Preface

The readings from "POLS 490: Hermeneutics as Politics" greatly informed my understanding of political philosophy. That is, Hans-Georg Gadamer's essay on The Problem of Historical Consciousness;[1] Gadamer's approach to understanding dialectics from an ontological perspective (as an experience of negation) in Truth and Method[2] and lastly, the method we, the class, practiced when reading Alasdair Macintyre's book[3] – when we were counselled to observe how Macintyre "compares" tradition(s) to see whether a tradition may "answer" other tradition(s) seemingly "unanswerable" questions. An inverted version of this technique will be employed in my exegesis. I will not compare Plato's dialogues in individualized terms to see whether an "unresolved" question or problem that is introduced in one dialogue may be "resolved" by reading the contents of another. Instead, I will consider the contents of the Republic, the Meno, the Gorgias, and the Symposium not as "parts" but in unison as a whole. By considering the philosophy that binds each dialogue through its presence and participation in each text, I will illuminate the essence of Plato's philosophy that abides; in each dialogue and generally, in time and space, through the continuation of Socrates' teachings. The idea that I have generated for this exegesis is inspired by the literature on irony and dialogue that Jacob Klein (1965) presents in the "Introductory Remarks" of his book.[4] This paper will be subdivided into three sections. Each section will explore the role that irony plays in the different levels of interaction. Namely, the interaction between form and content, the interaction between the interlocuters in the dialogues and the dialogues themselves, and the interaction between the dialogues and us (the readers).

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[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* vol. 5:1 (1975): 8-51.
[2] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Truth and Method," in Second, Revised ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London & New York: Continuum, 2004).
[3] Alasdair Macintyre, "Whose Justice? Which Rationality?" (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).
[4] Jacob Klein, "A Commentary on Plato's Meno," (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 3-31.

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05 December 2023

The Promise of Socratic Irony:
A Medium for Understanding (Noesis) in Platonic Dialogues

This exegesis on Plato's the Republic, the Meno, the Gorgias, and the Symposium is inspired by Jacob Klein's (1965) discussion on irony in Platonic dialogues.[5] Specifically, the statement that "[Socrates] is not ironical to satisfy himself. Everything about Socrates' irony depends on the presence of other people who are capable of catching the irony, of hearing what is not said."[6] By noticing instances of Socratic irony in the texts, Klein's remark seems to suggest that the reader can "hear what is not said" i.e. the reader (us), can unlock a form of understanding that is not explicitly mentioned in the text. The task of this exegesis, therefore, is dedicated to the so-called "noticing" of irony in Platonic dialogues. Guided by a desire to make Plato's innovative use of Socratic irony intelligible, the structure of this exegesis will explore the form (dialogue and irony), content (dialectics and meaning), and context (space and time) of Platonic dialogues in their varying levels of interaction – i.e. the interaction between the interlocuters in the

[5] Jacob Klein, "A Commentary on Plato's Meno," (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 3-31.
[6] Klein, 6.

dialogues, the interaction between the dialogues themselves, and the interaction between the dialogues and us (the readers).

Even though Platonic dialogues are, first and foremost, philosophical texts belonging to the philosophical tradition; the enjoyment, interpretation, and study of the dialogues themselves have not been constrained to philosophical enquiry. Rather, the study of Platonic dialogues is multidisciplinary in the sense that numerous academic disciplines have formed their own disciplinary knowledge as it relates to the texts. For example, Platonic dialogues are compelling historical documents, so naturally they are of interest to historians. Furthermore, classics scholars may take interest in Platonic dialogues, even if they are not interested in philosophy. Indeed, other components of ancient Greek literature that fall within the purview of classics are present in Platonic dialogues, from epic to comedy, tragedy and even myth studies. In addition to being multidisciplinary, the study of Platonic dialogues is necessarily an endeavor that is interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary. Intradisciplinary in the sense that Socrates' "oracular and paradoxical" statements in Platonic dialogues are never discussed or stated "with complete clarity."[7] The implication being that the texts are conducive to intradisciplinary debate and dialogue since the meaning of Platonic dialogues are open to philosophical interpretation. The act of philosophical interpretation, however, is the task of hermeneutic philosophers. That is, the philosophical discipline concerned with analyzing the conditions for understanding, requires knowledge from other

[7] Klein, 9.

disciplines – especially philology – which is integral to the study of hermeneutics, since it is the discipline that makes the study of ancient Greek philosophy possible.

According to Mackay (1997), "philology (philologia) is the abstraction of the Greek word philologue (philologos)" that describes "one to whom the word is dear."[8] Therefore, "one to whom the word is dear" can be described as a philologos. Mackay explains that in antiquity, the word signified "a commentator on the ancient poetical texts like the Iliad, which contained numerous words whose significance was obscure."[9] Today, the study of "philology is not a fixed procedure comparable to the methodology of the physical sciences. Instead, it is the use of human reason to attempt to understand, through the examination of comparative linguistic evidence, the correct, 'intended' meaning of a text."[10] In sum, philologists believe that the "intended" meaning of a historical text can become intelligible, only through an enquiry into the meaning of words and how the words relate to the syntax of the sentences. Moreover, "the words themselves must be interpreted in context."[11] Context is pertinent to the recognition of literary devices (e.g. idioms). Therefore, lacking regard for a text's context may obfuscate the "correct interpretation" of the text, especially in cases where literary devices are left unnoticed.

Philology is indispensable to the study of Platonic dialogues. Not only are Platonic dialogues ripe with literary devices, the texts themselves stem from ancient Greece. So, the ancient Greek words needed translating and Plato's literary devices

[8] Christopher S. Mackay, "Philology," (1997): 8.
[9] Mackay, 8.
[10] Mackay, 15.
[11] Mackay, 13.

required noticing. Hence the study of Platonic dialogues is by nature, interdisciplinary – as philosophical engagement with Platonic dialogues first required the work of philologists. Both the hermeneutic philosopher and the philologist engage in a task of interpretation but they are not alike. A philologist (philologia) i.e. "one to whom the word is dear" is devoted to "fundamentally, the correct interpretation of texts."[12] Here, "correct interpretation" is akin to accurate translation. The aim of the philologist is not to engage in philosophy. On the contrary, the aim of the philologist is to uncover "the correct, 'intended' meaning of a text" through the examination of linguistic evidence.[13] However, the so-called "correct, intended meaning" of Platonic dialogues cannot be uncovered simply through the examination of Plato's words. Hypothetically, a philologist could recognize the presence of an idiom in a Platonic dialogue and said recognition would be an instance of accurate interpretation. But if the idiom urged the philologist, for example – to *read in-between the lines*, the philologist would simply report the presence of the idiom, whereas the "one who pursues philosophy"[14] i.e. the philosopher (philosophon) as the "Lover of Wisdom" would engage in the interpretation of that which may be insinuated but is not said.

Brimming with literary devices (e.g. aphorism, allegory, irony), Platonic dialogues provide students with a fruitful opportunity to engage in hermeneutic philosophy and practice the art of dialectic. That being the case, Plato purposefully

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[12] Mackay, 8.
[13] Mackay, 15.
[14] Plato, "Symposium," translated by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 48.

employs aphorism, allegory, and irony for pedagogical purposes (for students of the past and the present). It is noteworthy that the aforementioned literary devices are pedagogical in the sense that they convey a method (dialectics) and a message (philosophy). The philosophy, i.e. Socrates' philosophy (as it is expressed by Plato) represents a radical departure from Athens' convention (nomos) at the time. Amusingly, Plato's "version" of irony is similarly a radical departure from what the ancient Greeks were accustomed to: Klein (1965) distinguishes between "the old Irony" i.e. "the tragic or comic reversal of fortune" which the ancient Greeks "perfectly appreciated" versus "this new kind" of irony found in Platonic dialogues, which "people did not like, did not know what to make of it. But they were quite sure it was Irony. They called it so, and it is because they so called it that Irony has its modern meaning."[15] Here, the "modern meaning" that Klein is referencing, "implies in any event that for a statement or a behaviour to *be* ironical there must be *someone* capable of *understanding* that it is ironical."[16]

The advent of "modern" irony has several implications.[17] The philosophical implication, however, is fundamentally an ontological implication. After all, to *understand* an ironical moment is to have an *experience*. And one must be in order to experience. It is the shift in who experiences the experience of understanding that defines "this new kind" of irony. For example, it is the character in an ancient Greek tragedy or comedy that is the experiencer. It is he who experiences the "reversal of

[15] Klein, 5.
[16] Klein, 5.
[17] Implications vary depending on academic discipline.

fortune" – whereas, in "this new kind" of irony – it the real-life person, who is not a silent observer but an active participant in the moment that is the experiencer. Without his or her participation in the moment, the new irony would not exist. After all, "for a statement or a behaviour to *be* ironical there must be *someone* capable of *understanding* that it is ironical."[18] Therefore, instances of "new irony" will necessarily go unnoticed by those who are incapable of understanding that the statement or behaviour is ironical. This differs greatly from the old conception of irony in ancient Greek dramas where irony is conspicuous even to its most dense or disinterested observers.[19] Despite the ontological shift in experience, irony played a similar function in both of instances. That is to say, irony's "function" in both instances is pedagogical. For example, the reversal of fortune in ancient Greek dramas provided its observers with valuable life lessons. These dramas, therefore, functioned as a form of moral education. Socrates (as he is represented by Plato) problematized this form of education – which emanated from the poets – due to its epistemological limitations which, in turn, result in grave political implications. Socrates' (as he is represented by Plato) "new version" of irony serves a pedagogical function that is epistemologically "limitless" in its capacity to transcend from the visible realm to the intelligible realm through the art of dialectic.

The notion that one can transcend from the visible realm to the intelligible realm through the art of dialectic is introduced in Book VI of the Republic, when

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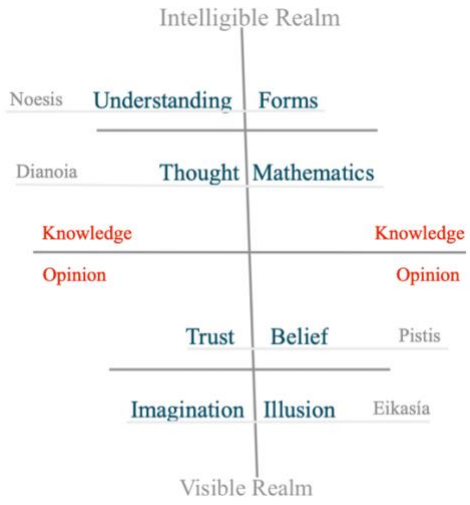
[18] Klein, 5.

[19] In Aristotle's Poetics, Aristotle writes that a comedy/ tragedy can only be classified as such if there is "peripeteia" or a reversal [of fortune]. Therefore, every person who observes an ancient Greek comedy or tragedy knows it will be ironical, since its namesake is contingent upon peripeteia.

Socrates demonstrates the process of transcendence using a diagram. This demonstration, known as the Divided Line, is Socrates' attempt to introduce the world of ideas and its relationship to the physical world:

The Divided Line



The visible realm is, in effect, characterized by illusion (eikasía) and belief (pistis); it is representative of the visible "worldly" things e.g. objects, and their shadows and reflections. The intelligible realm, on the other hand, is the world of ideas; it is characterized by mathematical reasoning: thought (dianoia) and forms: understanding (noesis). Using a demonstration (as is detailed above), the Divided Line expresses the relationship between imagination and illusion; trust and belief; thought and mathematics; and understanding and forms. It is noteworthy that the Divided Line is not a typical demonstration. Indeed, typical demonstrations use mathematical reasoning i.e. thought as it is expressed through the use of geometry and numbers.[20] While the Divided Line is, in fact, a demonstration – it is atypical in

[20] For example, Socrates' demonstration to the slave boy in the Meno.

the sense that it is not mathematical. Surely it consists of letters and lines, so it is related to geometry. However, the concepts themselves (i.e. eikasía, pistis, dianoia, noesis) are not mathematical. Rather, the Divided Line, through its comprehensive account, is the product of noesis. So, it is emblematic of the world of ideas. With that being said, the aim of the demonstration is to detail the process by which a person may ascend and acquire noesis. As the word "ascend" suggests – it is impossible to acquire noesis without (a) experiencing eikasía, (b) forming pistis, and (c) engaging in dianoia. The implication being, that noesis can only occur when the individual, having "experience" with the varying states of "knowledge" understands how the experiences of the visible realm participate in the intelligible realm, and vice versa. Understanding (noesis) can only be acquired in the absence of discordance. For as long as an individual is bound in a state of illusion, belief, or thought – their "knowledge" will remain limited.

While the Divided Line is not ironical, Socrates' Allegory of the Cave (as an extenuation of the teachings from the Divided Line) *is* ironical. An allegory is a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one. Therefore, an allegory (as a method to convey meaning), differs from ancient Greek dramas (another method used to convey meaning) because unlike dramas whose "message" (and use of irony) is conspicuous; the "message" that is being conveyed in allegories is by definition, hidden. In the Allegory of the Cave, Socrates employs symbolism to create an image, in which human beings are "in an underground cave-like dwelling" that from childhood, have "their legs and necks in

bonds so that they are fixed, seeing only in front of them, unable to turn their heads all the way around."[21] Meanwhile, there is a light from "from a fire burning far above and behind them."[22] "Between the fire and the prisoners [human beings] is a road above," along which there is a wall that is "built like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets."[23] Behind the prisoners, human beings carry artifacts, and the prisoners, unable to turn their heads, see the artifacts' shadows and therefore "hold that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of artificial things."[24] Until suddenly, a prisoner is released and is "compelled to stand up, to turn his neck around, to walk and look up toward the light."[25] In the Allegory of the Cave, the "message" is that the man who has "seen the light" will be "dazzled by the greater brilliance. And then would deem the first soul happy for its condition and its life, while he would pity the second."[26] The "second" being, those who have not seen the light. While by definition the "message" that is expressed in the Allegory of the Cave is hidden – it is far more conspicuous than Plato's subtle use of irony. Indeed, an instance of "new Irony" becomes evident when the Allegory of the Cave (as a method to convey moral/ political meaning) is juxtaposed against ancient Greek dramas.[27]

[21] The Republic, 514b.
[22] 514b.
[23] 514b.
[24] 515c.
[25] 515c.
[26] 518a.
[27] The conventional method in ancient Greece to convey a moral lesson.

As previously explained, a character in an ancient Greek drama must experience a "reversal of fortune" for a drama to be ironical. Hence the "old irony" presupposes an instance of *peripeteia,* that is, an event or moment that conveys a message or lesson through a sudden reversal of fortune. In the Allegory of the Cave, the sudden event or "moment" that occurs (and conveys Socrates' message) is when the prisoner suddenly is released and is "compelled to stand up, to turn his neck around, to walk and look up toward the light."[28] Unlike ancient Greek dramas, however, this is not a "reversal of fortune" moment. Rather, it is more akin to a miracle. I say it is akin to a miracle because like a reversal of fortune; it is a life-altering moment. Unlike a reversal of fortune, however, which has negative connotations; in the Allegory of the Cave, the "moment" has a positive connotation, because the [former] prisoner is no longer bound and his soul is happy. Meaning, the "moment" was not destructive; it improved his quality of life. This is confirmed when Socrates asks Glaucon, "don't you suppose he [who has seen the light] would consider himself happy for the change and pity the others?" to which Glaucon responds: "Quite so."[29]

There is a pedagogical implication that is being made here that is ironical. Rather than adhering to the conventional pedagogical methods in ancient Greek to convey his message, Socrates (as he is expressed by Plato) chooses an alternative medium that similarly incorporates chance but inverts it. As a result, the "old irony" is discarded and an instance of "new irony" becomes intelligible to those who are

[28] The Republic, 515c.
[29] 516c.

capable of understanding. Apart from the ancient Greeks themselves, those who are capable of understanding – or rather – those who are capable of *recognizing* this instance of irony are those who have adequate knowledge in all-things ancient Greece. Otherwise, irony would go unnoticed, which is a phenomenon that is only possible in instances of "new" irony.

Since the great departure from its tragic/ comic "reversal of fortune" roots, literary theorists have categorized irony into several classifications[30] – including Socratic irony – which is "a pose of ignorance assumed in order to entice others into making statements that can then be challenged."[31] An example of Socratic irony can be found in the Platonic dialogue: the Meno. After Meno asks "Can you tell me Socrates, whether virtue is taught? Or is it not taught but acquired through practice? Or is it neither acquired by practice nor learnt, but present in men by nature or some other way?"[32] Socrates responds by saying "Meno, my friend […] you must think me fortunate indeed, if you suppose I know whether virtue is taught, or how it comes to be present. So far am I from knowing whether or not it is taught, I don't even know what it is at all."[33] Socrates then asks: "What do you say virtue is, Meno?"[34] Clearly, this is an example of Socratic irony. However, an example (like the definition) says very little about the aim of Socratic irony. In fact, it says nothing at all – which begs the question: "what is the function of Socratic irony?"

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[30] E.g., cosmic irony, dramatic irony, romantic irony, situational irony, verbal irony.
[31] Oxford Dictionary, "Socratic Irony"
[32] The Meno, 70a.
[33] 71b.
[34] 71d.

The function of Socratic irony in Platonic dialogues serves the following purposes: (a) it forces us (the reader) to similarly admit our own ignorance, and (b) it lends Socrates' interlocuters (in the dialogues) with an opportunity to re-examine doxa through the vocalization of aphorisms. Indeed, Socrates (as he is expressed by Plato) relies on aphorism as a way for Socrates to initiate dialogue and subsequently, introduce the art of dialectics. Often handed down by tradition from generation to generation – an aphorism is a concise observation or expression that contains a general truth or principle.[35] Examples of aphorism are easily observable in the Republic – because often, in the Republic, Socrates' interlocuters use aphorisms as a means of responding to his question "what is justice?" For example, Cephalus, who suggestively is representative of the regime oligarchy (and therefore, is representative of tradition)[36] responds to the question by stating that "justice consists in speaking the truth and paying one's debt."[37] This is an example of an aphorism, because it is an expression of a general truth or principal that Cephalus acquired through tradition.

This literary device is employed by Plato for a reason. Cephalus' aphorism provides Socrates with an opportunity to engage with his interlocutors in the art of dialectics. Socrates responds by acknowledging that "what you say is very fine indeed, Cephalus […] But as to this very thing, justice" Socrates questions "shall we so simply assert that it is the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another, or is

[35] Aphorism e.g. "actions speak louder than words"
[36] Regression of Regimes; Cephalus (oligarchy) is representative of tradition (the past) since Athens' present regime in the dialogue is democracy.
[37] The Republic, 331d.

to do these very things sometimes just and sometimes unjust?"[38] Likewise in the Meno, Socrates responds to Meno's definition of virtue, in which Meno failed to define virtue and instead, listed virtues (plural) by *further asking questions*. Indeed, Socrates goes on to ask Meno whether virtues share in common one defining characteristic that is virtue.[39] Given that Socratic irony provides Socrates with an opportunity to further ask questions – it is clear that it serves a dialectical function. However, Socratic irony serves a second function. Socratic irony also forces us (the reader) to similarly admit our own ignorance. Klein (1965) asserts that by reading Platonic dialogues "We, the readers, are being implicitly questioned and examined, [so] that we have to weigh Socrates' irony, [and] we are compelled to admit to ourselves our ignorance […] it is up to use to get out of the impasses and reach a conclusion. If it is reachable at all."[40] The impasse being, the state of in-between(ness) of knowing and not knowing. So, the question remains: "Can we reach a conclusion of whether we know or do not know?"

To try to reach a conclusion, we must engage in philosophy. Klein expresses that "it is not enough to talk about the dramatic character of Platonic dialogues from the outside" stating that "we have to play our role in them, too."[41] He maintains that "our role as participants in the dialogue is fundamentally not different from that of Plato's own contemporaries."[42] Meaning, "there is no question that we share with

[38] The Republic, 331C.
[39] The Meno, 72c.
[40] Klein, 8.
[41] Klein, 7.
[42] Klein, 9.

them views commonly held by many people at all times."[43] "It is the familiarity Plato is bent on exploiting"[44] so, "we have to be serious about the contention that a Platonic dialogue, being indeed an 'imitation of Socrates,' actually continues Socrates' work."[45] Indeed, Platonic dialogues provide the reader with an opportunity to practice philosophy, since "the ultimate foundations on which [Socrates' oracular and paradoxical] statements rest and the far-reaching consequences which flow from them" are never discussed or stated "with complete clarity."[46] In the Meno, for example, Meno defines virtue on three separate occasions. The final conclusion seems to be that virtue is to attain the good. However, "the good" is never specified. Surely, Meno is satisfied. But is Socrates? Moreover, are we (the reader) satisfied with this conclusion? From the perspective of the reader, the dialogue seemingly concludes before virtue is explicitly defined. I suppose this is what Klein means when he asserts that the statements made in Platonic dialogues are never discussed or stated <u>with complete clarity.</u> Indeed, "it is still up to us [the reader] to try to clarify those foundations and consequences, using, if necessary, 'another, long and more involved road,' and then accept, correct, or reject them."[47]

While "meaning" in the Meno is not explicit, Socrates' use of irony in the text *is.* Not only in the Socratic sense but in other instances too. After finishing the dialogue, it becomes evident that Socrates' statement in the introduction of the text,

[43] Klein, 9.
[44] Klein, 10.
[45] Klein, 7.
[46] Klein, 9.
[47] Klein, 9.

that is, the claim that there is a drought of wisdom in Athens and that "[wisdom] very likely has left our borders for yours."[48] Yours being, Meno's city of Thessaly. This is ironic because Meno, the Thessalian, is in Athens. Meaning, he (along with his "wisdom") has left the borders of Thessaly. The implication being made here is that if the wise are from Thessaly, and the "wise" Thessalians are in Athens, then the "wise" are in fact in Athens. Meno is gratified by this remark. This is also ironical for us (the reader). However, it is not ironical for Meno. For him being gratified by this remark is demonstrative of the "new" kind of irony: while Meno is incapable of understanding that this is ironical, the reader can. Additionally, if Anytus had arrived at an earlier point in the text, presumably he would be capable of picking up on the irony as well. Furthermore, the Meno has ironical implications for the Gorgias. Namely, Meno's inability to learn and importantly, his inability to persuade Socrates demonstrates the limitations of rhetoric. Nevertheless, there is an entire Platonic dialogue titled the Gorgias where "the art" of rhetoric is explored. Once again, however, Socrates is not persuaded. Given persuasion is the aim of rhetoric, this is greatly ironical.

As previously stated, Socrates gratifies Meno in the conclusion when he excuses himself and says to Meno: "Please persuade your host Anytus here of the things you yourself are now persuaded, so that his anger may be allayed. If you persuade him, you may also do some benefit to the Athenians."[49] This final statement is ironical for a second reason.: Anytus is one of Socrates' accusers. Therefore, Anytus

[48] The Meno, 71a.
[49] The Meno, 100a.

is in many ways, responsible for Socrates' death. When Plato devised this text; he knew this, and so did fellow Athenians. Meaning, they (like us) are capable of understanding why this conclusion is ironical. In fact, Socrates' death is often "hinted" at in Platonic dialogues. In the Gorgias, for example, there are multiple references made that "foreshadow" Socrates' death. This is especially the case in the Gorgias, when the interlocuters speak hypothetically of the punishment that is afflicted upon those that corrupt the youth (Socrates' charge). I hypothesize that this "hidden" message is intended for the reader of the dialogue, and that it is connected to Socrates' claim that "[he would choose to suffer [injustice] rather than do it."[50] By selecting Socrates as his exemplar, Plato continues Socrates' teachings, while simultaneously suggesting that Socrates' philosophy is worth dying for.

In the conclusion of the Meno references the Republic. Plato selects a quote from Homer:

> Alone among those below he kept his wits.
> The rest are darting, fleeting shadows.[51]

This quote is analogous to the illusion that is expressed at the beginning of the Allegory of the Cave. And in this case, it has political implications. For initially, the prisoner's knowledge was limited to shadows and his imagination (eikasía). Upon seeing the light, however (reading Platonic dialogues), us the reader (like the [former] prisoner) can begin to make out the shadows, the phantoms of human beings, and the reflections in the water (pistis). Then, we can make out "the things themselves"

[50] The Gorgias, 469c.
[51] The Meno, 100a.

(dianoia) – until finally, we "turn" to the "things in heaven and heaven itself" (noesis). "At all events," Socrates says, "this is the way the phenomena [of the Divided Line] looks to me: in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the *idea* of the good."[52] Meaning, "in the knowable" (i.e. the intelligible realm) the last thing to be seen (forms) is the *idea* of the good. So, to acquire noesis – is to understand – the *idea* of the good. The Allegory of the Cave, therefore, affirms the process by which a person (including us, the reader) may ascend and acquire noesis. As the Allegory of the Cave suggests, this can occur when the individual, having gained "experience" with the varying states of "knowledge" understands how the experiences of the visible realm participate in the intelligible realm, and vice versa. After all, Socrates states that it is "the visible [realm] that gave birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible, itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence.""[53]

All the dialogues are interrelated in one way or another, that is, they express the essence of Socrates' philosophy. However, the process by which a person (like us, the reader) can live a life that is complementary to Socrates' way of life is expressed most clearly in the Republic.

In the Republic, the Divided Line effectively resolves the epistemological problem: "by what criterion can we distinguish between truth and falsehood?" because the Divided Line *is* a criterion that distinguishes between truth (noesis) and falsehood (eikasía) – while additionally providing an account for the in-between (pistis and dianoia). Additionally, the Divided Line (and the Allegory of the Cave)

[52] The Republic, 517c.
[53] 517c.

make an epistemological claim concerning the nature of knowledge. However, the Allegory of the Cave also makes an ontological, pedagogical, and political claim. The ontological claim that Socrates makes is that the "power [to turn our heads] is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns – just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body – must be turned around from that which *is coming into being* with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking at that which *is*."[54] Meaning, to be able to endure that which *is* (noesis), one's state of being (body and soul) must be whole (harmonized) and oriented towards the *coming into being.* This quote is an ontological claim (because it speaks to being) which signifies that "life" is always this process by which the body and the soul are being broken apart. This claim is at the core of Socrates' philosophy (as it is represented by Plato). Furthermore, the quote that "power [to turn our heads] is in the soul of each" is a pedagogical claim concerning the nature of learning. Namely, that learning is possible due to the nature of our souls.

Lastly, the political claim is related to pedagogy. For the soul who has seen the light (i.e. grasped the *idea* of the good) must "compel the best natures to go to the study which we were saying before is the greatest, to see the good and to go up that ascent."[55] Furthermore, they must "participate in both lives."[56] That is, "each in his turn [must go down] into the common dwelling of the others and get habituated along with them to seeing the dark things."[57] According to Socrates, it is these people who

[54] 518c.
[55] 519d.
[56] 520d.
[57] 520d.

must govern the city. And they will do so "in a state of waking, not in a dream"[58] – unlike "many cities nowadays [that] are governed by men who fight over shadows with one another and form factions for the sake of ruling."[59] Supposedly, the philosopher king is ironical. But is it? Socrates is often dismissed an idealist. But should he be? The political problem is that people never willingly do the right thing. But Plato advocates that people can. As a matter of fact, the philosopher will, even if it kills him. Evidently, this is an instance of dramatic irony because it has implications for us (the reader). However, the implications are only reachable through Plato's use of irony. That is, through Plato's personification of Socrates teachings – as they are expressed through the structure of Platonic dialogues – with Socrates as an exemplar.

[58] 520d.
[59] 520d.

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