sup>180</sup> of the soul is responsive to reason (*EN*, 1102b30-1103a<sup>181</sup>) while Plato believed that it is not<sup>182</sup>. The following example might illustrate

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encountered in Plato's Republic namely, conflicts about one and the same object of desire or aversion; for instance, in the case of an appetitive desire for more drink and rational aversion towards that drink because of considerations of health and well being". Scaltsas (1996, p. 301) also notes that "That is why Aristotle says that the human good is activity of the soul in accordance with, or not without, the rational principle in order to point to the guiding role that reason plays in the souls' pursuit of the good. The activities of the soul which are in accordance with reason will therefore avoid internal incompatibility and will be characterised by harmony and cohesion. Such a domain of activities will be pursuing real goods in so far as the internal conflicts will have been sorted out by the involvement and intervention of reason in the pursuits of the good".

<sup>179</sup>See for example *NE*, 1151b32-1152a5: "...for both the continent man and the temperate man are such as to do nothing contrary to reason for the sake of the bodily pleasures, but the former has and the latter has not bad appetites, and the latter is such as not to feel pleasure contrary to reason, while the former is such as to feel pleasure but not to be led by it." See also McDowell (1998, p. 128) who on the basis of this passage argues: "In full-fledged practical wisdom the correct conception of doing well, with the understanding that the worthwhileness that it embraces is pre-eminent, is so ingrained into one's motivational make-up that when an action is singled out as doing well, any attractions that alternatives might have are seen as having no bearing on the question what to do".

<sup>180</sup>According to Aristotle, the irrational part of the soul is two-fold. It includes the vegetative element and the appetitive/desiring part (*EN*, 1102b30-33). See Lorenz (2006, pp. 187-188) for more on this point: "Something which the non-rational part quite definitely includes is the part that is responsible for the nutrition and growth of the living organism. This, however, has no share in human virtue and is therefore of no concern to the ethical and political expert (1102<sup>b</sup>11-12). But as Aristotle explains rather carefully, he does not think that the non-rational part is exhausted by the part responsible for nutrition. He takes it to include in addition to that another part or aspect, which in a way has a share in reason (1102<sup>b</sup>13-14)".

<sup>181</sup>"The appetitive and in general the desiring element (of the soul) in a sense shares in it (reason) in so far as it listens to and obeys it".

<sup>182</sup>According to Plato, the appetitive part of the soul is irrational: "Then we shan't be without justification if we recognize these two elements as distinct. We can call the reflective element

the difference between the two scholars more vividly: a person following the Aristotelian approach would argue that we can teach ourselves not to want to put extra sugar in our food<sup>183</sup>. Once we have been taught this, then we will not have the desire for extra sugar. Contrary to such an argument, a person following the Platonic approach would argue that appetitive desires are not responsive to reason. For example, we cannot teach ourselves not to desire to eat excessive amounts of sugar or to desire one drink after the other. All we can do is train ourselves to control such desires in order not to allow them to become extreme and harmful (e.g. drinking a glass of wine is not harmful, but drinking two bottles of wine is).

It has often been argued against my position that (according to which the Platonic educational can be of value for contemporary virtue based approaches to education), given the above differences between the two philosophers' conception of the virtuous agent, the Platonic approach to education is lacking in comparison to the Aristotelian theory regarding the final aim of education<sup>184</sup>. In the Platonic approach, one can only hope to train students to have self-control while in the Aristotelian approach one can train students to always desire what is objectively good for them and never what is objectively bad/harmful.

One could argue that whether the Platonic approach is one step behind the Aristotelian largely depends on whether one believes that appetitive desires can be regulated by reason or not. If one believes that appetitive desires cannot be trained, then one is led to follow the Platonic approach to education and to train self-control. If one believes that appetitive desires can be aligned with what is good, then one should opt for the Aristotelian approach. Foot (1978) summarizes both points of view in a beautiful and concise way:

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in the mind the reason, and the element with which it feels hunger and thirst, and the agitations of sex and other desires, the element of **irrational** appetite.” (*Rep.*, IV, 439d). An example showing the irrationality of the appetitive part is that (according to Plato) it does not know when it is the right moment to stop. Plato calls the appetitive part of the soul “*insatiable*” (see *Rep.*, IV, 442a7); it keeps wanting more and more no matter the consequences – which can be dire for the agent (see e.g. Plato’s description of the tyrannical individual).

<sup>183</sup>Excessive desires can be bad for the agent. See *EN*, 1147b25-30.

<sup>184</sup>I want to thank Prof. Scaltsas and several members of the audience in the “Aretai Center 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference Connecting Virtues: Theoretical and Educational Insights, Genoa, Italy” for bringing this objection to my attention and for discussing it with me.

“We both are and are not inclined to think that the harder a man (sic) finds it to act virtuously the more virtue he shows if he acts well. For on the one hand great virtue is needed where it is particularly hard to act virtuously; yet on the other it could be argued that difficulty in acting virtuously shows that the agent is imperfect in virtue” (p. 10).

Still, one could argue that the Aristotelian approach is too demanding of even the most virtuous of individuals. The Aristotelian view seems to entail that all agents who desire to eat a third chocolate muffin, although they have already eaten two and are controlling themselves not to eat more, are second best; the truly virtuous person would never have such a harmful desire. Moreover, all people who have the desire to smoke but control this urge are second best since a truly virtuous person would never desire something objectively harmful. Does that mean that smokers who have quit smoking but sometimes crave for a cigarette (especially when they see another person smoking) are not fully virtuous? That would be a rather strange conclusion to draw given that psychological studies (see for example Dommett, 2010) have proven that past smokers who see another person smoking (stimulus) automatically feel the craving to smoke. That would automatically rule out all past (and present) smokers from being truly virtuous. It might be true that a truly virtuous individual would never take up smoking. But what about individuals who took up smoking at a young age and then quit smoking before becoming truly virtuous? Following the Aristotelian requirements, such a person is not truly virtuous. A past smoker will have the desire to smoke when given a certain stimulus and that would mean (for the Aristotelian conception) that she is not fully virtuous. It might be after all that although we can train some of our desires such as desiring less sugar in our coffee, some other desires are not responsive to reason at all (e.g. smoking) and all we can do is train ourselves to control them.

Still, this is not the only reply available to scholars who want to defend the Platonic position. In fact, in my opinion, it is the wrong kind of reply and this is because I think that this criticism against the Platonic educational program and his conception of the virtuous agent rests on a misconception. The aim of the Platonic educational program is to create philosophers – lovers of wisdom. Having understood the Form of the good, Plato’s philosopher-kings are truly virtuous and according to Sedley (2013, p. 87) “What marks the real philosopher is not a reasoned control of irrational and semi-

rational drives, but ascent to a level of understanding where the demands of the carnal world simply fade into the background, lose their relevance, and have no more than a bare minimum of motivational purchase". The thirst of Plato's philosophers for rational goods is so powerful that unnecessary appetitive and spirited desires need not be controlled and suppressed anymore. Having 'seen' the Forms, philosophers find true pleasure in contemplating them<sup>185</sup>. They are not any more interested in the pleasures derived by the satisfaction of unnecessary desires. According to Sedley, "whether this is achieved because the philosopher's intellect is naturally dominant, or because his earlier education in the ideal city is assumed to have made it so by now, is left unclear. Plato no doubt prefers to leave both options open, since not all philosophers live in an ideal city" (2013, p. 87).

Overall, it might indeed be too demanding to ask that a truly virtuous agent does not desire anything that is objectively harmful such as smoking. Nevertheless, for both Aristotle and Plato, the individual who needs to control her harmful desires is second best. The truly virtuous agent does not desire things that are objectively harmful for her. Through education and habit, her desires are aligned with what is objectively good.

One might disagree and/or believe that I have not sufficiently shown that Plato, similarly to Aristotle, thought that truly virtuous agents do not need to control their unnecessary desires. Nevertheless, this does not undermine my overall argument for the importance of the Platonic educational program. One cannot deny that Plato was the first to develop a detailed account of education upon which Aristotle built and developed his own views that inform much of the modern virtue-based approaches to education. Therefore, even from such a viewpoint, going back to the Platonic approach to education and looking for ideas and theories— such as his problem-solving method, teaching without knowing and the importance of building in students the proper dispositions - that can be of value for education nowadays is of definite merit.

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<sup>185</sup>See for example, *Rep.*, IX 586e.



## 4.7 EDUCATING VIRTUES THROUGH EXEMPLARS: THE CASE OF THE *REPUBLIC*<sup>186</sup>

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All versions of virtue ethics, including Aristotle’s virtue ethics, have been criticized as lacking moral action guidance. Indicatively, Louden (1984, p. 229) argues: “owing to the very nature of moral virtues, there is thus a very limited amount of advice on moral quandaries that one can reasonably expect”. According to Louden, this is a significant weakness of virtue ethics because “people have always expected ethical theory to tell them something about what they ought to do” (p. 205). Following the same line of reasoning, Solomon (1988, p. 433) argues: “it is in the very nature of the virtue ethics that it cannot provide the kind of determinate guidance for action that is required in an adequate normative ethics”.

In an attempt to reply to the criticisms that virtue ethics do not provide explicit moral action guidance<sup>187</sup> scholars such as Linda Zagzebski (2010) and Julia Annas (2004) have developed exemplarist approaches to educating moral virtues<sup>188</sup>. According to Annas, using virtuous agents as exemplars is a very common practice in our everyday life (2004, p. 61). Annas argues that we start our moral training in the same manner that the beginning builder starts her training by imitating the actions of the expert builder

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<sup>186</sup>This section is based on arguments from my discussion of Exemplarist theories in my MSc dissertation - Kotsonis, A. (2014). *Can Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics Provide Explicit Moral Action Guidance?* MSc Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

<sup>187</sup>For a different line of defense to the criticisms that virtue ethics lack explicit moral action guidance see Hursthouse’s (1991 and 2001) virtue rule approach.

<sup>188</sup>For Aristotle’s virtue ethics there is a completely different line of argument against the criticisms that it lacks explicit moral action guidance according to which the demand for reliable moral action guidance from a theory of ethics is unrealistic. See for example McDowell (1979, pp. 347-348): “It is sometimes complained that Aristotle does not attempt to outline a decision procedure for questions about how to behave. But we have good reason to be suspicious of the assumption that there must be something to be found along the routes he does not follow”. Similarly, Broadie (1991, p. 102) argues that “no kind of natural response neutrally described is either right or wrong in itself. This always depends on the particulars”. The moral intuitionists (Pritchard - 1912, Moore - 1903 and Ross - 1939) also offer similar arguments. For example, according to Pritchard (1912, p. 33): “...Aristotle does not do what we as Moral Philosophers want him to do, viz., to convince us that we really ought to do what in our non-reflective consciousness we have hitherto believed we ought to do, or, if not, to tell us what, if any, are the other things which we really ought to do, and to prove to us that he is right”. Pritchard argues that “The sense that we ought to do certain things arises in our unreflective consciousness, being an activity of moral thinking occasioned by the various situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 34).

(p. 69). Likewise, Zagzebski argues that through listening to stories of both real people and fictional characters we come to understand that some individuals are admirable and worth imitating (2010, p. 51). For Zagzebski, moral learning is the outcome of a process of imitation. According to her, we identify the individuals worth imitating through feelings of admiration (pp. 51-52)<sup>189</sup>.

The question I want to answer in this section is the following: Can we, according to Plato's theory of education as portrayed in the *Republic*, acquire moral and/or intellectual virtues through the imitation of virtuous exemplars? What is the role and the significance of the practice of imitation for Plato's educational theory?

Imitation does play a role in the two parts of the first stage of the Platonic educational program. For example, the young guardians imitate their teachers in carrying out physical and military exercises correctly. In addition, Plato argues for the control of the poems to be included in the Republic's educational curriculum because of the tendency of children to imitate the action of characters in the stories they hear:

“We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to their children, and by means of them to mould their minds and characters which are more important than their bodies. The greater part of the stories current today we shall have to reject” (*Rep.*, II, 377c).

The early stage of the Platonic educational program does make use of an exemplarist teaching method in order to foster the growth of a good and steady character in the students. For example, it helps them admire and understand the value of self-control through the stories they hear:

“Then again we shall want our young men to be self-controlled...We shall approve, therefore, the sort of thing that Homer makes Diomedes say: ‘Be quiet man, and take your cue from me’ and verses like those which follow it, ‘The

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<sup>189</sup>For an overview of all the positions and an argument as to why the exemplarist and the v-rule approaches to virtue ethics cannot defend Aristotle's virtue ethics from the criticisms that it lacks explicit moral action guidance (as well as an argument in favor of a different line of defense according to which the demand for explicit moral action guidance from an ethical theory is unrealistic) see: Kotsonis, A. (2014). *Can Aristotle's Virtue Ethics Provide Explicit Moral Action Guidance?* MSc Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

Achaean moved forward, breathing valour, in silent obedience to their officers” (III, 389e).

Moreover, one should not make the mistake of completely ignoring the value of imitation and exemplarism for the second stage of the Platonic education program. Just as graduate students learn how to do philosophy in seminars, and by reading good examples of argumentation, similarly, the philosophers of Plato learn dialectic, by engaging in it with experienced dialecticians.

Exemplarism complements Plato’s problem solving method: The Platonic educational method develops the students' epistemic virtues through problem-solving techniques (e.g. being exposed to mathematical problems), with the aim to produce philosophers (i.e. lovers of wisdom) who are able to acquire truth and understanding through the dialectic (i.e. a problem-solving method for finding the truth). Philosophers learn how to approach mathematical problems and learn dialectic, by engaging in them with more experienced mathematicians/dialecticians.

## 5. PLATO'S ACCOUNTS OF EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

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In the fifth and last chapter of this study, I discuss the two main accounts given by Plato in the Republic of how virtue education may fail to instill moral and epistemic virtues in the students: (i) the Eristic Method and (ii) the Five Regimes and their Corresponding Individuals. Through the study of these two accounts, contemporary scholars will discover reasons (which they might have not considered before) as to why certain approaches to virtue education might go astray and result in failure. In addition, by closely studying these cases, one explores further certain interesting features of the Platonic educational program (that can be of merit for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education) such as the relation of moral and epistemic virtues and the importance of character-education for the epistemic success of the agent.

## 5.1 ERISTIC AS A FAILURE OF EDUCATION IN THE DIALECTIC

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In the *Republic*, Plato does not only develop a detailed account of his educational program; he also offers accounts of how, if not properly structured, education can fail to produce the desired outcomes<sup>190</sup>. Plato's description of the eristic method is such an account. The individuals employing the eristic method is the outcome of training in the dialectic students who do not yet have the proper motivation (i.e. rational desires). Plato's account of the eristic method can be found in book VII of the *Republic*. It begins with Socrates' warning that the dialectic could corrupt those of young age and therefore great precaution must be taken to not educate them in the dialectic when they are not ready:

“Then if you want to avoid being sorry for your thirty-year-olds, you must be very careful how you introduce them to such discussions.’

‘Very Careful’

‘And there's one great precaution you can take, which is to stop their getting a taste of them too young. You must have noticed, how young men, after their first taste of argument, are always contradicting people just for the fun of it; they imitate those whom they hear cross-examining each other, and themselves cross-examine, other people like puppies who love to pull and tear at anything within reach’” (539b).

According to Plato, only men of steady and disciplined character should be educated in the dialectic. And as we have seen from earlier passages in the *Republic*, those who have a steady character are those who are able - because they have gone through the right character training - to overcome their appetitive desires and are motivated by their rational desires to acquire the truth:

“In fact all we ‘ve been saying has been said in the attempt to ensure that only men of **steady** and **disciplined** character shall be admitted to philosophic discussions, and not anyone, however unqualified, as happens at present” (539d).

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<sup>190</sup>For an Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian account of how education might go wrong see Battaly, 2013.

On the contrary, those who have not undergone the right character training, and thus do not have a steady and disciplined character, will end up following the eristic method if trained in the dialectic:

“You know, Glaucon, it’s extraordinary how powerful the influence of debating technique can be’

‘In what way?’

‘I think a lot of people fall under it quite unconsciously, and fail to see the difference between scoring points in debate and arguing seriously. They are unable to draw the distinctions in kind needed for the discussion of a subject, and so get side-tracked into purely verbal contradictions; they aren’t really arguing, but only scoring points’” (V, 454a).

According to Beresford and Brown (2005), individuals employing the eristic method are usually sophists and rhetoricians who develop arguments that are often absurd or paradoxical as a means of beating the competitions and/or for the entertainment of the crowd. The aim of these rhetoricians is to lead their opponents, through elaborate arguments, to contradict themselves and/or reach implausible conclusions. For the untrained eye, it is easy to confuse such rhetoricians with philosophers (Beresford and Brown, 2005, p. 156).

But what is the difference between the individual following the eristic method and the dialectician? The individual employing the eristic method just wants to overcome their opponent using arguments in any way possible<sup>191</sup>. On the other hand, the agent who follows the dialectic method is not interested in who ‘wins’ or ‘loses’ the argument; she is solely interesting in finding the truth. The dialecticians are partners in their quest for the truth; they work together rather than against each other:

“Well, one that’s true, at least. And if the man who’d asked the questions was one of those expert quibblers (*eristikoi*) who just want to “win” arguments then what I’d say to him is this: “Look, I’ve made my claim. If what I’m saying isn’t right that’s your problem: it’s up to you to question me and prove me wrong’ But if the two of us were friends and wanted to talk things through, with one another – the way you and I are doing now- then I’d have to go a bit easier on him and answer in a more talk-it-through kind of way. And I suppose ‘a more talk-it-through kind of way’ means not just giving an answer that’s true but also only answering by way of things the other person admits he knows, when you ask him” (*Meno*, 75 c-d).

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<sup>191</sup>See also Berson, 1989.

This kind of educational failure (resulting from introducing those who are not ready to the dialectic) highlights a quite significant point: the importance of character training in education. If one is given the methodological tools without having the right motivation (rational desires) developed through the right character training, one is led to educational failure and ends up following the eristic method: using their knowledge of how to make good arguments for non-virtuous purposes. For example, a politician is led to use any argument at their disposal no matter how absurd in order to gain advantage against his opponents in the political sphere or a criminal in order to convince the jury of a court for his innocence despite being guilty<sup>192</sup>.

What do such cases of educational failure show? What is their significance and importance for contemporary education? They show that virtue-based approaches to education must firstly, and perhaps for some time solely, focus on educating the character of the student. The agent following the eristic method is a much larger threat for herself and society than the agent who has rational desires but lacks the ability to reach to an understanding of the Forms through the dialectic:

“Well answered, I said; for I suppose there is more mischief when a man uses anything wrongly than when he lets it alone. In the one case there is evil; in the other there is neither evil nor good” (*Euthydemus*, 280e-281a).

Plato’s account of the eristic method shows that the motivational component of intellectual virtues should be at the beginning of every virtue-based approach to education. Character training is necessary for epistemic success.

Some agents who do not have the proper motivation may nevertheless appear to be virtuous at first. Consider, for example, the following scenario from the virtue responsibilist tradition: One may appear to have intellectual virtues, such as intellectual humility, without actually possessing such virtues. For example, one may appear to be

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<sup>192</sup>See for example *Euthydemus*, 289e-290: “For not only do these speech-writers themselves, when I am in their company, impress me as prodigiously clever, Cleinias, but their art itself seems so exalted as to be almost inspired. However, this is not surprising; for it is a part of the sorcerer’s art, and only slightly inferior to that. The sorcerer’s art is the charming of snakes and tarantulas and scorpions and other beasts and diseases, while the other is just the charming and soothing of juries, assemblies, crowds, and so forth. Or does it strike you differently? I asked”.

intellectually humble in order to take advantage of their interlocutors (and not out of a motivation to acquire truth and knowledge). Such a person may appear to be humble, just like the individual employing the eristic method may appear to possess the cognitive virtue of debate, but if one is lacking the proper motivation then one cannot possibly be virtuous. The motivational component of intellectual virtues is a necessary requirement for an agent to be intellectually virtuous and it should be at the heart of every virtue-based approach to education. Being motivated to acquire the truth is the most essential step in developing intellectual virtues.

Overall, by stressing out the importance of rational desires and their development through his rigorous education program, Plato safeguards against individuals following the eristic method, namely someone who is an expert at using ingenious arguments for their own personal gain rather than out of a genuine desire for truth.



## 5.2 THE FIVE POLITICAL REGIMES AND THEIR CORRESPONDING INDIVIDUALS

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In Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*, Socrates discusses four types of imperfect political regimes and the character of the individual that correspond to each one of them. He does so in order to prove that justice brings happiness and injustice unhappiness and thus counter the Thrasymachian argument made in book I of the *Republic*<sup>193</sup>. In Plato's discussion of these four imperfect societies and their corresponding individuals, one finds Plato's second account of how education might go wrong and fail to foster the growth of virtues in students. By understanding how these unjust regimes and their corresponding individuals are brought about, one comes to understand how Plato thought that education might go astray. Again, the focus is on the importance of rational desires: As the discussion proceeds down the inferior regimes and individuals, one notices that reason is progressively dominated by the irrational forces of the soul and the city (Rowe, 1984, p. 102) and that education is increasingly neglected.

The vast majority of scholars focus on the political and ethical ideas discussed at this point in the *Republic*. It is after all Plato's most extensive discussion of political regimes and the societal values they uphold. For example, Taylor (1926) has argued:

“It should be obvious that the primary interest of these sketches is thorough ethical, not political. The “imperfect” constitutions are examined in order to throw light on the different phases of human sinfulness, not in the interests of a theory of political institutions” (pp. 295-296).

My purpose in this section is to look at the educational implications of the arguments made in this section of the *Republic*. As I am going to show, according to Plato, the political system of a city-state and the values it promotes and represents, as well as the collective and individual happiness of its citizens, are very much dependent and the outcome of the educational system in place.

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<sup>193</sup>“Complete our inquiry into the relative happiness and unhappiness which pure justice and pure injustice bring to their possessor, and know whether we are to pursue injustice with Thrasymachus, or justice with the argument we are examining” (*Rep.*, IX, 545a5-10).

### 5.2.1 Aristocracy and the Aristocratic Individual

Aristocracy is the ideal regime for Plato. In such a regime, the city is ruled by the *ἀριστοί* (i.e. the excellent). According to Plato, to this ideal political regime corresponds the individual who (having seen the Form of the good) is truly just and good<sup>194</sup>. The *ἀριστοί* are the product of Plato's educational program. Socrates, at this point in the *Republic*, after having presented and extensively discussed (in the books that lead up to this) the Just state – the state of the *ἀριστοί* – proceeds to describe the four imperfect political regimes and their corresponding individuals. At the beginning of Book VIII of the *Republic*, Glaucon reminds Socrates the point they were left at:

“You were talking, rather as you were just now, as if you had finished your description of the state, and were saying that the state you had described and the individual corresponding to it were what you would call good...you were saying that if this was the right kind of state, the others must be wrong, And, I remember, you said that the others were four in number, and that it was worth discussing how they and the characters corresponding to them were at fault...” (544a-b).

According to Socrates, the four less than perfect political regimes (starting with the one that deviates the least from the state of the *ἀριστοί* and ending with the one that deviates the most) are: (i)timocracy, (ii)oligarchy, (iii)democracy and (iv)tyranny:

“Well, I am particularly anxious myself to hear what these four kinds of society.”  
 “There's no difficulty about that,” I replied. “The ones I mean have names in common use. There is your much admired Cretan or Spartan type; secondly, and second in common estimation, though it's burdened with many evils, there is the type called oligarchy; thirdly, and by contrast, follows democracy; and finally comes tyranny, often thought the finest and most understanding of all, but really the most diseased” (VIII, 544c-d).

### 5.2.2 Timocracy and the Timocratic Individual

Timocracy is the society that deviates the least from the just state of the *Ἀριστοί*. It is often suggested that Plato has the state of Sparta in mind as the paradigm example of

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<sup>194</sup>“But we have already described as truly just and good the type corresponding to our ideal society where the best rule” (*Rep.*, VIII, 544e5). The discussion of the four imperfect societies (starting at Book VIII) comes right after Socrates has finished describing the education of the philosopher (Book VII).

the timocratic state (see for example Taylor 1925, p. 296). The individual corresponding to such a state, according to Plato, is “the competitive and ambitious man...” (*Rep.*, VIII, 545a1). The most important feature of the timocratic state is its preference for the allotment of political offices to the military type of individuals. This goes against the Platonic ideal according to which philosophers are the ones best suited to rule the city because of their understanding of the Form of the good:

“Its own peculiar characteristics, on the other hand, will be, for example, a fear of admitting intelligent people to office...it will prefer the simpler, hearty types, who prefer war to peace. It will admire the tricks and stratagems which are needed in war, which will be its constant occupation” (547e).

According to Socrates, the state of aristocracy deteriorates to timocracy when those who are appointed to office are not worthy to rule the city-state and end up undervaluing the importance of education:

“... The resulting children will be neither gifted nor lucky. The best of them will be appointed to office by their elders, but won’t really be worthy of it, and so when they come to hold the posts their fathers held will start neglecting us, though they are Guardians, and undervalue the training, first of the mind and then of the body, with the result that young men will be worse educated” (546d5-10).

Plato stresses the importance of education for the well-being of the individual as well as for the well-being of society at large. The deterioration of aristocracy to timocracy is attributed to the neglect of educating students in matters of philosophic nature. According to Irwin, the timocratic individual “...is liable to this change because his rational part lacks the right training” (1977, p. 227) and because he lacks the right training, he is no longer in a position to control unnecessary desires:

“They will enjoy their pleasures in secret, avoiding the law like truant children; the reason being that they have been educated by force rather than persuasion, owing to neglect of the true principles of a rational philosophic education and an overvaluation of physical at the expense of intellectual training” (548b5-b10).

Following his description of the timocratic society, Plato moves on to describe the character of the timocratic individual. The quality of education received by the timocratic individual features heavily in his description. For example, in the passage quoted below, Socrates describes the timocratic individual as “rather less well-educated” and as having had an “imperfect education”:

“He must be rather more self-willed, and rather less well-educated, though not without an interest in the arts; ready to listen, but quite incapable of expressing himself. He will be harsh to his slaves, because his imperfect education has left him without a proper sense of his superiority to them; he will be polite to his fellow-freemen and obey the authorities readily. He will be ambitious to hold office himself, regarding as qualifications for it not the ability to speak or anything like that, but military achievements and soldierly qualities, and he’ll be fond of exercise and training” (548e5-549b).

The soul of the timocratic individual is primarily led by the spirited part of the soul and thus desires and values honor and pride above anything else:

“And since he’s not really at heart a bad chap, but has merely got into bad company, he takes a middle course between the two, and resigns control of himself to the middle element and its competitive spirit, and so becomes an arrogant and ambitious man” (550b).

Overall, the timocratic society is the outcome of the deterioration of the aristocratic society and is brought about by the neglect of intellectual training. The individual corresponding to this society is led by the spirited part of their soul. In timocratic regimes, the ideal of the man who rules the city is the ambitious and athletic man.

### 5.2.3 Oligarchy and the Oligarchic individual

According to Plato, oligarchy is a society in which wealth is considered the ultimate good and the wealthy few rule over the many poor: "A society where it is wealth that counts and in which political power is in the hands of the rich and the poor have no share of it" (*Rep.*, VIII, 550d). Plato attributes the transition from the timocratic society to the oligarchic one in the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few who “become extravagant and for this reason disobey the law” (550d10-e).

According to Plato, the oligarchic society has one characteristic fault: the city is ruled by the wealthiest individuals rather than those best suited for the job. Plato presents this characteristic fault to us with the use of the ship captains’ analogy:

"In the first place,' I replied, 'the principle which characterizes it is unsound. For consider, if one chose ships' captains on grounds of wealth, and never gave a poor man a command, even if he was the better sailor-' You should have some pretty bad navigation.' 'And isn't the same true of any other form of authority?' 'Personally I should agree' 'Except in politics?' I asked. 'Or is it true in politics

too?' 'It is truest of all about politics', he replied, 'for political authority is the most difficult and the most important' 'That, then, is one very serious fault in oligarchy'" (551c).

For Plato, one of the most important factors that lead to the deterioration of the timocratic society to an oligarchic one (i.e. a state in which wealth is the criterion of merit), is the lack of proper education and upbringing. This lack of education produces poor, unlawful citizens:

"'And do you find beggars in an oligarchy?' 'Most people are beggars except the ruling class.' 'Then we may suppose there are also plenty of stinging drones, in the shape of criminals whom the government is careful to hold in restraint.' 'We may indeed,' he agreed. 'And the reason for their existence is lack of education...'" (552e).

Likewise, the individual corresponding to the oligarchic society is solely interested in and motivated by their appetitive desire to accumulate unlimited wealth. Again, for Plato, such an individual is the outcome of poor education:

"'I agree,' he said; 'money is what both (i.e. the oligarchic state and its corresponding individual) value.' 'Yes, because I don't suppose he ever gave any attention to his education' 'I should think not; otherwise he wouldn't have promoted a blind actor (For the ancient Greeks wealth was a blind god) to play his chief part' 'A good point. Now, tell me,' I went on, 'I suppose that his lack of education will breed desires in him, like the pauper and criminal drones, which his general carefulness will keep under constraint'" (554b).

The lack of proper education also entails that the soul of the oligarchic individual is not lead by the rational part. The appetitive, moneymaking part of the soul has a strong presence in the oligarchic individual's soul, and takes control over the rational and spirited parts, forcing them to work towards moneymaking (553b5-d7). Also appetitive desires that threaten to go against his ultimate goal (i.e. moneymaking) are controlled, though for the wrong reasons – “He is wrong, Plato implies, to be obsessed by his dominant end that he completely rejects unnecessary appetites” (Irwin, 1977, p. 228):

“There it becomes quite clear that the high reputation for honesty which he has in other business transactions is due merely to a certain respectable constraint which he exercises over his evil impulses, for fear of their effect on his concerns as a whole. There's no moral conviction, no taming of desire by reason, but only the compulsion of fear” (554d).

The oligarchic individual abides by law because of fear. Therefore, such an individual cannot be compared to the real goodness of the individual who corresponds to aristocracy (554e).

#### 5.2.4. Democracy and the Democratic Individual

According to Plato, oligarchy turns into democracy because of the excessive pursuit of wealth that characterizes it (*Rep.*, VIII, 555b10). This change follows somewhat inevitably since, according to the dialogue, the poor (who are ruled by the few rich) will eventually realize that their rulers are not better than they are and having suffered under their rule, will revolt and seize control of the state (557a).

Plato, having given his account of how oligarchy changes into democracy, proceeds to give a description of the characteristics of the democratic state and the democratic individual. In this description, Plato stresses out, more than in any other section of book VIII of the *Republic*, the importance of having and pursuing the right (right in that they are beneficial for the agent to have and to pursue) desires which can only be the result of good character training and a sound education from an early age. Plato had most probably the ancient democratic city-state of Athens at the time of Pericles in mind when describing the democratic society (Taylor, 1926, p.296). The most important characteristic of the democratic society is that the individual has unlimited freedom to do as they like. This might sound appealing at first, but in the end is proven the characteristic fault of the democratic society:

“Would you agree, first, that people will be free? There is liberty and freedom of speech in plenty, and every individual is free to do as he likes...There’s no compulsion either to exercise authority if you are capable of it, or to submit to authority if you don’t want to: you needn’t fight if there’s a war, or you can wage a private war in peacetime if you don’t like peace; and if there’s any law that debars you from political or judicial office, you will none the less take either if they come your way. It’s a wonderfully pleasant way of carrying on in the short run, isn’t it?’ ‘In the short run perhaps’” (557b-e).

The main problem of such a type of governance is that it is those who are the most popular, rather than those who are the most qualified for the position, that hold office.

In the following quote, one can see again the importance of education and character training for a child to grow into ‘a good man’:

“We said that no one who had not exceptional gifts could grow into a good man unless he were brought up from childhood in a good environment and trained in good habits. Democracy which a grandiose gesture sweeps all this away and doesn’t mind what the habits and background of its politicians are; provided they profess themselves the people’s friends, they are dully honored” (558b).

In his description of the democratic individual, Plato also stresses the importance of education for the removal of unnecessary desires:

“But we can call unnecessary all desires which can be got rid of with practice, if we start young, and whose presence either does us no good or positive harm” (559a).

Knowledge, along with good practices and habits, (developed by the proper training of desires) are the best things for a young man’s mind and character:

“In the end they capture the seat of government, having discovered that the young man’s mind is devoid of sound knowledge and practices and true principles, the most effective safeguards the mind of man can be blessed with’ ‘Far the most effective’ ‘The vacant citadel in the young man’s mind is filled instead by an invasion of pretentious fallacies and opinions.’ ‘Very much so’” (560b-c).

The lack of appropriate training and education leads the democratic individual to fallacious beliefs about the nature of virtues and vices. It also leads them to the pursuit of unnecessary desires: “For the rest of his life (the democratic individual) spends as much money, time and trouble on unnecessary desires as on the necessary” (561b). Still, the democratic individual avoids unnecessary lawless appetitive desires (574e1-3). He avoids “law-breaking desires which cannot be satisfied at all without damaging his rational part for a law-governed life” (Irwin, 1977, p. 229).

Plato stresses out in his discussion here something that he has noted before<sup>195</sup>: not all desires are of equal value. Some desires are beneficial for the agents to have, some are

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<sup>195</sup>In dialogues such as the *Symposium* and even in previous books of the *Republic*. Plato’s educational program would not have the current format if he thought that all desires are equal.

neutral and some are harmful (561c) (For a more extensive classification of desires see section 2.1).

### 5.2.5 Tyranny and the Tyrannic Individual

According to Plato, the excessive desire for liberty is the downfall of the democratic society and what leads it to tyranny: “Then, as I was saying, an excessive desire for liberty<sup>196</sup> at the expense of everything else is what undermines democracy and leads to the demand for tyranny” (*Rep.*, VIII, 562c). Again, in Plato’s account of tyranny and the tyrannical individual, one can see the importance of having developed the right desires and subsequently the importance of the right training/education of the character of students, not only for the individual but also for the society.

Again, Plato makes several remarks about the importance of education and the role it plays in society in his description of the tyranic state and the manner in which it comes about. Plato, when describing the way in which tyranny originates from democracy, highlights the lack of respect that students in a democratic state have for their teachers and their elders:

“The teacher fears and panders to his pupils, who in turn despise their teachers and attendants; and the young as a whole imitate their elders, argue with them and set themselves up against them, while their elders try to avoid the reputation of being disagreeable or strict by aping the young and mixing with them on terms of easy good fellowship” (563b).

The tyrant first arises as the defendant and champion of people. According to Plato, there are three groups in a democratic state: the drones who have become leaders and

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<sup>196</sup>According to Plato, such an excessive desire for freedom produces the opposite results i.e., slavery: “The same disease which afflicted and finally destroyed oligarchy afflicts democracy, in which it has more scope, still more virulently and enslaves it. Indeed, any extreme is liable to produce a violent reaction; this is as true of the weather and plants and animals as of political societies.’ ‘It’s what one would expect.’ ‘So from an extreme of liberty one is likely to get, in the individual and in society, a reaction to an extreme of subjection’” (*Rep.*, VIII, 563e – 564a).



handle almost all affairs of the state<sup>197</sup>, the rich people<sup>198</sup> and the mass<sup>199</sup>. According to Plato, the leaders/drones rob the rich and keep most of the money for themselves while the rest they give to the masses to appease them (565a10-15). Naturally, the rich are forced to protect themselves by speaking at the assembly (565b1-3) and by going to trials (565c8-10). This conflict allows the tyrant to emerge (565c)<sup>200</sup>.

Although the tyrant first starts as a friend of the people, he soon removes violently any man who challenges his power and all men who he feels threaten him because of their courage, intelligence or wealth (567c). He has no friends and is in need of an army (567d5-8). Thus, he frees the slaves and uses them as his personal bodyguards (567e7-10). In the end, he even turns against the people who made him ruler of the state (569b1-10).

Plato, in his description of the tyrannic individual, continues his discussion of unnecessary desires. In this section, he argues that some of the unnecessary desires are violent and lawless and arise from our bestial nature when the human part of us (i.e. reason) is asleep (IX, 571c-d). The Platonic education program safeguards against such desires. It produces men of steady character who are guided by the rational part of the soul and are motivated by rational desires. The following quote reveals to us part of the Platonic character education rationale by highlighting how disciplined men control the lower parts of the soul: they do not completely starve appetitive desires nor do they

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<sup>197</sup>“Let us suppose a democratic society falls into three groups as indeed it does. First comes the group we have mentioned (the drones), larger than in an oligarchy because of the freedom it gets.” “Granted.” “And indeed a good deal more energetic.” “How is that?” “In an oligarchy it is despised and kept from power, and so lacks practice and strength. In a democracy practically all the leaders are drawn from it. It’s more energetic elements do the talking and acting, the remainder sits buzzing on the benches and won’t let anyone else speak, so that all public business, with trifling exceptions, is in their hands” (VIII, 564d).

<sup>198</sup>“Then there’s a second group which continually emerges from the mass.” “What is that?” “Everyone’s on the make, but the steadiest characters will generally be most successful in making money” “most likely” “and the drones find them a plentiful and most convenient source to extract honey from” “There’s not much to be extracted from poor men.” “And so this group, on which the drones batten, are called the rich” (VIII, 564e).

<sup>199</sup>“The third group is the mass of the people, who earn their own living, take little interest in politics, and aren’t very well off. They are the largest call in democracy and once assembled are supreme” (VIII, 565a).

<sup>200</sup> “‘In this struggle don’t the people normally put forward a single popular leader, whom they nurse to greatness?’ ‘Yes, as a rule.’ ‘Then it should be clear,’ I said, ‘that this leadership is the root from which tyranny invariably springs’”.

indulge in them. There seems to be a golden mean between starving unnecessary desires and indulging in them, and that allows the rational part of the soul to continue its journey into finding the truth unhindered:

“But a man of sound and disciplined character, before he goes to sleep, has wakened his reason and given it its fill of intellectual argument and inquiry; his desires he has neither starved nor indulged, so that they sink to rest and don’t plague the highest part of him with their joys and sorrows, but leave it to pursue its investigations unhampered and on its own, and to its endeavours to apprehend things still unknown to it, whether past, present or future the third, spirited, part of him he calms and keeps from quarrels so that he sleeps with an untroubled temper. Thus he goes to rest with the other two parts of him quietened, and his reasoning element stimulated, and is in a state to grasp the truth undisturbed by lawless dreams and visions” (IX, 571e-572b).

The tyrannic individuals are completely ruled by the appetitive part of their soul and are driven by their desire to satisfy all of their appetitive desires at any cost. This leads them to commit all kinds of crimes and injustices: fraud, deceit, robbery, use violence<sup>201</sup> and might even result in murdering their own parents<sup>202</sup>. This constant pursuit of appetitive desires, which completely disregards reason and feelings of honor or shame, is described by Plato as a kind of “madness”. The tyrannic individual is characterized by his pursuit of lawless appetitive desires:

“The other desires buzz round it, loading it with incense and perfume, flowers and wine, and all the pleasures of a dissolute life, on which they feed and fatten it until at last they produce in it the sting of mania. Then the master passion runs wild and takes madness into its service; any opinions or desires with a decent reputation and any feelings of shame still left are killed or thrown out, until all discipline is swept away, and madness usurps its place” (573 a-b).

Overall, the tyrannic individual is the complete opposite of the *ἀριστοι* (the individual corresponding to the state of aristocracy). The latter is fully and completely led by her rational part of the soul, primarily because of the rigorous training and education she has undergone. On the other hand, the tyrannic individual, not having undergone proper training, is completely led by her appetitive part of the soul and ends up being an enemy

<sup>201</sup>“If they don’t give it to him, I suppose he’ll try to get his way by fraud and deceit.’ ‘I suppose so.’ ‘And if he can’t, will he proceed to robbery and violence?’ ‘I suppose so’” (IX, 574b).

<sup>202</sup>This section can be taken to suggest that murdering one’s parents is seen by Plato as perhaps the greatest injustice one could commit: “‘I wouldn’t give much for his parents’ chances,’ said Adeimantus. ‘Do you really mean that he will strike his own mother and his ageing father, to whom he is bound by ties of birth and long affection...?’ ‘That is just what I mean.’ ‘What a lucky thing it is,’ I said, to have a tyrant for a son!’ ‘A real bit of luck,’ he agreed” (IX, 576c).

to herself, to all those around her and to society in general. According to Plato, there is no unhappier society than the one ruled by a tyrant and there is no happier one than the one ruled by the philosopher-king<sup>203</sup>. Likewise, the tyrannic individual is the unhappiest individual while the philosopher (the lover of wisdom) is the happiest one<sup>204</sup>. Plato points out that having the proper education is instrumental for the agent in order to live a happy life – and what Plato has in mind when referring to the right education is not the direct transmission of knowledge but an education that fosters the growth of moral and epistemic virtues (See sections 4.2-4.4).

### Section Summary

Plato’s account of the five political regimes, and how they come about, is not without its problems and certainly not without its critics. Aristotle, for example, in Book V of the *Politics* raises a number of problems for the Platonic understanding of these five regimes. Aristotle points out that constitutions do not necessarily change in the order that Plato has described but rather that “constitutions more often change into the opposite form than into the one near them<sup>205</sup>” (1316a15-30). To illuminate and further support his argument, Aristotle gives examples of city-states that have changed their constitution from oligarchy to tyranny (1316a35-36), democracy to oligarchy (1316a25) and tyranny to democracy (1316a33). Aristotle also argues that each political regime can have many forms (i.e. democracy can have many forms and not just the one Plato ascribes to it) and that contrary to what Plato thought, the revolutions that occur in each political regime are not only of one specific form for each political system (1316b15-27).

I fully agree with Aristotle’s criticisms of the Platonic description of the five regimes. Still, my aim in this section was not to defend Plato’s political philosophy but rather to

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<sup>203</sup>“That’s a fair challenge. And it is obvious that there is no more unhappy society than that ruled by a tyrant, and none happier than our philosopher kingship” (IX, 576e).

<sup>204</sup>“And is not what is furthest removed from reason furthest removed also from law and order?” ‘Obviously.’ ‘And didn’t we see that the passionate and tyrannical desires were the furthest from law and order?’ ‘Much the furthest.’ ‘And the orderly and kingly desires the nearest?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘So the tyrant is furthest removed from man’s true and proper pleasure, the philosopher king nearest it.’ ‘Necessarily.’ ‘And the tyrant therefore leads the most unpleasant, the philosopher king the most pleasant of lives.’ ‘That necessarily follows.’” (IX, 587a-b).

<sup>205</sup>I use Rackham’s (1932) translation of the *Politics*.

look at a number of arguments that lead back to the importance of education and reveal certain features of Plato's rigorous educational program. The importance of having rational desires is highlighted repeatedly throughout Plato's descriptions of the unjust states and their corresponding individuals, while the need to control harmful desires is constantly stressed.

Plato's account here shows in a quite detailed manner the outcomes of proper education and character training (which results in producing men who are ἀριστοι – excellent) and the outcomes of complete educational failure (which results in producing men of a tyrannical nature). It also highlights the outcome of educational programs which fail but nevertheless manage to bestow some elements of self-control to the individuals they bring about (i.e. timocracy, oligarchy, democracy).

In what regards contemporary theories of virtue education, one cannot help but notice that Plato's account of the five regimes and their corresponding individuals can be quite inspirational for contemporary theories of virtue education. First of all, Plato's account of imperfect societies highlights ways education can fail to bring about the desirable results (e.g. by neglecting the training of the mind). It also shows that the educational system needs to be safeguarded from corruption (e.g. not allowing people who are not suitable for such a position to make decisions about the educational curriculum). It also stresses the importance of character training and the appropriate ways to deal with unnecessary desires. Plato's account here is in accordance with the demands for an education that builds steady and good characters and goes beyond the mere direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. It highlights the instrumental significance that Plato gives to virtue-education for the wellbeing of the society and the individual.

## CONCLUSION

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The main conclusion that I want readers to take away is the realization that Plato was the first to conceive and to have started developing the concept of intellectual virtues. I have shown that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues satisfies both the motivational and the success component of intellectual virtues. I have argued that the motivational component of intellectual virtues can be found in Plato's discussions of rational desires and the success component in his dialectical method. Overall, I have argued that all the building blocks of the concept of intellectual virtues can be found in the Platonic corpus.

The realization that Plato was the first to conceive of intellectual virtues is not only of historic interest. I have argued that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of merit for contemporary virtue epistemology. I have argued that *episteme* is Plato's primary intellectual virtue and that, similarly to Pritchard's conception of understanding, is a cognitive achievement that cannot be attained by luck or testimony. I have discussed the relationship between Plato's conception of *episteme* and *sophia* and proceeded to highlight how certain contemporary virtue epistemology theories could benefit if they were to build upon the Platonic, rather than the Aristotelian, conception of intellectual virtues.

I have also argued that the Platonic conception of intellectual virtues can be of significant merit for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education that aim at fostering both the growth of moral and epistemic virtues. I have started this discussion with the argument that Socrates is not a moral philosopher but rather the very first epistemic character builder. This has helped me to delineate the continuity of thought from Socrates to Plato on theories of education and to separate the educational methods of the two philosophers. This has led me to discuss the rigorous Platonic educational program, as presented in the *Republic*, and to argue that it promotes three different kinds of virtue: (i) Moral virtues, (ii) The Cognitive Virtue of Abstraction and (iii) The Cognitive Virtue of Debate. I have also argued that the demand for an education that fosters the growth of the epistemic dispositions of students, rather than transmitting

knowledge to them directly, originates from Plato and Platonic Socrates. I have then presented and discussed Plato's problem-solving teaching method and argued that it can be of great value for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education. I have concluded this section by showing how the Platonic problem-solving learning method can be applied in schools nowadays.

Lastly, I have discussed Plato's accounts of educational failure. Plato, in the *Republic*, does not only give us his account of a successful educational system but also describes ways in which education can fail to bring about the desirable results. The two accounts of educational failure I have presented are: (1) the Eristic Method and (2) The Five Regimes and their Corresponding Individuals. I have showed that Plato's accounts of educational failure can also be of merit for contemporary virtue-based approaches to education. I have argued that these two accounts primarily show the importance of character education for the epistemic success of the agent.

## POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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I want to conclude my thesis with a brief outline of the numerous possibilities for future research. The realization that Plato was the first to conceive and to have started building the concept of intellectual virtues brings out many possibilities for future research. The relevant research material could not possibly fit within a single study. After all, one of the biggest difficulties I faced while researching this topic was deciding what to include and what to leave out of my thesis. Therefore, I want to leave the reader with a few examples of possible avenues of research. Such examples are the following:

- One could attempt to create a Neo-Platonic virtue theory that attempts to modernize Plato's ideas about moral and epistemic virtues in the same way that Neo-Aristotelian scholars, such as Linda Zagzebski (1996), have done for the Aristotelian conception of virtue.
- Having in mind that Plato was the first to conceive of intellectual virtues, one could look into his account of moral virtues and investigate what this account can offer to contemporary theories of virtue ethics. Now that I have shown that Plato had a conception of both moral and epistemic virtues, perhaps scholars working in virtue ethics have one less reason to ignore the Platonic account of moral virtue and to focus solely on the Aristotelian.
- Lastly, now that I have shown that Plato and Dewey are not the two opposites that contemporary philosophers of education make them out to be, one could compare the two philosophers' theories of education further in order to find other potential areas that these two scholars might agree on. One might even try to produce a contemporary theory of education based on the two scholars' theories of education that attempts to bridge their differences. The backbone of such a theory can be Plato's and Dewey's agreement that teachers should not simply transmit knowledge to the students directly; they both thought that there is more to education for students than simply being a passive receiver of information.

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As someone might notice, I list for some of the dialogues more than one translation (i.e. the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Protagoras*, the *Apology*, the *Meno*, the *Euthyphro* and the *Phaedo*). I want to note that in my thesis I mostly used Lee's (Lee and Lane, 2007) translation for the *Republic*, Nehamas's and Woodruff's (1995) translation for the *Phaedrus*, Beresford's (Beresford and Brown, 2005) translation for the *Protagoras*, Grube's (2002) translation for the *Meno* and the *Apology* and Fowler's (1919) translation for the *Euthyphro* and the *Phaedo*. Whenever this is not the case, and I have used one of the other translations listed, I have highlighted it with a footnote.

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