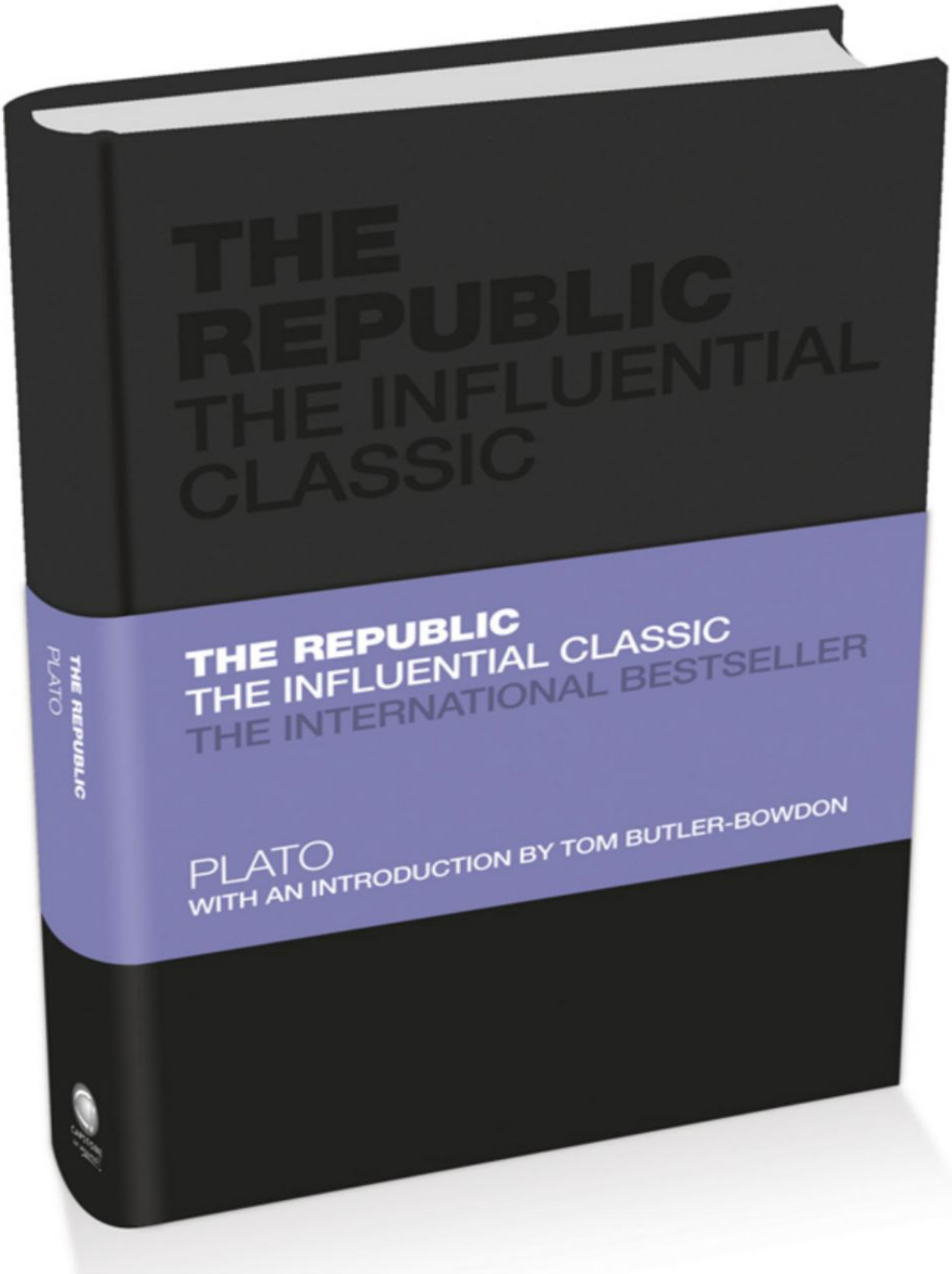
THE REPUBLIC
THE INFLUENTIAL CLASSIC
THE REPUBLIC
PLATO
THE REPUBLIC
THE INFLUENTIAL CLASSIC
THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER
PLATO
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY TOM BUTLER-BOWDON

THE REPUBLIC

THE INFLUENTIAL CLASSIC

PLATO

With an Introduction by
TOM BUTLER-BOWDON

CAPSTONE

This edition first published 2012

The material for *The Republic* is based on the complete 1908 edition of *The Republic of Plato*, by Plato, translated by Benjamin Jowett, published by Clarendon: Oxford University Press, Oxford, and is now in the public domain. This edition is not sponsored or endorsed by, or otherwise affiliated with Benjamin Jowett, his family or heirs.

Registered office
Capstone Publishing Ltd. (A Wiley Company), John Wiley and Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom
For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-857-08313-5 (hardback) ISBN 978-0-857-08327-2 (ebk)
ISBN 978-0-857-08328-9 (ebk) ISBN 978-0-857-08329-6 (ebk)

Set in 9.5/13 pt ITC New Baskerville by Sparks – www.sparkspublishing.com

CONTENTS

An Introduction

About Tom Butler-Bowdon

The Republic

Persons of the Dialogue

Book I

Book II

Book III

Book IV

Book V

Book VI

Book VII

Book VIII

Book IX

Book X

An Introduction

by Tom Butler-Bowdon

> *“Until kings are philosophers, or philosophers are kings, cities will never cease from ill: no, nor the human race; nor will our ideal polity ever come into being.”*

Despite being over 16 centuries old, *The Republic* is no dry political text, but still has much to say to the contemporary person about what it means to live the good life.

The word *dikaiosunē* lies at the heart of the book. It does not have a direct English translation, but loosely means moral virtue, both at the personal and societal levels. In this Introduction we look at the basic meaning of justice for Plato in relation to the individual, before considering the characteristics of his ideal just state. Though it lays out his plans for a perfect society, we will see how Plato's most famous work can also be a guide for success as a person.

Plato's ideal state or society is characterized by wisdom, courage, self-discipline and justice, qualities that a well-balanced person should also develop. Conversely, his discussion of reason, spirit and desire (the “three parts of the soul”) shows how personal mental harmony is not just good for the individual, making them “just”, but good for their community too.

The Republic proceeds as a dialogue led by Socrates, who was Plato's teacher.

Across ten Books, Socrates responds with powerful logic to the questions and counter-arguments posed by Glaucon and Adeimantus, older brothers of Plato, and Polemarchus, whose home in Piraeus (the port of Athens) is where the dialogue takes place. Others include Thrasymachus, an

orator, Polemarchus' brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, and Cephalus, his father.

Part of the reason for *The Republic's* undying influence is that, despite being one of the great works of Western philosophy, it is still a relatively easy read, requiring no special knowledge. We use here the well-known translation by Benjamin Jowett, an Oxford don and master of classical texts.

Does it Pay to be Just?

The text begins with a discussion of the meaning of justice.

Cephalus argues that justice is simply telling the truth and making sure one's debts are paid. He will die a comparatively rich man, and says that one of the benefits of wealth is that one can die in peace, knowing all accounts are settled. But Socrates asks, is there not something more to truth and a good life than this?

Glaucon and Adeimantus make a case for injustice, saying that we can live to suit ourselves and get away with it, even prosper. Glaucon grants that justice is good in itself, but challenges Socrates to show how justice can be good at an individual level. Can the just person actually be happier than one who is not just? And if people can get away with it, surely they will act in unjust ways?

Glaucon evokes the story of Gyges and his golden ring. This magical ring gave Gyges the power to make himself invisible at will, and naturally enough, he uses it to do things that he could not get way with if he was visible. The story suggests that anyone with such a power would of course take what they want, sleep with whom they want, and so on, because they know they would never be detected. People only act justly when they fear they will be

caught, Glaucon suggests, and have no interest in being good for its own sake.

Socrates' response comes in some detail, but in essence it is this: doing the right thing is its own reward, since it brings the three parts of our soul (reason, spirit and desire) into harmony. Acting justly is not an optional extra, but the axis around which human existence must turn; life is meaningless if it lacks well-intentioned action. And while justice is an absolute necessity for the individual, it is also the central plank of a good state.

Socrates tries to convey the value of justice in his retelling of the myth of Er. This is the strange story of a man killed in battle whose body did not decay after his death. The reason is that the gods had anointed Er to be the one human who would be able to witness what happens after people die, and to return to the world afterwards to tell all of what he had seen.

Er recalled that after his death, he found himself in a meadow where souls gathered who had either just spent a life on earth, or who had just descended from heaven. They are meeting to choose their next incarnation, and are given lots to decide among their possible lives. Er describes the various choices that souls make, and their impulse or reason for making them. Having chosen, Er recalls, the souls would then drink from the river of Forgetfulness and then take form on Earth. Only Er is allowed not to drink. His body never having decomposed, after this vision of the afterlife he comes alive again while awaiting the flames of the funeral pyre.

What is the point of this myth? Er noted that souls were often swayed by the chance of being a rich or famous person in their next life, while failing to choose on the basis of whether a life was *just* – or not. Those who made the most progress over many lifetimes, in terms of fulfilling their soul's potential, naturally chose the former. Socrates notes:

> *“A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right, that there too he may be undazzled by the desire of wealth or the other allurements of evil, lest, coming upon tyrannies and similar villainies, he do irremediable wrongs to others and suffer yet worse himself; but let him know how to choose the mean and avoid the extremes on either side, as far as possible, not only in this life but in all that which is to come. For this is the way of happiness.”*

Always seeking the just way and the just life – “doing the right thing” – is thus the eternal route to the happy and fulfilled life. In having Socrates retell this myth, Plato presents his final nail in the coffin of the idea that justice is a noble but impractical notion. In fact, it is the *only* route to the good life.

The Balanced Individual

Plato divides the human soul into three parts: Reason, Spirit, and Desire.

Reason is the overseer of the soul and seeks the best overall outcomes; it gives us the ability to make decisions, and provides our conscience. Spirit generates ambition and enterprise, but also gives rise to feelings like anger, pride and shame. Desire is simply the basic urges for food, sleep and sex.

The individual becomes just when spirit and desire are not given free rein, but shaped and guided by reason, which is guided by knowledge of “the Good”, a basic universal form. Thus we achieve balance, and our actions are naturally just and in harmony with the world around us.

A person driven only by ambition or desire may well achieve their aims, but probably at great eventual cost to their integrity of self. As Plato scholar Gail Fine notes:

> *“... justice turns out to be a sort of mental health, and injustice a sort of mental illness or chaos; and surely life is not worth living if one's mental life is in total chaos?”*

The aim of Plato's teachings on the individual are simple: to show what it means to be “all of a piece”. We can take a negative habit, for instance anger, that has in the past so often alienated us from others, then work so that it no longer has control over us. We no longer have a “side” that will hijack our otherwise good actions. Socrates says:

> *“... the just man does not permit the several elements within him to interfere with one another, or any of them to do the work of others,—he sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself; and when he has bound together the three principles within him, which may be compared to the higher, lower, and middle notes of the scale... and is no longer many, but has become one entirely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature, then he proceeds to act, if he has to act, whether in a matter of property, or in the treatment of the body, or in some affair of politics or private business; always thinking and calling that which preserves and co-operates with this harmonious condition, just and good action, and the knowledge which presides over it, wisdom, and that which at any time impairs this condition, he will call unjust action, and the opinion which presides over it ignorance.”*

In Plato's meaning, justice is simply “doing what's right” in every situation. Countering the arguments of his interlocutors, Socrates tries to show that doing what's right is not a moral good to be traded in order to gain something, or to be sacrificed when it has no apparent benefit; rather, correct action is a necessity – one cannot live a good life without it. A person whose psychic parts are in harmony is not only happier in themselves, because they will live in

good conscience regarding their own actions, but their effect on the world is also more likely to be just.

Socrates opines that only a “philosopher” can develop the right balance between the parts of the soul. The philosopher's chief desire is for the world to be as good as it possibly can, and to help achieve this he is willing to forego what he might naturally desire. In short, those who have knowledge, and who are psychologically and spiritually in balance, have a duty to serve the rest who lack these things.

State and Individual

The links Plato makes between the quality of the state and the quality of the individual, also known as his analogy between the city and the soul, can seem a bit strange to the modern reader. Today, it is probably more natural to think that the nature or quality of a nation arises from the combined attributes of its citizens, but Plato took the opposite view. As a sort of early behavioural psychologist he believed that environment is the main shaper of people, and therefore the question of what is just could not simply be a private one, but was necessarily political.

In modern life, as *Republic* translator Desmond Lee notes, we tend to divide morality into the personal and community spheres. Justice in the home may be different to justice administered by the state. The Greeks, however, did not elevate the domestic sphere as we do. Quite the opposite: they accepted that the standards operating in political life also held good for private morality. This is why, strange as it may seem to modern eyes, Plato looks at the ethics of the state as a corollary for individual action.

To understand how Plato arrives at his ideal Republic, it is necessary to know his criticisms of the other forms of government, Timarchy, Oligarchy, Democracy and Tyranny.

Timarchy was essentially Plato's description of ancient Sparta, in which individuals were entirely subordinated to the military aims of the state. There was no conception of a separate civil society and, however admirable as a military nation, Plato sees it as corrupt and extreme.

Sparta was an anomaly, because most of the ancient Greek cities were either oligarchies or democracies. Oligarchical states were run by wealthy elites who claimed to govern for the good of the whole, but Plato believed there was a deep conflict of interest at their heart; the rich enriched themselves and the poor got poorer, creating increasing social unrest. His explanation of Tyranny will be very familiar to us: power becomes no longer vested in the state itself, but in an individual. Some tyrants come to power through popular support, but their total authority naturally corrupts, and they essentially become criminal rulers.

And Democracy? Democracies in Plato's time were not the representative governments we know today; Athenian democracy was a popular assembly of free male citizens who met regularly to vote on specific issues, and who devolved administration to a Council of Five Hundred. Plato's problem with this kind of direct democracy was that it tends towards bad decisions. Complex issues relating to foreign policy, or economics, for instance, become subject to the irrational whim of the voting bloc on any given day. Moreover, since membership of the Council was limited to a year, and no citizen could be a member more than twice, there was little strategic or long-term thinking to guide the state. Athenian leaders gained power by telling voters what they wanted to hear when they should have been charting a plan for the health of the state. Despite it being of a rather different type than today's democracy, Plato's criticism of it could almost apply to our own. The result of “freedom and plainness of speech”, he has Socrates say, is that:

> *“... every man does what is right in his own eyes, and has his own way of life... the State is like a piece of embroidery of which the colours and figures are the manners of men, and there are many who, like women and children, prefer this variety to real beauty and excellence. The State is not one but many, like a bazaar at which you can buy anything. The great charm is, that you may do as you like; you may govern if you like, let it alone if you like; go to war and make peace if you feel disposed, and all quite irrespective of anybody else... Such is democracy;—a pleasing, lawless, various sort of government, distributing equality to equals and unequals alike.”*

In short, democracy offers everything to everyone, but stands for nothing. It tends towards rule by an uneducated mob, with politicians simply telling voters what they want to hear in order to stay in power. For Plato, such a system was inherently flawed because it assumed virtue on the part of every citizen, yet virtue could only arise from knowledge, and most of the populace were not educated to a proper extent.

The Ideal State

Against this backdrop of failed systems the framework of Plato's ideal state rises. He imagines an elite group of philosophers whose sole purpose is to work for the good of the state. Brilliant, highly educated, and spiritually advanced, these philosophers would probably rather spend their time in contemplation, considering the eternal “forms” (such as Beauty or Truth) that underlie the world of appearances. Instead, they are asked to forego their all-knowing state of bliss and choose to return to the prosaic world to govern for the benefit of all.

The just state is divided into two: Guardians and Workers. The ruling class of Guardians is made up of a top tier of philosopher-rulers, and a military class called “auxiliaries” which defends the state and carries out the administrative functions decreed by the rulers. The working class keeps the state going in a material way.

Just as an individual will not properly “work” until he or she has achieved self-balance guided by reason, so Plato suggests that we should not expect a nation or a state to be run properly by merchants, or tradesman, or soldiers, but only by those who have the best general overview of what constitutes the good in society. A society run by soldiers would be always at war and limit freedom to its citizens; a state run by businessmen would be characterized by envy and materialism; and a state run by workers would lack the intellectual breadth and depth to know what good governance is, or properly manage relations with other states. Only the properly educated generalist, trained over many years in abstract subjects (Socrates suggests ten years study of mathematics before moving onto philosophy), can govern well. Yet practical knowledge of administration is the least of their requirements. The basic condition of superiority and fitness to govern is knowledge of the essential spiritual Forms of Justice, the Good, Beauty, Temperance, which manifest themselves in actual circumstances.

Plato outlines an authoritarian state, but in a positive paternal sense. The Guardians must put the good of the state above any kind of personal desire. Plato believed that private property, for instance, made people greedy and defensive of their interests, so Socrates proposes that the Guardians are provided for by the state so they are not swayed by private concerns and interests. Similarly, he notes that social unity is only possible if the worker class is looked after to the extent that it can carry out its jobs

without complaint. Both poverty and wealth would upset society's equilibrium.

Socrates observes that the just state will exhibit four qualities or virtues: wisdom, courage, discipline or good sense, and justice. Wisdom comes from the rulers, courage from the auxiliaries, and self-discipline from general agreement about how the state is to be ordered. Justice is the acceptance that everyone has a role to play in society. If we are a merchant, for instance, we respect the role of the military or the rulers, and vice versa.

The Control of Culture for Good Ends

Given that his philosopher-kings need decades of education and personal development before they are ready to rule, Plato required a system of public education that would ensure the health of the state.

Socrates goes to some length to show how the great poets and stories normally used to inculcate moral action are not actually up to the task. In Plato's time there was no Bible or equivalent religious text to act as moral guide, so it was the work of poets that filled this role. Socrates' argument is that:

> *"... poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue."*

Homer's depiction of the horrors of the afterlife, Socrates believes, only puts fear into people's minds, as does any kind of lament. He would censor the stories told to children so that their brains are not filled with negative images. Rather, education must focus on instilling the idea of the

Good. The citizenry should be exposed only to literature that does not glorify lying, or inconstancy, lack of self-control, or violence, for these will naturally weaken and corrupt minds, leading to wreck the ship of state. Most grievous are the stories in which unjust characters are said to be happy, or to win at the cost of the just, or that suggest being good is a disadvantage.

The just person, Socrates notes, wishes to *be* good intrinsically, not just to seem good:

> *"There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honoured and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honours and rewards."*

Literature, Socrates says, should emphasize the advantages that justice brings those who follow it, no matter what seems to be the case on the surface.

Attempting to counter the fear in the gods in ancient times, Socrates argues that God, contrary to general opinion, is not (as Zeus is portrayed) in charge of dispensing good and evil in the world, but is responsible only for the Good. Indeed, a basic principle of the ideal state must be that "God is the cause, not of all things, but only of good". In contrast to some of the poets' stories about Gods taking the shape of humans or sea creatures and so on, which only create fear and confusion about divine nature, God must be portrayed as perfect, incorruptible, totally without deceit or falsehood and only ever acting for good.

Plato's wish to censor culture may seem totalitarian, but we can understand it in the context of a time when the state's vitality and success was held up as the highest good. He felt justified in proposing a system that would ensure the state's strength by way of the moral firmness of its people. In fact, Plato is not different to today's politicians who lament the role that value-free entertainment in films and television, violent video games and pornography have on

the moral fibre of society. Though often lampooned for being prudes, they echo Plato in not seeking censorship for reasons of power, but so that individual potential not be wasted.

Women and Children

Though he may seem overbearing on the cultural front, Plato was remarkably farsighted when it came to sexual equality. Through powerful logic he shows how the estimation of women as weak is usually wrong, and provides a case that women who seem cut out for ruling should receive the same education and have similar opportunities as men. In this respect he talks of philosopher-*rulers*, not simply philosopher-kings.

But if philosopher-rulers must be loyal to the state, what about their family ties? To ensure a good stock of new children in the Guardian class, marriage and sex is not left up to the free market but regulated through festivals that bring the “right” people together. The children of this elite are then looked after in state nurseries, leaving their parents free to devote themselves to state matters. We may find such a system of eugenics repugnant, but for Plato it seemed a necessity because he believed that emotional ties were a weakening distraction. The traditional family unit tended to create a barrier between it and the rest of the society, and the desire to help our own, though natural, could therefore only lead to a chaotic, atomized state that had no real direction. His hope was that “us and them”, or selfish values, would be transformed into a desire for the good of society generally.

Plato's views were shaped by the fact that he himself never married. He may have been celibate too, given his view that sex (apart from continuing the species) was unproductive and often caused negative societal outcomes

such as jealous feuds. In his rather simple view, sex was an animalistic urge that had to be catered for, but which the best philosopher-rulers should be able to rise above.

Allegory of the Cave

We turn now to the most famous passage in *The Republic*, Plato's allegory of the cave (or underground den, as Jowett translates it), which is to be found in Book VII.

Socrates has his friends imagine a group of people living in a cave which has only a small opening to the light of the outside world. These individuals have spent their whole lives in the cave, chained in such a way that they can only see the walls, and cannot turn around to see the light. Behind them is a perpetual fire, and between the fire and walls walks a parade of people carrying various things, including models of animals, with the shadow of them cast onto the wall in front of the prisoners. The chained people can only ever see the shadows of this procession and their own shadows, ensuring that “reality” is for them a simple two-dimensional film of shadows, and never the original things that cast them.

Then, however, someone comes to release one of the prisoners from their bondage. One assumes that the prisoner will be delighted see that what they had perceived as real was in fact just a projection of true reality, but this shift in perception is too much. The prisoner is in fact dazzled by the light of the fire. Nevertheless he is brought out of the cave and shown the sun, which again appears horribly bright and pains his eyes. However, in time the prisoner comes to appreciate the sun, understanding it as the real light of the world and the source of all perception. He pities his fellow prisoners back in the cave, still believing that what they dimly see is “reality”.

When the prisoner returns to the cave and cannot see in the dark so well any more, his fellows contend that his journey into the light was a waste of time that only damaged his eyes. They can't appreciate that his world has changed forever, and he himself cannot imagine going back to his former life in which mere appearances count for truth.

Socrates uses the sun as a metaphor for the Form of the Good, and the fact that appreciation of the Good is not arrived at easily. However, when properly seen for the first time, the viewer understands this form to be:

> *"... the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed."*

Elsewhere, he describes the journey out of the cave as a movement from "becoming" to "being", from conditioned to absolute reality; from the worldly experience of being human to the pure light of reality.

Having had this experience, Socrates says, is it any wonder that those philosophers who have seen the essential Form of Justice might despair at descending back into the world to administer justice in real courts of law, which is filled with people who have no appreciation of what Justice is?

Well they might, but it is their duty to discern the shadows from the truth, ensuring that they will not do such things as starting wars for power's sake, but will work tirelessly for the long-term benefit of the state and people. Socrates sagely notes to Glaucon that, "the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed, and the State in which they are most eager, the worst."

Final Comments

It is easy to paint Plato as an elitist or snob who supported a rigidly hierarchical society. The philosopher of science Karl Popper famously said that Plato was an enemy of the open society.

But Plato's model can be seen another way.

History since Plato has been full of disastrous Marxist worker-governments, brutal military juntas, and corrupt regimes that loot the state for all its worth, and to a lesser extent democratic states hijacked by special interests which advance themselves at the expense of the whole. Contrast this with the Platonic model which provides for philosopher-rulers specifically trained to have the welfare of the whole as their highest concern, with power for power's sake completely beyond the pale.

There is a gravitas and pleasing unity to Plato's view of justice, both person and polis, that stands in contrast to today's political arena in which citizens rear up at any suggestion that they should forego some of their rights or privileges for the good of the state overall. John F. Kennedy's famous exhortation, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”, is a faint echo of Plato's outlook, and now seems almost quaint.[1] Plato would not have been impressed with today's democracies. Even in his time he saw them as chaotic and prone to be captured by certain groups or classes, and today would note their lack of a sense of planning for the long term and working for the highest benefit of all. Instead we have politicians toadying to their local electorates, being swayed by lobbyists, pork-barrelling or doing favours to others in their party to ensure their promotion or survival. In light of democracy's weaknesses, Platonic autocracy by a well-intentioned elite does not look so ridiculous.

Does Plato's template for the just and balanced individual still work for us today? In a culture which seems to offer easy routes to every kind of pleasure, and which encourages us to express emotions with abandon, his emphasis on allowing reason to be our ruler can seem austere. Yet the fruits of this reign will be the same for a 21st-century person as it was for the individual of ancient Greece: wisdom, courage and right action.

Plato's parable of the cave is a precious reminder that most of us go through life chasing shadows and believing in appearances, when beyond the superficial world of the senses awaits timeless and perfect truth. Plato has Socrates make the case for philosophers being the only ones who can ascertain this truth through their study of the Forms, but today, of course, we all have access to education, books, and ethical or spiritual teachings, and each of us is equipped to contemplate the eternal.

Accordingly, *The Republic* opens the way for everyone to live according to such timeless truths, instead of existing simply for pleasure or to gain the upper hand over others. The very fact that you are reading this book makes it more likely that you have seen the cave of perception for what it is, and now have the opportunity to apprehend what is lasting and true.

Tom Butler-Bowdon

Sources

- *The Republic of Plato*, translated with an analysis and introduction by Benjamin Jowett, Oxford University Press, 1908.
- Plato *The Republic*, translated with an introduction by Desmond Lee, London: Penguin, 1953, 1974.
- Fine, Gail *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul*, USA: Oxford University Press, 2000.

1 Are there any expressions of Plato's ideal state today? The closest would be technocratic governments with limited or no democracy which nevertheless produce reasonably prosperous and integrated societies. Singapore, which places great emphasis on the quality and training of its top public servants, comes to mind, but there are no large states run along these lines.

About Tom Butler-Bowdon

Tom Butler-Bowdon is the author of five best-selling books on the classic writings in the personal development field. He has been described by *USA Today* as “a true scholar of this type of literature”.

His first book, *50 Self-Help Classics*, won the 2004 Benjamin Franklin Award. *50 Success Classics* followed, looking at the landmark works in motivation and leadership from Napoleon Hill to Nelson Mandela. Tom's third book, *50 Spiritual Classics*, provides commentaries on famous writings and authors in personal awakening, from Mother Teresa to Carl Jung to Eckhart Tolle. With *50 Psychology Classics* (2007) and *50 Prosperity Classics* (2008), the series has been translated into 22 languages. *50 Philosophy Classics* will be published in 2012.

Tom is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the University of Sydney, and lives in Oxford, England. His website, www.Butler-Bowdon.com, has an array of free self-development resources.

- Readers can receive a free bonus philosophy book commentary written by Tom by sending an email toTom@Butler-Bowdon.com with “Republic” in the title bar.
- See also Capstone's editions of *Think and Grow Rich*, the classic motivational text by Napoleon Hill, *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace Wattles, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, *The Prince*by Niccolò Machiavelli, and *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu, all of which contain Introductions by Tom Butler-Bowdon.

The Republic

Persons of the Dialogue

Socrates, who is the narrator.
Glaucon
Adeimantus
Polemarchus
Cephalus
Thrasymachus
Cleitophon
And others who are mute auditors.

The scene is laid in the house of Cephalus at the Piraeus; and the whole dialogue is narrated by Socrates the day after it actually took place to Timaeus, Hermocrates, Critias, and a nameless person, who are introduced in the Timaeus.

Book I

I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston, that I might offer up my prayers to the goddess (Bendis, the Thracian Artemis.); and also because I wanted to see in what manner they would celebrate the festival, which was a new thing. I was delighted with the procession of the inhabitants; but that of the Thracians was equally, if not more, beautiful. When we had finished our prayers and viewed the spectacle, we turned in the direction of the city; and at that instant Polemarchus the son of Cephalus chanced to catch sight of us from a distance as we were starting on our way home, and told his servant to run and bid us wait for him. The servant took hold of me by the cloak behind, and said: “Polemarchus desires you to wait.”

I turned round, and asked him where his master was.

“There he is,” said the youth, “coming after you, if you will only wait.”

“Certainly we will,” said Glaucon; and in a few minutes Polemarchus appeared, and with him Adeimantus, Glaucon's brother, Niceratus the son of Nicias, and several others who had been at the procession.

Polemarchus said to me: “I perceive, Socrates, that you and your companion are already on your way to the city.”

“You are not far wrong,” I said.

“But do you see,” he rejoined, “how many we are?”

“Of course.”

“And are you stronger than all these? for if not, you will have to remain where you are.”

“May there not be the alternative,” I said, “that we may persuade you to let us go?”

“But can you persuade us, if we refuse to listen to you?” he said.

“Certainly not,” replied Glaucon.

“Then we are not going to listen; of that you may be assured.”

Adeimantus added: “Has no one told you of the torch-race on horseback in honour of the goddess which will take place in the evening?”

“With horses!” I replied: “That is a novelty. Will horsemen carry torches and pass them one to another during the race?”

“Yes,” said Polemarchus, “and not only so, but a festival will be celebrated at night, which you certainly ought to see. Let us rise soon after supper and see this festival; there will be a gathering of young men, and we will have a good talk. Stay then, and do not be perverse.”

Glaucon said: “I suppose, since you insist, that we must.”

“Very good,” I replied.

Accordingly we went with Polemarchus to his house; and there we found his brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, and with them Thrasymachus the Chalcedonian, Charmantides the Paeanian, and Cleitophon the son of Aristonymus. There too was Cephalus the father of Polemarchus, whom I had not seen for a long time, and I thought him very much aged. He was seated on a cushioned chair, and had a garland on his head, for he had been sacrificing in the court; and there were some other chairs in the room arranged in a semicircle, upon which we sat down by him. He saluted me eagerly, and then he said:

“You don't come to see me, Socrates, as often as you ought: If I were still able to go and see you I would not ask you to come to me. But at my age I can hardly get to the city, and therefore you should come oftener to the Piraeus. For let me tell you, that the more the pleasures of the body fade away, the greater to me is the pleasure and charm of conversation. Do not then deny my request, but make our