

THE DIVIDED LINE AND THE STRUCTURE OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

Kenneth Dorter

1

The *Republic's* overall argument progresses to a climax in book 9 but its progress is conspicuously disrupted after books 1, 4, 7, and 9. The style of book 1 is so different from the others that it is often taken for an earlier work, but the actual content is so consistent with the whole that even the doubters acknowledge it must have been revised to fit the rest of the *Republic*.¹ Every claim made against Thrasymachus (in the left column below) is resurrected later and treated as crucial:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Rulers seek the good of their subjects, not themselves (342e). | Rulers seek the good of the subjects, not themselves (419a–b). |
| 2. The best are not tempted by the normal rewards of ruling, and must be compelled (346e–347d). | Philosophers will be reluctant to rule, and must be compelled (520a–d). |
| 3. Justice and knowledge have the same attributes and are therefore the same (350c). | Justice is knowledge that masters spiritedness and appetite (443c–444a, 516b–d). |
| 4. We can understand justice in the individual by observing it in a group (351c–352a). | We can understand justice in the individual by observing it in the city (368c–369a and <i>passim</i>). |
| 5. Virtue is fulfillment of a natural function (352d–353c). | Virtues are fulfillments of natural functions (433a–b, 443c–e; cf. 608e–611a). |

Nevertheless, instead of using these connections to move smoothly to book 2, Plato disregards book 1 and begins afresh. Book 1 ends with a confession of failure, and book 2 begins with Glaucon's concurrence (357b).

Books 5–7 seem grafted between books 4 and 8 so awkwardly that they have been taken for a later addition.² They ignore the project of examining of the city to understand the soul (368d–369a), and the distinctive features of 5–7, unlike 2–4 and 8–9, are relevant only to the city. Nothing in the soul corresponds to equality of women (457b–c), elimination of family (457c–d), or philosopher-rulers (473c–d). The requirement in book 4 that the rational class (not yet philosophers) rule, fits the city-soul correspondence, for we have a rational faculty within us; but we do not have a philosopher within us as books 5–7 would require, and instead of drawing a city-individual parallel as in books 4 and 8 Socrates evades the question: "No doubt it's also clear what we'll say the individual is like."³ Plato actually emphasizes the breaks before and after books 5–7. Socrates begins book 5 not as an amplification of the longer road spoken of at 435c–d, but as if the city were complete, with only its decline remaining to be shown. Books 5–7 are forced upon him (450a), and when he does get to the decline, in book 8, he describes books 5–7 as a digression (ἐξέτραπόμεθα). In fact the subsequent books presuppose material from books 5–7, so the latter are not a digression, but Plato makes the transitions seem as discontinuous as possible and calls attention to inconsistencies between the material in books 2–4 and books 5–7 (536c–d).

By the end of book 9 the work of the *Republic* seems over, but book 10 abruptly returns to the discussion of the arts in books 2–3. There is no continuity with the preceding argument, nor any attempt to provide a connecting link. The discussion of virtue and afterlife at the end of book 10 could have followed naturally from the discussion of virtue and vice in book 9, but Plato interposes the re-examination of art between them.

These discontinuities mark off different discussions in a way that shows the dialogue to be organized not only progressively but also chiasmatically around books 5–7. Books 8–9 (the city's decline and the nature of injustice) correspond to books 2–4 (the city's rise and the nature of justice), while book 10 (art's ability to appear persuasive even when devoid of knowledge, and the importance of virtue for the afterlife) corresponds to book 1 (the importance of virtue for the afterlife, and arguments that appear

persuasive but are devoid of knowledge). Within book 7 there is an additional discontinuity when Socrates says there is a further level where Glaucon will be unable to follow (533a).

These four layers—497c–535a within books 5–7, books 5–7 within books 2–9, and books 2–9 within books 1–10—represent four ways of examining justice, corresponding to the stages of the Divided Line. Book 1 exemplifies *eikasia*, books 2–4 *pistis*, books 5–6 (to 497c) *dianoia*, and books 6–7 (497c–535a) exemplify as much of *noesis* as can be put into words.⁴ The dialogue returns symmetrically down the levels of the Line in books 7, 8–9, and 10, with the higher levels now in view, but for reasons of space we shall examine only the upward path. The opening words, "I went down" are sometimes taken as an allusion to the philosopher's descent back into the Cave to help raise others up. It seems the dialogue really does begin within the Cave, with *eikasia*.

2. BOOK 1: *EIKASIA*

The Divided Line is initially partitioned into two segments, the intelligible realm and the visible. Each is bisected again into an image and an original. Thus *eikasia* (from "image") perceives images of visible things, *pistis* visible things themselves, *dianoia* images of the intelligible, and *noesis* the intelligible itself (509e–510b). Let us begin with an examination of the arguments of book 1 to see whether they exemplify what is said about *eikasia* in book 6.

1 (331c). First is Socrates' refutation of Cephalus's conception of justice as honesty and repaying debts: if someone who lent us a weapon wants it back when he is raging, it would be unjust to return it or tell the whole truth. The refutation is a straightforward counterexample, a logically valid refutation of a universal proposition. But its crucial premise, that justice cannot have adverse consequences, is never defended.⁵

2 (332a–333d). When Polemarchus replies that what we owe to a friend is always something good—so we must not return the weapon—Socrates asks what we owe an enemy. The question prompts Polemarchus to transform Cephalus's definition into a new one: justice means benefiting friends and harming enemies. The definition, Polemarchus acknowledges, applies especially in wartime, and he is unable to apply it in peacetime better than to say a just person can be trusted with money when it is not needed. Again there is no inquiry into the nature of justice.

3 (333e–334b). Socrates points out that every art can be used for good or ill—e.g., medicine enables physicians not only to be best at curing disease but also best at introducing it. Accordingly, if the peacetime art of justice is to keep money safe, the just person will also be best at keeping it wrongly, and is a kind of thief. The argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*: the conception of justice as an art (*technē*) leads to an absurdity, so the conception is mistaken. There is also hyperbole, for what follows is that just people *can be* thieves, not that they are thieves. Once again no positive conception of justice is reached.

4 (334c–335b). Because of our fallible judgements our friends are not always good nor our enemies always bad. Does justice entail helping evil friends and harming good enemies? Polemarchus redefines “friend” as someone who we not only think is good, but really is good. This begs the question by redefining “friend” to exclude the possibility of error. Whether infallible knowledge of individual human characters is possible—a precondition for justice on this definition—is never considered.

5 (335b–336a). If to harm is to make worse, and to make worse is to make less excellent, less virtuous, then a conception of justice that requires harming enemies or bad people, requires making them less virtuous, and people can be rendered less virtuous by virtue. The argument is another *reductio ad absurdum*. It illuminates the need to distinguish between punishment as harm and as correction,⁶ but once again relies on unexamined assumptions—e.g., that justice is a virtue, which Thrasymachus denies (348c). The refutations of Cephalus and Polemarchus have done nothing more than explore the consequences of our uncritical assumptions.

6 (336b–c). Thrasymachus is under no illusion about what Socrates has accomplished: “If you truly want to know what the just is don’t only ask questions and gratify your love of honor by refuting whatever answer someone gives, since you know it’s easier to ask than answer, but answer yourself and tell what you say the just is.” Socrates has been pursuing the love of honor rather than the love of truth: he has been concerned with winning arguments rather than developing a positive conception of justice. Love of honor is associated with *eikasia*, the lowest level in the Cave allegory (516c).

7 (336d–337c). Thrasymachus admonishes Socrates, “Don’t tell me it’s the necessary, beneficial, profitable, gainful, or advantageous, but tell me clearly and precisely what you mean. For I

won’t accept it if you say such inanities.” Socrates replies with a Straw Man argument, comparing Thrasymachus’s stricture to asking how much twelve is but refusing to accept “twice six,” “three times four,” “six times two,” or “four times three.” We can sympathize with Thrasymachus’s sarcastic response—“How similar this is to that!”—because he did not exclude particular answers but only unexplained synonyms. However Socrates’ protest succeeds in getting Thrasymachus to give his own answer, and to enable Socrates to return to honor-loving refutations—a strategy not lost on Thrasymachus (337e). Their subsequent conversation falls into five parts: clarification of Thrasymachus’s definition, followed by a transitional passage and three refutations of his claim that injustice is superior to justice.

8 (338c–344c). Thrasymachus’s initial definition is that justice is the advantage of the stronger, a formulation so vague that even Socrates could agree, given his belief that a just person is stronger than an unjust and that justice is therefore advantageous. By a series of counter-examples, dilemmas, and distinctions Socrates forces Thrasymachus to confess his belief that since justice benefits others at one’s own expense, it is a disadvantage to be just. Just people are either fools or are coerced into behaving justly by those who are stronger. The latter, who are unjust, get all the advantages, both from their unjust treatment of others, and from their victims’ forced altruism toward them. There are no tricks or fallacies in Socrates’ handling of Thrasymachus here, as there will be when he turns from clarification to refutation.

9 (345b–347a). The transitional passage can be regarded either as further clarification or a refutation of Thrasymachus’s claim that the distinguishing feature of consummately unjust people is their intelligence and knowledge. Socrates forces him to concede that intelligence and knowledge in themselves do not produce injustice, but only when governed by self-interest. Again, Socrates is scrupulously fair in eliciting this distinction.

10 (349a–351a). Socrates’ refutation of the claim that an unjust person is superior to a just one with respect to knowledge, is so confusing that Cornford replaces it with a paraphrase. Its obfuscating nature hides Socrates’ strategy from Thrasymachus until it is too late. Like the master game player that Adeimantus compares him to (487b–c), Socrates hides his real target until he is ready to attack:

1) In a certain way a just person resembles a knowledgeable person and an unjust person an ignorant one.

- 2) If two people resemble each other they have the same qualities.
- 3) Accordingly, a just person has the same qualities as a knowledgeable one, and an unjust person those of an ignorant one.
- 4) Therefore a just person is knowledgeable and an unjust person ignorant.

In book 5 Socrates gives a critique of this kind of argument: the reason people doubt that women can rule as well as men is that they are misled by eristic arguments which claim that if there is some difference between two things they cannot be the same in any respect. One might as well say that since a bald person differs from a long-haired one, if bald people can be shoemakers then long-haired people cannot (454a-c). The present argument uses comparable All or Nothing reasoning in step 2, and Thrasymachus stands for it only because he was tricked into accepting it when it appeared to work in his favor (349d). By the time Socrates springs the trap at 350c there is nothing left for Thrasymachus to do but blush (350d). He realizes he has suffered a mortal blow, and Socrates reminds him that the conclusion can be used to continue the refutation if he resists Socrates' new arguments (351a).

11 (351b-352d). Socrates argues that since unjust behavior by members of a group toward one another weakens the group, injustice has a weakening effect and will weaken any individual who is unjust. Whether we classify this as an illicit analogy—since Socrates gives no argument here that an individual is composite like a group—or as a fallacy of Division, Thrasymachus makes no objection but plays at being genially aloof (352b).

12 (352d-354a). After securing Thrasymachus's ironical agreement that a just person is more knowledgeable and stronger than an unjust one, Socrates argues that justice is also the source of happiness:

- 1) The virtue of something is the fulfillment of its distinctive function.
- 2) Living is a function of the soul.
- 3) Justice is its virtue.
- 4) Consequently a just person lives well.
- 5) To live well is to be happy.
- 6) Therefore a just person is happy.

In most respects the argument is *logically* fair, even if some readers would take issue with particular premises, especially the first. But in the third step Socrates takes a crucial liberty when he says, "Didn't we agree that the virtue of the soul is justice, and its vice injustice?" (353e). Socrates knows that Thrasymachus maintained exactly the opposite (348c) just before being outmaneuvered in the first refutation, and agreed to its denial only in an attempt to save face by ironically patronizing Socrates. Socrates deliberately begs the question here, and Thrasymachus replies in the same ironical vein as before (354a).

Book 1 concludes with Socrates rebuking himself for having digressed from asking what justice is in order to ask whether it is vice and ignorance, or wisdom and virtue, and having digressed from that inquiry to ask whether it is more profitable than injustice, "for if I don't know what justice is I will hardly know whether it happens to be a virtue or not, and whether someone who has it is unhappy or happy" (354c). The preceding twelve passages were a mixture of good and bad reasoning, but they all share an absence of any attempt by Socrates to inquire into the nature of justice; he explores only what the others say about justice.

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says:

In the law courts no one cares anything at all about the truth of these things, but only about what is convincing; and this is the "likely" [*eikos*], to which whoever intends to speak with skill must apply himself. He must sometimes not even mention the facts themselves, if they did not happen in a likely way [*eikotōs*] but rather what is likely [*eikota*], both in prosecution and defense. And, whatever one says, one must pursue the likely [*eikos*] and say goodbye to the true. (272d-e)

What takes place here is similar—Socrates is concerned only with the semblance of demonstration, not with investigating the thing itself—and "likelihood" (*eikasia*) is an apt term for it.

In book 10, Socrates will argue that painters and poets are at three removes from reality and truth: the highest reality is the form, next is the particular thing that imitates the form, and third is the painter's imitation of the latter in a picture or the poet's imitation in words. The painter is like someone who carries a mirror and shows reflections of everything, and a poet does the same thing in words (596a-599a). Socrates previously used the mirror metaphor to depict *eikasia* in the Divided Line (510a), and book 1 and the beginning of book 10 seem to be, in different ways, elucidations of *eikasia*. *Eikasia* neither looks at the forms themselves,

like *noesis* and *dianoia*, nor at the physical things which imitate them—like *pistis*—but rather at words or other images of the physical world. Book 1 illustrates this in the way Socrates, by his own admission, examines only words or images of justice, without attempting to discern justice itself. There were refutations but no affirmations. *Eikasia* examines words—theories—without investigating the things to which the words refer. In book 2 we see what Socrates could have done differently.

3. BOOKS 2–4: *PISTIS*

At the beginning of book 2 Glaucon asks, “Socrates, do you want to seem to have persuaded (*pepeikenai*) us or to truly persuade (*peisai*) us that it is in every way better to be just than unjust?” (357a–b). The terms for “persuade” are related to *pistis*, the name for the second section of the Divided Line. If he is to truly persuade them Socrates must examine not merely words about justice but justice and injustice themselves, to show their nature and intrinsic power (358b). Glaucon and Adeimantus revive Thrasymachus’s position to make Socrates refute it more convincingly, because it is a view that many fear is correct. “Don’t only show us in words that justice is stronger than injustice,” Adeimantus adds, “but show us what each in itself does to the person who possesses it” (367e). The demand is to turn from *eikasia*, the reflection of things in words, to the things themselves—the practice of justice and injustice—and from the appearance of persuasion to true persuasion or *pistis*. Consequently Socrates does not attack his opponents’ view with a counterexample or polemical device, as before. Instead of merely refuting the proto-Hobbesian social contract theory that the brothers defend (358e–367c) he proposes an alternative explanation of the origin of cities, on the basis of helping friends rather than harming enemies:

A city comes into being, as I believe, because it so happens that none of us is self-sufficient, but we lack many things. . . . So when one person takes on someone for one need, and another takes on someone else for another need, then, since many things are needed, many people gather in one area of residence as associates and helpers. (369b–c)

On this model civil society arises not because people harm each other but because they help each other. According to the

contractarian thesis, the original condition is injustice (mutual exploitation) and justice is derivative as a way of limiting the destructiveness. According to Socrates’ thesis of cooperation, the original condition is one of justice (mutual benefit), and injustice arises derivatively because once our primary needs are satisfied our appetites turn from the necessary to the unnecessary (372d–373a), which are eventually unjust and monstrous (559c, 572b–575a).

Similarly, where Glaucon’s model made violence primary and peace derivative, Socrates shows violence emerging almost seamlessly from peaceful beginnings. First hunting appears (373b) which employs violence only in the service of appetite; then, as appetite expands from the necessary to the unnecessary (373d), war becomes inevitable (373e), and appetite has passed over into spiritedness. The spirited warriors become guardians of the city, and the “guardians also need, in addition to their spiritedness, love of wisdom (*philosophos*) in their nature” (375e). Thus reason is found within spiritedness as spiritedness was found within appetite, and by imperceptible degrees during the next 40 pages the rulers evolve from spirited natures into rational ones (414b).

Although the rational guardians are educated to philosophy, love of wisdom (410e, 411e–412a), and are called wise (428e), their wisdom consists only of good judgement (*euboulos*, 428b) and has nothing to do with a love of the intelligible realm of forms, which becomes the hallmark of the true philosopher in book 5 (475e–480a). Their education comprises only gymnastics and fine arts (376e). Books 2–4 never introduce the theory of forms, but remain entirely within the visible world of becoming and are governed by what we might call anthropological thinking rather than the abstract philosophical thinking introduced in book 5. Since they never go beyond the visible world, but do study the visible things themselves rather than merely verbal imitations of them, they correspond to the higher subsection of the visible sector of the Divided Line, *pistis*. Given the limitations of *pistis*, however, it is not surprising that Socrates says, “in my opinion, we will never get an accurate answer using our present methods of argument—although there is another longer and fuller road that does lead to such an answer” (435c–d). The reason the previous approach was inadequate, he later explains (504b–c), is that it falls short of Being (*τὸ ὄντως*), that is, as Socrates proceeds to make clear, the good and the other forms.⁷

4. BOOKS 5-7: *DIANOIA*

The transition to the next stage begins when Adeimantus complains that Socrates evaded crucial questions (449c-d). Socrates' response leads to a new beginning, as he calls it (450a) and as the action attests: At the beginning Socrates, accompanied by Glaucon, had his cloak grabbed by Polemarchus' slave and was prevented from going (*ἀφείναι*) by Polemarchus and Adeimantus. When Socrates resisted, Glaucon sided with the others and Socrates relented (327b-328b). Now Polemarchus grabs Adeimantus's cloak and they inform Socrates, accompanied in the discussion by Glaucon, that they will not let him go (*ἀφίετε*). When Socrates resists, Glaucon sides with the others and Socrates relents (449b-450a).

Socrates is reluctant to pursue the matter because much about it lacks confidence (*ἀπιστίας*), and there is no confidence (*ἀπιστοῖτ'*) the regime is possible, or even confidence (*ἀπιστήσεται*) it is best. Glaucon tells Socrates they do not lack confidence (*ἀπιστοί*) in him, and Socrates says that would be encouraging if he were confident (*πιστεύοντος*), but since he is not confident (*ἀπιστοῦντα*) he fears misleading them (450c-451a). Book 2 began with the need for *pistis* (357a5, b1). Now that we turn from *pistis* to *dianoia* there is a cluster of references to the absence of *pistis*. Socrates is merely disclaiming certainty, but the language reminds us that the new subject outstrips *pistis*.

By the end of book 6 the guardians' education expanded from fine arts, gymnastics, and war (452a) to the highest mathematical and dialectical studies.⁸ When Socrates proposes that these philosophers become rulers (473c-d), the audience's outrage is surprising since the philosophical nature of the rulers was mentioned in book 2 (375e) and reiterated in book 4.⁹ Then, however, "philosophy" referred only to good judgement (428b), but now the audience recognizes that something new is intended. It is here in book 5 that the argument completely crosses the division between *pistis* and *dianoia*, the next level of the Divided Line. For the first time Socrates' words contain clear allusions to the theory of forms: if they find what justice is they should not expect the just man to be identical with it, but to participate (*μετέχη*) in it more than others do. They are seeking a pattern (*παράδειγματος*) of justice itself (*αὐτο . . . δικαιοσύνη*) in which we can see how it is related to happiness. Just as the pattern of the good city that they made in words is no less good if it cannot be brought into existence, the pattern of the just man is no less valid if a per-

fectly just man cannot actually exist (472b-e). Socrates no longer speaks only of making rulers philosophical in a general way, but makes it clear that he is referring to actual philosophers, people like Socrates who would soon be sentenced to death; and the dangerous dimensions of the wave of opposition that his proposal will arouse are recognized in no uncertain terms (473e-474a).

When Glaucon asks what he means by philosophy, Socrates replies, "It would not at all be easy to tell someone else, but you I think will agree" (475e). He is referring to what the *Phaedo* calls the hypothesis of forms (100a-b) and the *Republic* calls a thesis (596a) the belief that beauty, justice, goodness, etc., are each a unity although they manifest themselves as multiplicities (475e-476a). The hypothetical aspect becomes clear when Socrates explains how he would justify it to someone who did not acknowledge these unities: "What if someone who we say has opinion but not knowledge [someone at the level of *eikasia* or *pistis*] becomes angry with us and disputes that what we say is true?" (476d). The supposition resembles the *Phaedo's* reference to someone who challenges our hypothesis (101d), but Socrates does not yet follow the *Phaedo's* procedure of seeking a higher hypothesis. He does not even claim to demonstrate the truth of his claim to the objector but only to "soothe and gently persuade him" (476e); in valuing his argument so humbly Socrates is not being modest. What he offers is a strangely unfocused argument in defense of the claim that knowledge is directed to the forms, and that we can have only opinion about physical things:

1. To know is to know something that is (476e).
2. Therefore what completely is, is completely knowable, and what is not at all, is completely unknowable (477a).
3. If anything is in between what completely is and what is not at all, it must be directed to something between knowledge and ignorance (477a).
4. Opinion and knowledge are different powers (477b).
5. Therefore they are directed to different things according to their distinctive power (477b).
6. Knowledge is directed to what is (477b).
7. Powers differ from one another if they are directed to different things and accomplish something different (477c-d).
8. Opinion accomplishes something uncertain while knowledge accomplishes something certain (477e).

9. Therefore opinion and knowledge are different (478a).
10. Therefore they are directed to different things (478a).
11. Knowledge is directed to what is (478a).
12. Therefore opinion cannot be directed to what is (478b).
13. Neither can it be directed to what is not, since ignorance is directed to that (478c).
14. Opinion is between knowledge and ignorance (478d).
15. Because visible things are equivocal they are between what completely is and what is not at all (478e-479c).
16. Therefore opinion is of physical things (479d).

The initial inference (step 2) is fallacious: from "all knowledge implies being" we cannot infer "all being implies knowability," let alone that complete being implies complete knowability. The question-begging false conversion slips past Glaucon because he already accepts the assumption that it is meant to justify, that the forms represent the identity of being and knowability. Hence Socrates' warning at 475e: "It would not at all be easy to tell someone else, but you I think will agree."

The argument is especially confusing because steps 4-7 are a digression. Step 3 says that if anything is between what is and is not, it must be directed to something between knowledge and ignorance; step 8 begins the demonstration that opinion is between knowledge and ignorance; and step 15 concludes that physical things are between what is and what is not. Steps 4-7 are either redundant or irrelevant, but they "soothe and persuade" the objector by reinforcing a fundamental feature of the claim which has been challenged, namely that knowledge is reserved for the forms, and about physical things there can be only opinion. Despite its appearance of defending that claim, the passage merely begs the question, as step 2 had already done in a different way. The question-begging premise is step 7:

In the case of abilities [like seeing and hearing] I do not see any color or shape or any other such quality . . . to which I can look in order to distinguish them for myself from one another. . . . The only thing I can look to is what it is directed to and what it accomplishes. . . . That which is (1) directed to the same things and accomplishes the same thing I call the same, while that which is (2) directed to different things and accomplishes something different I call different.

The question-begging character of this passage has been widely noted. Socrates presents these two possibilities as if they were the only alternatives, but obviously we also call things the same when they are (1a) directed to different things but accomplish the same result, as when we know different things through the power of knowledge. And we also call things different when they are (2a) directed to the same things but accomplish something different, as when perception and action are directed to the same things and result in perceiving and doing. By limiting Glaucon's choices to (1) and (2) Socrates prevents him from separating "what it is directed to" from "what it accomplishes," forcing him to conclude that if knowledge and opinion accomplish something different they must be directed to different things. But this is part of what the argument was supposed to demonstrate, so the question is begged.

This passage shows the limitations of *dianoia*, hypothetical thinking about intelligible forms, namely that it does not derive its principles from something higher, but takes them as given (510b). It cannot justify them, therefore, except on the basis of its original assumptions, and so it cannot avoid begging the question when it defends itself. Like *eikasia*—which is to *pistis* as *dianoia* is to *noesis*—it can draw valid inferences from its assumptions, but it perceives only images of reality rather than reality itself, and can never rise above its words to justify its assumptions. When it must do so it can only try to soothe and persuade; it cannot justify its own principles until it passes into *noesis*.

5. BOOKS 6-7: *NOESIS*

After Socrates finishes explaining the qualities of the philosopher, Adeimantus complains that although Socrates may have defeated the objector in words (487a-c), that will not change the objector's perception that most of those who pursue philosophy become strange or useless, if not vicious (487d-e). Just as the problem with the elenctic *eikasia* of book 1 was that it did not examine just and unjust behavior themselves but only words about them (352b, 354a-c), Socrates now wins wars of words about *intelligible* reality without examining that reality itself, that is, without demonstrating his first principles.

This time, as he begins the transition from *dianoia* to *noesis* (which again is gradual—see n. 7), Socrates replies not with a question-begging argument but with an analogy: those who disparage philosophy are like people who, knowing nothing about

piloting a ship, think the pilot is wasting time when he observes the season, the weather, and the sky. The analogy is instructive, but only a likeness (487e, 489a), not an investigation or demonstration. It shows how it is possible to be good and yet perceived as bad, but it does not show that philosophers are actually good. When Socrates turns from the image to the reality the analogy becomes clearer: just as pilots were distinguished by their determination to understand all relevant factors, philosophers are distinguished by their determination to strive ceaselessly for the truth. We can give a defense of the philosopher that is *metriōs*—acceptable (literally, “moderate”)—by pointing out that

a real lover of learning . . . would not be blunted or desist from his eros before he came in touch with the nature of each thing, what it is in itself, grasping it with the appropriate part of his soul—the appropriate part being the kindred part—and through his closeness and intercourse with real being he would beget reason and truth, and he would know and truly live. (490a–b)

Adeimantus agrees that this defense is *metriōtata*, as plausible as possible. The significance of both speakers’ use of *metriōs* here emerges later, when Adeimantus says that the previous investigation of books 2–4 was acceptable, *metriōs*, to him, and Socrates replies:

But, my friend, a measure (*metron*) of such things that falls short to any extent of what is, is not at all *metriōs*, not at all a measure; for nothing incomplete is a measure (*metron*). However, it seems to some people that they have already done enough and there is no need to search further. (504c)

In other words, the things that we call *metriōs* or acceptable in the colloquial sense are not really acceptable, because we should not rest satisfied with anything less than what is completely good. Their present defense of true philosophers—the analogy with the ship’s pilot—against the notoriety attached to them from the behavior of false pretenders was called *metriōs* in the colloquial sense because it is incomplete. It does not yet demonstrate that these seekers of truth are not only plausible but indispensable rulers of the city. The inadequacy of the previous account becomes clear in what follows.

After explaining why so few aspirants become true philosophers, Socrates finally turns to the demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) of the need for the philosophical regime. Now something new is added to his previous characterization of philosophers. The philosopher

looks upon and contemplates the things that are organized and eternally the same, things which neither commit injustice nor are treated unjustly by one another, but which all are orderly in accordance with reason, and he imitates them and assimilates himself to them as far as possible. . . . Associating with the divine and orderly, the philosopher becomes orderly and divine as far as is possible for a human being. . . . Do you think he would be a poor crafter of moderation, justice, and all of popular virtue? . . . As they work they would frequently look both ways, both toward the just, the beautiful, the wise, and all such things in nature, and again to that which they are producing in human beings . . . until they had made the characters of human beings as dear to god as it is capable of being. (500c–501c)

Previously he spoke of philosophers only in terms of reason and truth, which would not convince the objector in whose experience all too many seekers after truth are scoundrels, while the rest are useless. Nothing in the former characterization of the philosopher as a seeker after truth (490a–b) refuted those concerns by connecting truth with goodness, but in the new characterization the realm of truth and reason that philosophy is concerned with is not only of intellectual interest but of moral, political, and spiritual value. It promotes a thinking and being that is free from injustice and disorder, and promotes virtue and godliness in others. When Socrates later distinguishes *dianoia* and *noesis*, *dianoia* is characterized by following the implications of assumptions about intelligible reality that make no necessary reference to value—to virtue or the good. *Noesis*, on the other hand is characterized as a way to rise above those assumptions and to demonstrate them by derivation from something higher, ultimately the good itself. The present passage displays how the proposal of a philosopher-ruler can be demonstrated to an objector by showing how it alone follows from the demands of goodness and divinity (“This regime is divine and the others are human,” 497c). The “defense” (490a–b) was still at the level of *dianoia*, since it was only acceptable, *metriōs*, but the “demonstration” (497d–501c) transcends such limitations (504c), and now introduces a study that goes even beyond the form of justice and the other forms, namely the study of the Idea of the good (504d–505a). In the progress of the investigation philosophy is first seen in terms of its relation to being, then in terms of its relation to the kind of being that is divine and productive of human excellence, and finally to what lies beyond being altogether (509b) and is the source of all that is valuable (505a–b) and divine. That is the upward movement of *noesis*.

The upward movement of *noesis* can be displayed, but not *noesis* in its highest manifestation, which requires a mental seeing rather than hearing about. Even 497c–535a, because it employs visible images (Sun, Line, Cave), cannot be pure *noesis* (510b, 511b–c). When Glaucon asks for an explanation of *noesis* Socrates replies:

You will no longer be able, my dear Glaucon, to follow me, although for my part I would not willingly omit anything. But you would no longer see an image of what we are saying, but the truth itself. . . . And [we must insist that] the power of dialectic alone can reveal it to someone who is experienced in the things we just went through, and it is not possible in any other way. (533a)

This recalls Socrates earlier remark that education is not the putting of knowledge into souls, like putting sight into blind eyes, but rather turning the soul in the right direction so it can see and contemplate the good directly (518b–d).¹⁰

6. THE OBJECTS OF *DIANOIA* AND *NOESIS*

The status of the objects of *dianoia* is problematic: if the objects of *noesis* are forms (511b–c), the objects of *dianoia* must be images of forms, but images of forms are physical things, and the objects of *dianoia* are intelligible. Conversely, if the objects of *dianoia* are forms how can they differ from the object of *noesis*?¹¹ It is sometimes suggested that the objects of *dianoia* are intermediate mathematical forms such as Aristotle ascribes to Plato, but in that case not only would mathematical intermediates (*dianoia*) be images of metaphysical forms (*noesis*), but physical things (*pistis*) must be images of mathematics—a quasi-Pythagorean view for which there is no evidence in Plato.¹²

Socrates describes the difference as follows:

Noesis differs from *dianoia* because it proceeds not downward from a hypothesis but upward, by the power of dialectic, employing the hypotheses not as first principles but as literal hypotheses, things set under us—stepping stones and springboards to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped it, it once again hangs onto the things that depend from it, and proceeds downward to a conclusion, making use of nothing at all visible but only of forms themselves, from them to them, and concludes in forms. (511b–c)

Dianoia and *noesis* thus have the same *initial* objects—intelligible hypotheses or forms—but their ultimate objects are different. *Dianoia* is concerned with forms as causes (what follows from them), and *noesis* with forms as effects (their origin in

the *unhypothetical* principle). *Dianoia* looks downward from particular forms (the being of things), and does not see all forms as related to one another. *Noesis* proceeds upward hierarchically and synoptically (537c) until it unifies all true beings (forms) in the Idea of the good, their common source beyond being (509b). Thus the ultimate object of *noesis* is not the forms as such—which are the objects of *dianoia*—but the Idea of the good. As *dianoia* attends to visible things for the sake of understanding the forms (510d), *noesis* attends to the forms of being for the sake of understanding the good that is beyond being. The forms, as articulations of the rationality or goodness of the world, are not only effects of the good, but also images of it. Physical things, in turn, by participating in the forms are images of them; and reflections and shadows are images of things. Thus the object of attention at each level is the image of the one above.

These stages of the Divided Line are also illustrated by Plato's Eleatic tetralogy.¹³ 1) The *Parmenides* devotes itself to elenchus in the first part, and in the second part to a demonstration of how arguments can be constructed to prove both sides' contradictory claims. Like *Republic* book 1, it is at the level of *eikasia*. 2) The *Theaetetus* investigates the nature of knowledge, not in a merely elenctic or verbal way, but by examining the phenomenon of knowledge itself. Although refutations occur, something positive is continuously learned as well, but the dialogue never reaches a satisfactory conclusion because it never rises above sense experience to the intelligible forms. 3) The *Sophist* does introduce abstract formal categories, as the starting points for divisions into species. Nevertheless, as with *dianoia* it provides no justification of these starting points but takes them as first principles. Moreover it explicitly avoids concerning itself with the good (227a–b). 4) The *Statesman* begins with genus-species divisions like those of the *Sophist* but then moves to an examination of the source of goodness (283e–284b), which eventually becomes the only relevant consideration in political constitutions (293b–d). The ideal ruler in the *Statesman* is not practicing *noesis*, however, because he is concerned not with forms but actions; he corresponds to the philosopher-rulers of the *Republic* only at the point when they have achieved *noesis* and return to apply it to the art of ruling.¹⁴ No dialogue could be written on the final theme, the philosopher (*Sophist* 217a), because it corresponds to *Republic* 533a.

University of Guelph

NOTES

1. For example, Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, Vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1964), chap. 3, p. 63, and note 15.

2. A. E. Taylor ascribes this view to Henry Jackson and R. D. Archer-Hind (*A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928], p. 27).

3. 541b. Even Robert Hoerber, who argues that the *Republic* represents *only* the soul writ large, and *not at all* politics, does not claim a strict correspondence between the Three Waves and features of the soul (*The Theme of Plato's Republic* [St. Louis: Washington University, 1944], pp. 34–45, 113, 115).

4. Nicholas Smith defends a related thesis in "How the Prisoners in Plato's Cave are 'Like Us'" (*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 13, ed. John Cleary and Gary Gurtler [Leiden: Brill, 1999], pp. 187–204). Although his concern is not with different kinds of thinking but with different definitions of justice, he offers the parallel argument that the definitions in book 1 are at the level of *eikasia*, and the later ones at the higher levels. Our interpretations are largely compatible but there are disagreements, which will be addressed where they arise.

5. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 439n2.

6. It is not an equivocation. See Andrew Jeffrey, "Polemarchus and Socrates on Justice and Harm," *Phronesis*, vol. 24 (1979), pp. 54–69.

7. In accordance with the continuous nature of a line, there is a transitional moment between *pistis* and *dianoia* at the end of book 4. The attempt in books 2–4 to understand the soul by seeing its image in the city resembles *dianoia*, which uses visible images to think about intelligible objects (510b–d), but the soul does not belong to the intelligible realm: it is intermediate between the physical and the intelligible, even if closer to the latter (611e, cf. *Phaedo* 80a–b), so when Socrates uses the city as an image to understand the soul (beginning at 435b), he is no longer in the visible realm but not yet in the intelligible. Smith (1999, p. 200) classifies book 4 as the beginning of *dianoia* because of Plato's use of the word *eidōs* or "form" at 435b and 445c, but "*eidōs*" often has nothing to do with the theory of forms. It was already used colloquially in book 2, where clearly the theory of forms was not yet intended (e.g., 357c, 363e–364a, 369a), and is periodically used in a non-technical way throughout the dialogue. The theory of forms—intelligible reality—is not thematized until book 5. Also see James Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963 [1902]), p. 168; and Guthrie 1975, pp. 459–460.

8. 502e, 503e; cf. 522c, 536d.

9. 410e, 411e–412a.

10. Because they have moved from *dianoia* to *noesis*, what was then called *episteme* is now recognized as "dimmer than [true] *episteme*" (533d–e).

11. See Smith's detailed survey and discussion in "Plato's Divided Line" (*Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 16, 1996), pp. 25–46, especially p. 32. One solution proposed by Smith, among others, is that the objects of *dianoia* are at the same ontological level as those of *pistis*; but there is disagreement about what those objects are. Smith proposes that the objects both of *dianoia* and *pistis* are physical things, although *dianoia* takes them as images of abstract objects. This conflicts with Socrates' statement that although *dianoia* makes use of visible images, its object is not those images but "that of which they are images; they produce an account for the sake of the square itself and the diagonal itself, rather than the ones they draw" (510d). Smith acknowledges two further difficulties. First, his interpretation violates the stipulation that the objects of the lower level be images of the objects of the higher; on his view both are visible objects at the same level. He replies that the Cave's portrayal of *pistis* as statues is not an image of its portrayal of *dianoia* as shadows and reflections; both are images of physical things. Granted, a statue is not an image of a reflection but of the thing itself, but it is nevertheless at a further remove from the thing than the reflection is, because human intervention is added. That painters and sculptors often work from photographs—less anachronistically a Greek painter could work from someone's shadow in profile—shows how works of art are ontologically further from the original than reflections and shadows are. The other difficulty that Smith acknowledges is that his account leaves us with only three levels — forms, things, images of things—instead of the four that the Line and Cave lead us to expect (Smith 1999, p. 203n16). J.S. Morrison similarly argues that the objects of *dianoia* and *pistis* are on the same level but seen in different ways, but the objects are "common characteristics" ("Two Unresolved Difficulties in the Line and the Cave," *Phronesis*, vol. 22 [1977], pp. 212–231). However, since common characteristics are recognized by the mind rather than the senses, they cannot be present on the visible side of the Divided Line. Vassilis Karasmanis suggests that "*pistis* and *dianoia* deal with mathematics. But while the objects of *pistis* are visible diagrams etc, the objects of *dianoia* are intelligible (Forms)" ("Plato's *Republic*: The Line and the Cave," *Apeiron*, vol. 21 [1988]), pp. 147–171, esp. p. 164). On that view, however, physical things (which would be the objects of *eikasia*) would be images of visible diagrams.

12. Smith 1996 also gives an excellent survey of this and other proposals (pp. 35–37). *Dianoia* is not limited to mathematical thinking, although mathematics is Plato's favorite example of it. His mathematical demonstrations of recollection in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, and the mathematical studies used to awaken the prisoners in the Cave to the intelligible world, refer to intelligible reality generally. Socrates does not refer to mathematics at all when he first describes *dianoia* (510b) but only as a subsequent example when Glaucon is puzzled (510b–c). Any thinking that posits and draws consequences from intelligible reality without inquiring into its foundation (as also Empedocles' Love and Strife, and Anaximander's Mind) is

dianoia. To limit *dianoia* to mathematical thinking is to exclude one of the most fundamental forms of philosophical thinking from the Divided Line. The other main feature of *dianoia*, its use of the objects of *pistis*, physical things, to facilitate thinking about the intelligible realities of which the physical things are images (510b-d), is clearly not limited to mathematics, as we can see from the doctrine of recollection in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus*, and the method of paradigms or examples in the *Statesman* (285e-286b). In the *Republic* Socrates utilized images of sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and birth (490b), and images of the sun, the Line, and the Cave, to help us think about the intelligible realm.

13. Even the *Theaetetus* alludes to Eleatic philosophy (*Theaetetus* 183c-184a).

14. For a discussion of the relationship between the ruler in the *Statesman* and in the *Republic*, see Kenneth Dorter, "Philosopher-Rulers: How Contemplation Becomes Action" (*Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 21 [2001], pp. 335-356), pp. 346-353.