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**Front Pages**

# Athens Journal of Philosophy

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Gregory T. Papanikos
President
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- **Dr. William O'Meara,** Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.

## Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **DEADLINE CLOSED**
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# Interpretative Phenomenological/*Phronesis* Analyses: Using Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs) to Position Research Participant Experiential Narratives

*By Md Azalanshah Bin Md Syed[*] & Tony Wilson[±]*

*IPA is now a widely recognised qualitative approach within psychology. Drawing on its hermeneutic underwriting, enabled by hermeneutic philosophers (Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur), this paper proposes eight Hermeneutic Themes ubiquitous within presentation of these philosophers' writing. Research participant experiential narrative, accounts of understanding-in-practice, can be allocated structurally to these Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs). For Gadamer, a hermeneutic consideration of practices was initiated by Aristotle's early writing on phronesis or a situated understanding-in-practice. The present thematic analysis recognises such a Greek source. Exemplars of potential participants' experiential narratives are provided within their respective HUTs prior to positioning Malaysian women viewers' ethical 'watching competencies'.*

**Keywords:** ethics, *hermeneutic ubiquitous themes*, Malaysia, phenomenolgy, *phronesis*

IPA is a widely recognised qualitative approach in psychology, now with over two thousand members within its online discussion group. An author of this paper is most grateful for its guiding initiative. Here, to systematically assist in its thematic analyses, we seek to extend its philosophical understanding of practices as *phronesis* drawing on the latter's origins in Aristotelian Greek thought. Accounts of being-in-time are ubiquitous within hermeneutic philosophers from Aristotle onwards. Analysis can align participant experiental accounts with their widely applicable themes in a research presentation.

## Introduction

IPA is hermeneutically shaped. Further enabled by the hermeneutic philosophers Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur who sought to make wide ranging claims about human 'being-in-time', the present paper presents a case for seeking the instantiation of these claims as Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs). Research participant experiential statements emerging from discussing their understanding-in-practice can be located as participant experiential themes with these HUTs.

Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs), theses widely evident in philosophers' accounts of living, can generate a set of thematic questions asked of already

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achieved research participants' experiental narrrative, providing answers. These answers can promote structured thematic analysis where response can be allocated to a hermeneutic ubiquitous theme. If a similarity obtains between the experiential thematic responses within the HUT, HUGS as the 'horizon of understanding' group shared, can be identified. For Gadamer, in whose scholarship hermeneutic thought upon a culturally situated practice was initiated by Aristotle's earlier Greek writing on *phronesis,* that can be viewed as ethical understanding-in-practice. Thematic analysis here recognises this early resource.

Aristotle's concept of someone who exercises *phronesis* or practical wisdom, who 'makes the best of present circumstances' (Warrington 1963, p. 19) is foundational in a hermeneutical analysis. In dualist philosophies body and mind are detached, but they are integrated in *phronesis*.

Hermeneutic theory guides this research analysis from the outset. A Hermeneutic Thematic Question initiates this process with respondent answers, previously recorded within research, to be considered as allocated to these Hermeneutic Themes of understanding-in-practice. In this way, the participant's iterative narrative is analysed as a conjunction of themes.

**Questions Focussed on Participant Recorded Responses:**
**Answers to be Located in Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs)**
**- Schemata Enabled by Philosophers Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur**

Hermeneutic presentation of 'understanding-in-practice' continues an Aristotelian origin. Establishing hermeneutic philosophy, Heidegger argued (1927) that the primary structure of our human existence is implicitly 'being and time'. Within such a temporal template, we exercise an experiential understanding-in-practice as is signified linguistically by using a gerund (ing ending).[1]

Giddens (a former head of the London School of Economics), influenced by Heidegger in establishing his own work, anticipates subsequent practices theory. He distinguishes between tacit or unreflective pursuit of equipped goal-oriented routines as 'practical consciousness' and enlarging, contextualising awareness such as is found in IPA. The latter discursively reflects upon interpretative 'horizons' of our routine understanding-in-use (a distinction between 'ready-to-hand' and 'presented-at-hand' within Heidegger's scholarship):

> 'The theory of the subject I outline involves what I call a "stratification model" of personality, organised in terms of three sets of relations: the unconscious, practical consciousness, and discursive consciousness.' (Giddens 1979, p. 2)

Taking Heidegger's account of human living further, Gadamer (1975) places a culturally and historically located practical understanding as - in his spatio-temporal metaphorical conceptualising - being positioned along a 'horizon of understanding'. Signifying the 'framework of our experience, it is both limit and

[1]We owe this linguistic signifier to Associate Professor Sheryl Chatfield at Kent State University.

condition of possibility' (Evink 2013, p. 298) That is, horizons circle all around us, before us and behind: as the latter, cultural ethnic, gendered and generational perspectives generate an identification of people and places, a representational foundation for IPA psychological analyses.

With Ricoeur's (1981b) narrative of 'distanciated' or critical response to powerful ideology located on horizons of understanding, a political placing of thematic analysis is reached, furthered by seeing 'horizon' as agreed or contested 'boundary object' (Star 2010),'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point' (Gadamer 1975, p. 301).

In IPA psychology, a hermeneutic discussion of a practice with its responses as 'discursive consciousness', takes place. Further philosophical questioning, directed at the results of discursive consciousnes, can locate the latter across the range of Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs).

Drawing upon IPA's hermeneutic of human behaviour, enabled by hermeneutic philosophers (Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur), Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes can be established. In empirical research, interviewing participants appropriately or analysing their existing data, these Themes can guide the questions asked, shaping an extended interviewee discussion by researchers as well as enabling responses to be thematically organised for presentation of the research. Further academic discussion doubtless will occur over the relationship involving a hermeneutic philosophy and Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (HUTs). But a connecting remains, that a hermeneutic IPA is informed by hermeneutic philosophers with their core concerns or themes. Naturally, reading these philosophers - or mediating commentators - may further analyses.

As indicated, the early hermeneutic consideration of our practices was initiated by Aristotle writing on '*phronesis*', a person's understanding-in-practice. Consequently hermeneutic insight into interviewee understanding-in-practice can be organised by asking during research in progress, or of research already conducted, eight Themed Questions. Of course, these can be linguistically adapted to suit the particular qualitative circumstances of the respondents and (in)formality of research interviewing.

## Placing Research Respondent Experiential Narratives with HUTs (I)

Drawing upon this brief considering of hermeneutic philosophers Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, discussion of participant understanding-in-practice is structured within Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes (*Theme (i)* to *Theme (viii)*) by asking how participants are:-

> *Theme (i).* **E**ngaged in *phronesis* (Aristotle) understanding-in-practice?
> *Exemplar Answer*: 'I am seeking to heighten ethical social awareness with my programme.'

> *Theme (ii).* **E**mbodied, seeking to further goals (Heidegger's *Sorge*)?
> *Exemplar Answer*. 'I care about my television programme's international circulation.'

*Theme (iii).* **E**quipped (Heidegger's *Zeug*) in achieving their goals?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I am pleased to say I have the necessary production facilities.'

*Theme (iv).* **E**mplacing participant interpretative 'horizons of understanding' (Gadamer)?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I believe television programmes have immense social influence.'

*Theme (v*). **Af**fective in generic, care-directed involvement, exercising 'being and time'? (Heidegger's *Selbstsorge*, care towards self)?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I have a deep caring commitment towards programme directing.'

*Theme (vi).* **A**rticulating, 'refiguring' (Ricoeur 1988) personal identity in experiential account?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I believe my status as television director will be much enhanced.'

*Theme (vii*). **A**ligned or Alienated ('distanciated' (Ricoeur 1981b) in embodied understanding?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I'm much alienated by television programmes with superficial content.'

*Theme (viii*). **A**ttaining a secure, albeit sometimes contested, 'boundary object' (Star 2010)?
*Exemplar Answer*. 'I believe my programme will advance televion schedules beyond superficial.'

Enabled by Gadamer's (1975) *Truth and Method*, a Hermeneutic Theme could be termed a HOUP, a 'horizon of understanding participants' presented in a hermeneutic circle of understanding. As indicated, should two or more research participants supply similar answers to a Thematic Question, or within existing research data be seen to do, then they can be viewed as occupying HUGS or a 'horizon of understanding group shared' in a HUT. 'Horizon of understanding' is a core hermeneutic concept, employed across multi-disciplinary qualitative research.

## Hermeneutic IPA

IPA Psychology seeks knowledge of interviewees and as such it also has a necessary basis in epistemology - or defining what constitutes people knowing. Broadly speaking, there are three such defining epistemologies: Cartesian, Empiricism and Hermeneutic Analysis.

Descartes' conceptualising of our knowing was famously formulated as: - 'I think therefore I am'. However, this separates knowing from embodied practices, a central concern for IPA.

Empiricism (for many years a dominant Western view) was formulated by Hume, Locke or more recently, Ayer. Here 'sense-data', representations of an external world (e.g., 'patches exhibiting colours and shapes', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*) which human beings passively receive were held to be fundamental, as a secure basis for knowledge. However, resourced in a hermeneutic philosophy is a basic rejecting of passive perception as privileged

source of sense-data representing an external world. Instead active understanding in practices, culturally inflected modes of *knowing how*, constitute the fundamental engaging with the world which IPA discusses in research.

For hermeneutic philosophy, our practices of knowing how (*phronesis*) are interpreted from people's culturally informed perspective, 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer). The focus of IPA is their PET or GET, a personal experiential theme or group experiential theme. Alternatively a horizon of understanding participants can be a HOUP, with horizonal understanding of a group denoted as being a HUG.

This hermeneutic theorising as initiated from Aristotle onwards provides the theoretical base from which asking a structured series of questions of participant data is possible, regarding people's engaging in practices, or *phronesis*, their embodiment, equipment, and emplacing. Involved within practices, they will be affectively engaging, articulating identities as aligned with or alienated from practices, attaining secure (albeit potentially alternatively perceived) boundary objects. Together these ubiquitous themes enable a structuring of responses, constituting the focus of Interpretative Phenomenological/ *Phronesis* Analyses.

## A Cross-Cultural IPA

Published research interviewing within this paper is cross-cultural, exhibiting Malaysian women viewers' 'watching competencies' and resulting discourse on local ethical judgement. This augmenting IPA narrative offers an intercultural focus on *phronesis*, understanding-in-practice, Malaysian audience 'watching competencies', offering a tabulated analysis, detailed below.

Psychological narratives frequently have political dimensions, not least within Malaysia. Interviewing the research participants took place during the Malaysian Government's 'Look East' policy, intended to detract from a perceived Western decadence. However, such 'looking' was not consistent in furthering strategy in maintaining Malay feminine modesty and familial mindfulness.

'The Look East policy has influenced the flow of cultural products in the country. The major aim of this policy is to counter Western television content that has been deemed inappropriate for family and clear contradiction to the moral system of the Malay society'. But in redirecting the audience gaze towards a SE Asian television, 'the popularity of K-pop has often been criticised by the Malay patriarchal authorities who considered its influence as threat to the moral system of the Malay society in particular to maintain family values' (Syed, Md A. Md, 2019).

More specifically, the present interpretative psychology paper seeks to draw cross-culturally in illustration on a Malaysian account of ethical responses to television narrative. In this discussion, integrating concepts of 'watching competencies' and 'understanding-in-practice' is employed. This analysis is informed by signalling culturally positioned *phronesis*, practical wisdom, as central to analyses:

> 'As a Muslim, we are not supposed to touch or hug any non-related or un-marriageable kin. If we are too obsessed toward some popular idols, please control yourself… I

> think, if we obsess with any or certain idols, we just need to idolise them from afar. And please, no physical contact' (female, Malay) (Cited in Syed, Md A. Md, 2019).

In this brief extract exhibiting 'cultural competencies', a viewer exercises ethical judgement, a culturally informed element, tool or equipment in their generic, recurring practical understanding. There is a declared embodied perception of knowing how, Aristotle's *phronesi*s, 'making the best of present circumstances'. Here affective knowing how has been exercised thematically not only in her 'competencies', judging of appropriate behaviour for 'us', but also within her assembling narratives as a ludic, 'to-and-fro' anticipating and realising meaning in a 'horizon of expectation' (Jauss 1982) of a coherent content constituting 'unacceptable' television soap opera.

Syed, Md A. Md, and C. Runnel (2014) examine 'watching competencies' where within the understanding of television contents, a cultural distance between the Malaysian female audience and foreign soap opera encourages these viewers to engage from an alienated perspective with a disparate ethic.

> 'I know that Korean and Filipino soaps show many habits of urbanised western lifestyle such as drinking, clubbing and pre-marital sexual relationships. I guess all of these things that we consider unacceptable are part of their lifestyle' (female, Malay).

Celebrating a locational self-identity, a Malay viewer's affective 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer 1975) is perceived to 'emerge hierarchically, signifying ethically, personally, or socially elevated greater vision with wider insight, as empowering authenticity' (Wilson 2022, p. 122). She is 'refiguring' (Ricoeur 1988) herself, articulating in responding an ethical cultural superiority. 'Our' recurrent behaviour, equipped and informed by its ethical statement, is presented as a goal-shaped practice constraining the unworthy, as 'distanciated' (Ricoeur 1991) from the Korean and Filipino.

This viewer focusses on purpose, 'an experience which is lived through the body' (Eatough and Smith 2006, p. 494). Should the researcher integrate these emerging themes, this would achieve a thematic HOUP, a horizon of understanding positioning the research interviewee. Moreover, as 'we (together) consider unacceptable' this behaviour, such embodied thematic horizon of understanding constitutes a HUG, or a horizon of understanding occupied by groups of Malay women viewers in their readings of media.

Culturally imbricated moral competency critique of Korean and Filipino ethical habituated practice here 'rests on the moment of *distanciatio*n' (emphasis in original) (Ricoeur 1991, p. 35), the conspicuous discursive separating away from the 'interpretation that a social group offers of itself by means of collective representations' (Ricoeur 1981a, p. 38) on television. Within these 'soaps', a tacit embodied self-understanding exposes overseas participants to 'unacceptable' practices from which they avow an ethical distance.

**Hermeneutic Engaging:**
**Placing Published Research Respondent Experiental Narratives with HUTs (II)**

| | |
|---|---|
| (i) *Engaged* | Ethical dismissing of Korean/ Filipino 'unacceptable' 'lifestyle' |
| (ii) *Embodied* | 'Drinking, clubbing and pre-marital sexual relationship' activity |
| (iii) *Equipped* | *Phronesi*s, practical understanding equipped by Malay ethics |
| (iv) *Emplacing* | 'Part of their lifestyle' within 'what we consider 'unacceptable' |
| (v) *Affective* | Caring as judging 'many habits of urbanised western lifestyle' |
| (vi) *Articulating* | Ethical superiority rejecting 'part of (Korean/Filipino) lifestyle' |
| (vii) *Alienated* | Distanciated respondent response to element of 'western lifestyle' |
| (viii) *Attaining* | 'Boundary object', rejecting behaviour as 'western lifestyle' and 'unacceptable' |

**Hermeneutic Engaging: Placing Published Research Respondent Experiential Narratives with HUTs (III)**

'Although we live in the modern world, our fans create the negative effect through various social misconducts. Girls should stick with Islamic ways and values. We must find a way how to balance secular and Islamic education. I don't have any problem to manage my children at home especially my daughter. I monitor her circle of friends and make sure she makes friends only with someone who has positive values and attitude. I don't want her to mix around or associate with immoral person or event. I will constantly check her surrounding especially in school and neighbourhood. In the case of Kpop (Korean popular music), someone might think a live show will create negative impact. However, I beg to differ. Live show brings entertainment but the fans create the negative effect through various social misconducts. They actually tarnish the image of this Kpop live show' (female, Malay)' (Cited in Syed, Md A. Md, 2019).

| | |
|---|---|
| (i) *Engaged* | Ethical personal dismissal of Kpop. fans' behaviour as 'negative' |
| (ii) *Embodied* | 'Social misconducts', 'I don't want my (daughter) to mix around' |
| (iii) *Equipped* | 'Someone might think live show will create negative impact' |
| (iv) *Emplacing* | Cultural horizon, 'girls should stick with Islamic ways and values' |
| (v) *Affective* | Caring that the fans 'tarnish the image of this (Kpop) live show' |
| (vi) *Articulating* | Identity, 'I don't have any problem to manage my children at home' |
| (vii) *Alienated* | Distancing from fans' 'negative effect' but aligned with 'live show' |
| (viii) *Attaining* | 'Boundary', 'a way how to balance secular and Islamic education' |

**Hermeneutics of Making Sense in Media: Contextual Comment**

In hermeneutic terms, making sense of a media programme, people extend their 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer 1975) to include (but certainly not necessarily to agree or align with) the perspectives on a screen. Vessey writes upon the concept of 'horizon', 'horizons might function as a limit at a particular time, but they are always also gateways to something beyond' (Vessey 2009, p. 533).

Extending a perspective or 'horizon of understanding' (but not necessarily in agreement) is spoken of hermeneutically as being a 'fusion of horizons', augmenting an understanding. Gadamer employs his core spatio-temporal metaphors in obtaining conceptual purchase upon the practice of such understanding: - 'understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves' (Gadamer 1975, p. 306). Malaysian viewers here remark upon an extending 'fusion of horizons' in their responses.

Media text discourse and viewer 'understanding emerges (with) the fusion of these horizons as the two are brought together in dialogue' (Gimbel 2016, p. 79). A perspective can be thus extended, horizons of understanding 'fused', yet one rejected. Understanding as a cognitive process 'requires and perpetuates a mode of differentiation' (Davey 2006, p. 5) between distinct idiographic practices. 'Horizons change for a person who is moving' (Gadamer 1975, p. 304). Visitors to a mall, for whom their shared emplacing behaviour is fundamentally framed by recognition, can be seen (with their own words) to be 'finding a home-from-home'. People affectively embrace material horizons.

## Conclusion: Hermeneutic Thematic Analysis of Research Participant Narrative

Informed by an Aristotelian initiated hermeneutics, this brief paper endeavoured to establish Hermeneutic Ubiquitous Themes can contain or inform discussion with research participants. In this way, philosophy can underwrite empirical qualitative research, not least across cultures.

In regard to ethical *phronesis*, with respect to the Malay women, morality as understanding-in-practice emplaces an affective horizon of self-understanding (iv Gadamer) wherein identity is a subject of celebrating (as ethically elevated) and distanciation (vi and vii Ricoeur) from the viewed. Differentiated moralities are here a thematic focus of participant narrative, albeit culturally bound.

Ethics create significant ways of managing issues in life. Morality forms an institutionally consensual, even necessary, 'boundary object' (viii Star) of political, ideological response here regarding 'distanciated' (Ricoeur 1981b), 'unacceptable' practices. *Phronesis* (Aristotle) operates as embodied understanding-in-practice, supporting generic, care-directed judgement (ii, iii, and v Heidegger), emerging (i) in thematic HOUPS and HUGS analyses of viewer 'competencies'.

## Hermeneutic Extended Reading

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# On the Triple Connections between Morality[1] and Politics: An Inquiry of Western and Chinese Political Philosophy

*By Shi Li*[*]

*Morality determines the stability of political order in three aspects: first, moral theory is the basis for justifying political order. In Chinese and Western political philosophy, scholars of different schools try to justify political order in different ways. In western political philosophy, the most important are social contract theory and utilitarianism. In Chinese political philosophy, the most typical is the Confucian theory of "benevolent government". Secondly, whether the words and deeds of political leaders conform to the moral principles is a sign of the legitimacy of the relevant political order. It is for this reason that the Chinese political thought emphasized "rule of morality" at the beginning of its birth, especially the Confucian doctrine, which has become the official ideology in two thousand years, and developed the thought of "internal saints and external kings " after repeated writings of several generations of Confucian scholars. Thirdly, the people within the political regime must have some civic virtues for them to maintain the political order. Of course, morality is not the whole of politics. Politics must be based on the monopoly of force to maintain stable order.*

**Keywords:** *politics, morality, justification, citizenship*

## Introduction

What is the relation between morality and politics? Does politics need morality? If we want to research on these questions, we have to start from the substance of politics. The so-called "politics" refers to the long-term stability of human society, in which a set of institutional rules is admitted by people, so that most people voluntarily respect these rules. Generally speaking, there are two ways to encourage people to follow a set of rules. First, relying on people's self-discipline and reasoning, if people agree with a set of rules, they will follow them. The second is to rely on heteronomy, based on mandatory violence agencies, to punish those who do not comply with relevant rules. Therefore, politics encompasses two aspects: "authority" and "power". Authority convinces and guides people to voluntarily obedience; while "power" makes people afraid and forces them to obey. Authority and power are like the two legs of a giant Leviathan, pushing society forward in an orderly manner. Based on this understanding, how

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[1]In Chinese, morality and virtue are the same meaning, which use the words of 美德, 道德, etc. In this article, I discuss morality and virtue generally, and use morality or virtue in different contexts.

to establish political authority becomes the key to the success of a political order. Morality plays a crucial role in this aspect.

This article focuses on the most important western and Chinese political theory and tries to conclude the similarities of between them. In these two traditions, politics is deeply connected with morality. Moral theory and related arguments help to consolidate the authority of political order in three aspects: first, moral theory is the basis for justifying political order. Secondly, whether the words and actions of political leaders comply with moral principles is a signification of the legitimacy of the political order. Thirdly, people in the political order need to have certain civic virtues, so that they will follow the political order voluntarily. Of course, morality is not all about politics. As Comrade Mao Zedong once said, "political power emerges from the barrel of a gun". In addition to the justification given by moral philosophy, politics must also be built on the basis of monopolistic violence in order to build a stable order. Morality and law are the two wings of politics.

## Morality is the Foundation of Political Legitimacy

Any political order that can maintain long-term stability originates from the politics of reasoning, rather than the politics of power. Mighty may be effective for a while, but it cannot be effective forever. Although humans have various desires, fears, and passions, they are after all rational beings. If a mandatory institutional system is logically unreasonable and cannot be recognized by people, its governance cost will be extremely high. Moreover, the crucial thing is that the violent organs that constitute its mandatory basis are also composed of people with rational thinking abilities. If these people do not agree with the relevant institutional arrangements, the ruling foundation will be shaken. Of course, considering the rapid development of artificial intelligence, we can envision a dictator who possesses a large number of robot policemen and enslaves most of the people. But even so, the dictator has to control these robots through scientists, and there is also a risk of scientists' rebelling against the dictator. Anyway, politics needs to be justified and the majority of people in a society have to be convinced by the justification. Otherwise, the stability of political order cannot be guaranteed. In Chinese and Western political philosophy, scholars from different schools are committed to provide justification for political order. In western political philosophy, the most famous are social contract theory and utilitarianism. In Chinese political philosophy, the most important one is Confucian "benevolent governance" theory.

First, the logic of the social contract theory is as follows: as a mandatory institutional system, a political order will inevitably pose a threat to people's natural rights. So, under what circumstances is this compulsion not contradictory to individual rights? It can only be done when people voluntarily relinquish a portion of their freedom. Therefore, the theory of social contract takes "voluntarily agreement" as the basis for proving the legitimacy of mandatory order. Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and other traditional social contract theorists have all conceived

the scenarios where people enter into social contracts from a natural state. For example, Hobbes argues that: "This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by convent of everyman **I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.** This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a Commonwealth, in Latin Civitas. This is the generation of that great Leviathanth" (Hobbes 1651, 2.17). In Hobbes' view, people agree to relinquish a portion of their rights due to fear of violent death caused by wars between them, and hand over this right to a neutral third party for arbitration. This third party is the sovereign, the state. Due to the fact that authorization to a sovereign is granted by everyone, all actions of that sovereign have legitimacy. And when it exercises its power and makes mandatory institutional arrangements, it does not infringe on people's rights and freedoms, because these "rights" are voluntarily handed over by people.

The justification of social contract theory may be clever, but it also has fatal weaknesses. The crucial problem is that there is no historical record of the contracting process in the natural state. Which means both natural state and social contract are probably hypothetical. The question is: how can a hypothetical contract justify people's obligation of obedience? If a person has never signed any contract, how can we require him to execute the contract content? Hume once satirized social contract theorists: "Were you to ask the far greatest part of the nation, whether they had ever consented to the authority of their rulers, or promised to obey them, they would be inclined to think very strangely of you." (Hume 1739, Book 3, Part 2.8) Therefore, another important task of contract theorists is to demonstrate how a "hypothetical contract" can provide legitimacy for a mandatory institutional system. Locke and Kant provided two different answers to this question. Locke proposed the concept of "tacit agreement". Locke believed that if a person lives in a certain political order, enjoying various benefits provided by this order, and has never expressed a clear objection to it; then he actually admits this order. Locke argued, "that every Man, that hath any Possession, or Enjoyment, of any part of the Dominions of any Government, doth thereby give his *tacit Consent*, and is as far forth obliged to Obedience to the Laws of that Government, during such Enjoyment, as anyone under it" (Locke 1960, p. 348). Kant's answer to this question was even more brilliant. Kant believed that consent that can provide legitimacy for political order is not an actual consent, but should be the consent in a normative sense (Kant 2012, p. 37). Kant's argument may seem absurd at first, but as long as it is connected with reality, it suddenly becomes clear. There are many unjust behaviors in human society which are based on "actual consent". Such as money and power trading, power and sex trading, and all the exchanges those contradict to people's moral intuitions. This type of trading is profitable for both parties involved, and is carried out with the consent of both parties, but the transaction itself is illegal. In addition, in situations of coercion, inducement, and bullying, people may also agree under pressure. But such consents cannot justify anything. It is precisely for this reason that in international relations, people have no obligation to fulfill any "unequal treaties", because the

treaty itself is illegitimate. Therefore, actual consent cannot justify the contract itself. Only in a hypothetical state, contracts signed by free and equal people voluntarily, can justify the contract. And such consent must be "hypothetical consent". As contemporary contract theorist John Rawls once said, "The principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement. They are the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association" (Rawls 1999, p. 11).

Secondly, another school of western political philosophers - utilitarians - are extremely dissatisfied with the metaphysical tendency of social contract theory. They believed that the concepts of natural state, natural rights, and hypothetical contracts that social contract theorists refer to are too abstract and far from people's actual lives. For example, Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, once laughed at what social contract theorists said about natural rights as "nonsense on stilts" (Bentham 2002, p. 331). In the view of utilitarians, the legitimacy of political order originates from the reality of the life itself. For everyone, although they may have different life plans and goals, they are all "pursuing pleasures and avoiding pains", pursuing the maximization of happiness. Therefore, utilitarians believe that the legitimacy of political order lies in the fact that it can maximize the happiness of as many people as possible, which is called "greatest happiness of the greatest number" by Bentham. That is to say, if a set of institutional systems can maximize the happiness of everyone and, from an overall perspective, maximize the total happiness of all, then this political order is good and should be followed.

There is a difficulty in the justification provided by utilitarianism, which is the relationship between the interest of individual person and the common interest. As a branch of western political philosophy, utilitarianism has the characteristics of "individualism"[2]. Based on the position of individualism, utilitarianism does not believe that individuals can be aggregated into any new entity - family, community, country, etc. Therefore, the so-called common interests are not any new interests that are independent of individual interests, but rather the sum of all individual interests. If we write one person's utility as Ui, the overall social interest can be written as $\Sigma$Ui. Utilitarian judges whether a social order is a good order by whether or not $\Sigma$Ui reaches the maximum. In other words, utilitarians agree with all institutional designs that can increase $\Sigma$Ui, and oppose any institutional design that reduces it. From this point of view, as a moral theory, utilitarianism provides a justification for the corresponding institutional system. The logic of this justification is that any system that can increase the total amount of individual interests is legitimate, which people should support and obey. The theory of utilitarianism is closely related to economics because it is easy to calculate. In the simplified calculation of economics, the concept of overall social interest ($\Sigma$Ui) evolves into a calculation of GDP or GNP in many cases. From the perspective of

[2]For the fundamental characteristics of Western culture, see Samuel Huntington's statement: "Westerners and non-Westerners have repeatedly regarded individualism as the main distinguishing mark of the West." (Huntington 2010, p. 51).

utilitarianism, whether GDP or GNP continues to grow is an important sign of the legitimacy of a set of institutional systems. And this is also an important reason why politicians in many countries nowadays attach so much importance to whether their GDP continues to grow.

Thirdly, traditional Chinese political ideology also contains profound moral doctrines that provide legitimacy for political order. The ancient Chinese understood political legitimacy as "the mandate of heaven". And the political power that conforms to the mandate of heaven is legitimate, while the opposite is not. As Tingyang said, "Political legitimacy is the 'the mandate of heaven'. If one political power contradicts with the the mandate of heaven, it shifts to a new political power, and a successful revolution proves the new political legitimacy. This is so-called 'restoration of one's destiny'" (Tingyang 2009, p. 95). How to perceive "the mandate of heaven"? Many classics of early Chinese political thought linked "the mandate of heaven" with "the will of people". For example, *The Book of Changes* says, "Heaven will follow the will of the people" "Heaven sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear". *The Book of Mencius* says: "Why did Jie and Zhou lose their political power, because they lost their people. They acted against the will of the people". Tingyang believes that the political ideology of the Zhou Dynasty began to emphasize the political legitimacy of "the mandate of heaven and the will of people". This is because the Zhou Dynasty replaced the Shang Dynasty, which is weakness defeats strength. This signifies human relations change from natural jungle into true "politics" - "achieving stable and credible governance and management through intellectually designed systems" (Tingyang 2009, p. 97). In this stable political system, proof of political legitimacy is particularly important. Zhou discovered the so-called rule of morality, which grounded political legitimacy (Tingyang 2009, p. 97). The "rule of morality" refers to the rule that conforms to the will of the people. Therefore, conforming to the will of the people is the essence of political legitimacy.

However, "the will of people" is still a very ambiguous concept. There are many people in the state, and they are divided into small groups. Whose opinion is "public opinion", which can represent "the will of people"? According to Tingyang's interpretation, Zhou Dynasty's ideology of "the mandate of heaven" understands political legitimacy from an economic perspective. As stated in *Liu Tao*: "Those who can benefit the people will be welcomed by the world; Those who cause harm to people, the whole world will oppose them; Who ensures the survival and reproduction of lives in the world, everyone will be grateful to him; Whoever causes slaughter to the people, the world will all hate him; Those who can make the path of life smooth, will be supported by everyone in the world; He who makes the world helpless will be hated by all; He who makes the people of the world live and work in peace will have obedience; What causes harm to the people of the world will be regarded as a disaster star. The world doesn't belong to one person; only virtuous individuals can occupy the throne and govern the world." From this discourse, it can be seen that the so-called world is the world of all, and the politics that can make people prosperous are good politics, while the institutions that can promote the interests of all are good institutions. From this perspective, there are many similarities within the proof of political legitimacy

between ancient Chinese political thought, which is based on "the will of people ", and the proof of Western political philosophy. If we consider the proof of social contract theory appeals to "people's will" (voluntary agreement), and the proof of utilitarianism appeals to "people's interests" (the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people), then the traditional Chinese moral theory often combines these two. "The will of people" refers to "people's interests", and to follow people's will is to enhance people's interests. The politics of "seeking the welfare of the people" is good politics, which leads to the emergence of good government and stable political power. In fact, until today, "the will of people" and "people's interests" are still the substantive content of political legitimacy.

## The Morality of Political Leaders is a Manifestation of Political Legitimacy

The second significance of morality in politics lies in the fact that those who hold political power possess corresponding moralities and virtues. As mentioned above, politics refers to the stability of a set of institutions. This stability relies on a monopolistic coercive power. As the owner of this power, the sovereign or actual ruler, whether their (his or her) words and actions conform to people's moral conceptions is an important factor that affects whether the entire institutional system can be admitted and obeyed by people. Especially in the traditional monarchy country, as the ruler in power, the words and deeds of the monarch are closely related to the political legitimacy of relevant policies and decrees. It is precisely for this reason that Chinese political ideology emphasized the concept of "the rule of morality" at its inception, especially the Confucian doctrine which became the official ideology in almost two thousand years. After several generations of repeated writings by Confucian scholars, it developed into the theory of "inner sage and outer king".

The phrase "inner sage and outer king" originated from *Zhuang Zi*, but it has been continuously interpreted by Confucians and ultimately holds an important position as "orthodoxy" in Confucian tradition. In fact, in the eyes of many ancient Chinese academic researchers, "inner sage and outer king" is the ultimate goal of all traditional Chinese political thoughts. As Youlan said, "In Chinese philosophy, no matter which school or doctrine, they all think that they are saints inside and kings outside" (Youlan 2000, p. 7). Taking the Confucian classic *The Analects of Confucius* as an example, the first chapter "Xue Er" emphasizes the importance of learning. What is the content of learning always raises the debates among researchers. Some scholars believe that it refers to learning to be a gentleman (Yuanbiao 2015). Other scholars believe that learning is conducted for the purpose of governing and restoring etiquette (Ruilai 2008). As it stated in *Lun Yu*: "Confucius said, 'A gentleman does not pursue fullness in his food; he does not pursue comfort in his residence; he is diligent and agile in his work, but cautious in his speech; he approaches a moral and knowledgeable person and learns from him, correcting his own shortcomings, and can be called good at learning'". Based on this discourse, it can be seen that the content of learning is "Tao", which is the way of inner sages and outer kings. In other words, the purpose of learning is to

improve personal moral cultivation and constrain one's behavior through self-discipline and internal laws. "Cultivating one's moral character, regulating one's family, governing the country, and pacifying the world" (*Book of Rites· Great Learning*) is the Confucian ideal of life, and only by achieving internal sainthood (cultivating one's moral character, regulating one's family) can one achieve external monarchy (governing the country, and pacifying the world). As *The Doctrine of the Mean* says: "If you enjoy learning, you approach wisdom; if you work hard, you approach benevolence; if you know shame, you approach courage. Knowing these three things, one knows how to govern people; knowing how to govern people, one knows how to govern the country and the world. "

Another reason for traditional Chinese political ideology places so much emphasis on the "rule of morality" is that the real "rule of law" has not yet been established. Confucianism advocates that "The formulation of etiquette and righteousness does not apply downwards to ordinary people, and the execution of punishment (corporal punishment) is not imposed upwards on nobles." (*Dai Sheng Li Ji*). That is to say, those who hold high and powerful positions are not bound by punishment, but of course they are bound by rules of etiquette. However, compared to punishment, the effectiveness and intensity of rules of etiquette are greatly reduced. Even for legalists who promote strict law and punishment, the law is nothing more than a weapon in the hands of the monarch to govern the country. On the one hand, Legalists emphasize "rule the state by law" and everyone is equal before the law. As it stated in *Han Feizi* • *Youdu*: "The law does not favor the noble, and the criminal law applies to everyone equally". On the other hand, Legalists also emphasize that the law is the law of the monarch and conveys the will of the monarch, as stated in Guanzi· Renfa: "It is the monarch who made the law". If the law is merely a weapon in the hands of the monarch, then such a law cannot restrict the monarch's own actions. Therefore, from both Confucian and Legalist perspectives, monarchs are not bound by the law, which may pose a huge political threat to the state. Once a tyrant appears, the people will suffer and the political order of the country may collapse. Therefore, the only thing that can constrain the monarchy's power is moral precepts. This is the fundamental reason why Confucianism emphasizes the morality of monarchs so much. The basic concept of Confucian moral theory is "benevolence", which means "love". This "altruistic" motivation is the starting point of all moral behaviors. Confucianism hopes that everyone cares about others while considering oneself. Especially when the monarch uses the power in his hands, he should practice "benevolence" to control the excessive expansion of desire and avoid the abuse of power. Mencius gave a profound explanation of "benevolent governance". Mencius believed that everyone is inherently kind, with a heart of compassion, shame, modest, and knowing right or wrong. Monarchy should start from the nature of kindness, govern the country with virtue, and practice "benevolent governance" in order to achieve political success. *Mencius·Gongsunchou* says: "Everyone has a heart of compassion. The ancient sages first had a heart of compassion and sympathy for the people, which led to policies and politics of compassion. By implementing a political system that sympathizes with people, it will be as easy for the ruler to govern the state as playing with things in his palm".

"The superiors' virtue is the wind, The inferiors' virtue is grass. Wherever the wind blows, grass bends." (*Lunyu· Yanyuan*) Political leaders are the owners and executors of political power, and whether their words and actions conform to moral principles represents whether the application of political power conforms to public opinion and moral norms. The ancient Chinese were well versed in this path, particularly emphasizing the morality of monarchs. We can find some similarities between China and the West on this point. In Western world, the time of ancient Greece was an era of virtues, and the virtues of both ordinary people and rulers were important. Ordinary people should possess civic virtues, while rulers are the embodiment of wisdom and virtue. Aristotle believed that rulers should be more virtuous than ordinary citizens: "When we talk about a good governance, we call him a good person, a person who is wise and upright, and also say that as a politician, he should be wise and upright" (Pol. 1277a10-15). The most famous theory which emphasizes the virtues of rulers is Plato's "Philosophical King" theory. In Plato's view, philosophers are the most rational person, and only philosophers can understand the world of ideas, especially the idea of "goodness". Therefore, only philosophers who simultaneously become rulers can lead the city-state to pursue the highest "goodness" (Plato, 501d-502b). Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine continued Plato's emphasis on the virtues of rulers. Even Machiavelli, who separated morality from politics, did not completely ignore the significance of rulers' morality in politics. Machiavelli advised the monarch in his *Il Principe* to be primarily "hypocritical". When discussing whether the monarch should keep his words, he argued: "Many contracts and many promises are invalidated and invalid due to the monarch's lack of faith, and those who know how to be foxes achieve the greatest success. However, the monarch must know how to conceal this animal nature. He must also be a great disguiser and hypocrite; Sovereigns do not need to truly possess the virtue of 'keeping faith and righteousness'. However, monarchs still need to pretend to possess such virtues" (Machiavelli 1532). Why does a monarch need to pretend to be moral? This is because the stability of political order is closely related to the morality of the monarch. From this perspective, Machiavelli was also aware of the importance of morality for political order. For this reason, Machiavelli bluntly taught the monarch how to be hypocritical: "I even dare to say that if you possess all these qualities and often wait for them to form, it is harmful. However, if you appear to possess all these qualities, it is beneficial. You should appear compassionate, faithful, humane, honest in politics, devout in God, and also do so. But at the same time, you should be mentally prepared to make arrangements: when you need to change your course, you should be able to and know how to do a transformation of 180 degrees" (Machiavelli 1532).

From above analysis, we can see that both Chinese and Western political ideologies place great emphasis on the moralities of rulers. How do people wield power? Are they bound by moral rules? This relates to the legitimacy of the entire political order and also decides whether the political order can be acknowledged by people.

**Citizen Virtue is the Guarantee of Institutional Stability**

The third relationship between morality and politics is reflected in the role of civic virtues in political success. As mentioned above, the stability of the political system cannot rely solely on mandatory monopoly power, and it also requires people's voluntary obedience. Even if a political order has obtained political legitimacy and the power holders in it possess the expected virtues, the success of the institutional system still depends on whether people are willing to follow the institutional requirements. It depends on whether people are willing to bear the burdens imposed by the system while enjoying various conveniences it brings. As a result, those "free riders" who are only willing to enjoy benefits and are unwilling to take responsibility have become the main culprits hindering the success of the political system. Political thinkers from ancient times to the present have realized the importance of civic virtues in political communities for political stability. Below, I will elaborate on this viewpoint from two aspects: Aristotle's discourse on civic virtues and Rawls' construction of the concept of 'sense of justice'.

Aristotle raised a question in his book *Politics*: Are the virtues of good people the same as those of good citizens? (Pol. 1276b15-20) From this, we can see that Aristotle believed that as legitimate members of the political community, citizens should possess some specific virtues. Citizens do not necessarily have to be "good people" (such as those who are prudential, just, brave, and moderate as required by the "Greek Four Virtues"), but citizens must possess certain virtues to ensure the normal operation of the political community. Aristotle believed that different forms of government require different civic virtues. In the ideal city-state of in-turn governance, citizens are both rulers and ruled, so citizens must be able to rule as well as be ruled. Aristotle argued that although the virtues of rulers and ruled are different, a good citizen must rest on these two aspects. "He should know how to govern free people as a ruler, and as one of the free people, he must know how to accept the rule of others - this is the character of a good citizen" (Aristotle 2008, p. 127, Pol. 1277b 10-15).

Contemporary political philosopher John Rawls discussed more specifically on what kind of virtues citizens should possess. Rawls believed that the stability of the political system depends on the citizens' sense of justice. The so-called "sense of justice" refers to "an effective desire to apply and to act from the principles of justice and so from the point of view of justice" (Rawls 1999, p. 497). Rawls believed that "sense of justice" is a moral emotion gradually acquired by people in family relationships, community activities, and social cooperation. First, in family, children gradually develop "love" ability under the care of their parents and form attachment relationships with their loved ones. In this intimate relationship, children who violate their parents' teachings will feel guilty, which marking the initial formation of morality. Rawls referred to the morality formed during this stage as Morality of Authority, which is a morality formed based on an intimate relationship with authority. Secondly, the attachment relationship in the family gives people the emotional ability to form friendly relationships with different roles in the community. In a just social arrangement, this friendly emotion

transforms into trust and goodwill towards other members of the community, a goodwill that hopes that friends can be treated fairly. Rawls referred to it as the Morality of Association, which is a morality that relies on friendly relationships within the community. Thirdly, in a social system known as just, trust and friendly feelings towards fellow citizens transform into a sense of justice. At this point, a moral emotion of interacting with strangers is a cooperative concept of "reciprocity". Rawls referred to it as Morality of Principle, which is a moral emotion that hopes that the principles of justice can be consistently enforced (Rawls 1999, pp. 429-30). Rawls argues that a sense of justice "The basic idea is one of reciprocity, a tendency to answer in kind. Now this tendency is a deep psychological fact. Without it our nature would be very different and fruitful social cooperation fragile if not possible" (Rawls 1999, p. 433).

Rawls believed that if a person with a sense of justice considers an institutional arrangement as just, he (she) will take his (her) own actions to uphold it. When someone violates the rules, he (she) will feel "resentment". For example, when getting on a bus, most people honestly queue up. If someone wants to jump the queue, it will cause public indignation. Queuing up to get on the bus is an arrangement of Procedural justice. People with the sense of justice will try to maintain the just regulations. In Rawls' view, a sense of justice is a key factor in maintaining stability in a just system, because a sense of justice can effectively eliminate isolation and establish trust. The so-called "isolation" refers to everyone making choices in isolation, who wants to maximize self-interest. The ultimate result of their choices is often against their wishes - everyone's interests are harmed. This is like in a natural state where everyone only considers oneself, but each person cannot determine the other person's intentions and actions. Therefore, everyone is constantly under the threat of violent death. In Rawls' view, a sense of justice is the key to "eliminating isolation". People with a sense of justice, even among strangers, can follow the rules of justice and promote "personal interests" while also promoting "public interests". On the other hand, a sense of justice can also establish "trust" among strangers, allowing people to believe that while following the rules of order, others will also do it. Rawls believed that the premise for someone to follow rules is that others will also follow rules; otherwise it would be irrational to follow rules oneself. Taking queuing as an example, if people do not believe that others will also queue honestly; then queuing honestly on their own is stupid. Therefore, in an institutional environment, only when people have a sense of justice and a desire to actively follow the requirements of the system can everyone be sure that others will also follow corresponding rules, and the system can maintain stability.

From this perspective, the morality of citizens is crucial for the success of political order. On the contrary, if in a system of institutions, people have to violate their own moral intuitions in order to continue to comply with the requirements of the institutional system, then the system is not far from collapse. For example, under Hitler's totalitarian rule, people at that time had to violate their moral intuition in order to carry out cruel persecution of Jews. Oscar Schindler was originally a Nazi party member, but his conscience did not allow him to coexist with Nazi Germany. Schindler risked his life and spend a lot of money to protect

Jews. The "Schindler's List" is a manifesto to human conscience and a moral resistance to politics[3]. This example tells us that if a political order goes against people's moral intuition, conflicts with people's moral conceptions, and creates a huge tension between morality and politics; then, this tension will ultimately tear apart the system itself, leading to political turmoil.

What is the relationship between morality and politics? This is an old political philosophy issue. This issue is particularly important in ancient societies where the rule of law has not been established. At that time, morality and religion became the main norms that constrained rulers. In modern society, due to the gradual development and maturity of relevant systems such as the Constitution and representative democracy, moral constraints on rulers no longer have crucial significance. In the eyes of some historians of political thought, Machiavelli is at a time of transition between the ancient and modern eras, and his political ideas are of great significance for the construction of the discipline of politics Machiavelli attempted to separate politics from morality and religion (Skinner 1978, Pocock 1975). In his view, the political sphere has its own operational logic, and the pursuit of political value can also become the ultimate end of human society. For a state, the highest political purpose is to maintain "power". Rulers can use morality and religion as tools to achieve political goals. Politics has its own operating mechanism, and when morality and religion contribute to achieving political goals, they can be relied on. On the contrary, when morality or religion is not conducive to achieving political goals, morality and religion should be abandoned without hesitation. Especially the core of political power - rulers (monarchs) - should not be tangled by moral or religious precepts. In many people's opinion, Machiavelli's greatest achievement was to separate politics from moral philosophy and give it a higher status than moral philosophy. As contemporary scholar Harvey Mansfield once said, "In his view, politics is not constrained by things higher than it, but is often seen as something outside of politics - belonging to 'given' in any political context - to a much higher degree than politicians, the people, and philosophers have always imagined" (Mansfield 1998). However, politics cannot justify itself. The so-called "pure theory of politics" can only be about the issues such as the acquisition and application of political power, the design of political systems, how to maintain stability, etc. Such a theory cannot prove innocence by itself. Because even if people can design a perfect system which monopolize power through politics, there is still a need for another theory to tell people why they should follow this system? What is the advantage of this system? What moral principles have been followed? So called "pure theory of politics" cannot prove its own legitimacy, and the legitimacy of political order and regime can only be proven by non-political theories, leaving room for moral philosophy to question politics.

[3]Of cause, there were also many people chose to betray their own conscience and obey Hitler's orders. Cf. (Roland 2010).

## Conclusion

To sum up, the purpose of politics is order and long-term stability. To achieve this goal, on the one hand, relying on morality; On the other hand, relying on force. It is precisely for this reason that since the Han Dynasty, the concept of "external Confucianism and internal Legalists" has become the governance philosophy of Chinese monarchs: Confucianism provides political legitimacy for political order, while Legalism consolidates the violent foundation of the country through decisive decisions of rewards and punishments, which plays a decisive role in the actual political order. The thought that emphasizes the positive role of moral argumentation and moral education in people's adherence to rules is political idealism. On the contrary, the thought that emphasizes the normative role of strict punishment in people's behavior, and emphasizes the political stability guaranteed by the basis of violence, is political realism. Truth is neither pure idealism nor pure realism, but in between. Sometimes it leans towards ideals, sometimes it leans towards reality. Reforming reality according to ideals and realizing ideals in reality, there's a mutually reinforcing relationship between morality and politics. Moral theory help to consolidate the authority of political order in three aspects: first, moral theory is the basis for justifying political order. Secondly, whether the words and actions of political leaders comply with moral principles is a signification of the legitimacy of the political order. Thirdly, people in the political order need to have certain civic virtues, so that they will follow the political order voluntarily.

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# The Practicality of the Theory of the Good: An Interpretative Reconstruction

*By Catus Brooks*[*]

*Plato's political philosophy is for the sake of directing people towards the good life: this purpose is manifest from his theory of the Good. Nevertheless, Platonic scholarship has often criticized this theory for being impractical. Against this criticism, I argue that this theory has a practical aspect because of its strategic and methodological nature. This essay reconstructs Plato's induction towards the absolute Good, through his justice theory and educational recommendations, with a view to the intended practicality of the theory of the Good. The major conclusion is that the theory of the Good provides a formula to achieve the greatest good in an everchanging, sensible world.*

## Introduction

Political philosophy is indebted to Plato for his theory of the Good. Leo Strauss once wrote that the purpose of political philosophy is to study the good, and it has had this purpose since Plato's innovations (Strauss 1959, 10; Haarmann 2017, 11). According to Plato, philosophy is a matter of human affairs when its purpose is to ascertain the Good, and once philosophy is about human affairs, it becomes political (Dancy 2006, 70). Further, Christopher Rowe argues that Plato's purpose with the political art is to make people as good as possible; what is politics to Plato is not mediating between competing interests or allowing the goods of individuals to clash under the name of liberty (2007, 53). Plato's *Republic* is political insofar as it investigates the Good, through the practice and theory of dialectics, to inform decision-making, but it is the ideal decision-making that Plato seeks to inform. As Rowe puts it, for Plato, "having a rational policy is what matters: getting priorities right" (2007, 41). The study of the Good provides this rational policy. Nevertheless, a contradiction seems to arise when rational policy is put side-by-side and in conjunction with Plato's idealization of the Good, for achieving the ideal appears impractical (White 2006b, 362).

Is there a practical understanding of Plato's theory of the Good? In this context, a practical understanding means that the theory has influence over political strategy and its consequences. This question is advantageous to the history of political thought both because scholarship on it is unavailable and the mainstream criticism towards it since Aristotle has deemed it impractical and nonsensical, framing it as unproductively abstract (Klosko 2012, 172-173). Political theorists can accept this criticism but if they do then they will miss or marginalize Plato's philosophical and political purpose in developing a theory that directs people — through high standards of knowledge and vigilant verification —

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towards the Good. I argue that the theory of the Good is highly practical because of its strategic and methodical nature. Not only does this theory demand a rigorous verification of opinions and beliefs for the purpose of political strategy, but it also consists of a formula that attempts to ascertain the many goods of an everchanging, sensible world (*Republic* 6.504c; White 1992, 279). This formula anticipates the mistakes governors may make in this uncertain world: it offers a method of achieving the greatest good among uncertainty.

Is there a practical understanding of Plato's theory of the Good? The best approach to answering this question is to divide it into sub-questions. First, what are the countervailing criticisms towards the theory of the Good? Aristotle holds that the Good cannot be a metaphysical principle to categorize things and knowledge by, which George Klosko agrees with (2012, 170-173; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.1096$^{a}$15-1097$^{b}$15). Aristotle and Klosko also argue that this theory is unproductively abstract because people, whether craftsmen or politicians, need only know the Good of their particular profession, not Plato's absolute Good. I also clarify that Aristotle has divided this theory down, reducing it from its inductive framework, making it appear nonsensical. The purpose of this section is to present the prominent criticisms of this theory in the history of political thought in order to clarify the obstacles to understanding it as practical.

Second, what is Plato's metaphysical definition of the Good? The theory of the Good is meant to address problems of subjectivity in determining what is good and bad (Kraut 1992, 311). The Good refers to an idea, whether a physical thing or quality (Cox 2007, 5). It can be good per se or for its consequences or both (*Republic* 2.357b-2.357c). This theory oversees the arts and sciences, ensuring that they have a productive aim that contributes to the greatest good. Lastly, the Form of the Good exists eternally and rationalistically; this form is not a sensible object. The Form of the Good is comparable to mathematical variables or expressions and is not a physical representation of a sensible thing.

Third, how does Plato induce towards his theory of the Good? In *Republic* Book One, Plato moves from the specific discussion of justice towards the argument for education and the absolute Good in *Republic* Books Six and Seven. This section outlines Plato's discussion of virtue and justice and shows how Plato moves from the justice of the soul towards the greater good of the polis, which he calls political unity (*Republic* 5.462a-5.462c; Mouracade 2004, 222). The absolute Good to Plato is unity and his theory of the Good can be interpreted as a method of ascertaining this unity. Wherefore, this method proceeds inductively.

What role does education play in this induction? Plato recommends a strict educational regime for guardians and philosopher-rulers, which aims to quicken the cognition of guardians and philosopher-rulers (*Republic* 7.526b). Although this education regards mathematics and the mathematical sciences, it specifically treats these arts and sciences in relation to political strategy and warfare. There are two practical factors at play here: education in the theory of the Good seeks to enhance the ability of political actors and teach them about strategy and warfare *Republic* 7.525b-7.525c). This educational program also regards dialectics, which serves the philosopher-ruler as a knowledge verification process. Through dialectics, philosopher-rulers can test and ensure the ethical goodness of the hypotheses of

the arts and sciences. The education of mathematics, the mathematical sciences, and dialectics also prepare philosopher-rulers for a comprehensive study of the Good (*Republic* 6.510c-6.551e). Again, Plato proceeds from the particulars of education to the general study of the Good.

Finally, what are the practical advantages of knowing the Good? Since knowledge of the sensible world is impossible for Plato, knowledge of the absolute Good equips philosopher-rulers with a formula to understand how to achieve political unity in a given circumstance: with it, philosopher-rulers can know the good of their political actions (Ferejohn 2006, 153; White 1992, 279; *Republic* 7.534a-7.534b). Mathematics and the mathematical sciences supply philosopher-rulers with ready hypotheses potentially good and dialectics verifies if these hypotheses are good for political practice. Nevertheless, it is not simply verification that the theory of the Good is intended for, knowledge of the Good also renders philosopher-rulers independent of another's opinion of the Good (Nichols 1987). With it, philosopher-rulers can formulate equations about problems of the Good themselves; these rulers do not imitate past leaders, whether from poetry or history — at least not without an independent verification to determine if past strategies are replicable in the present.

## The Countervailing Criticisms of the Theory of the Good

What are the countervailing criticisms towards the theory of the Good? In answering whether this theory is practical, if I can outline the counterarguments toward it, then the dominant obstacles to understanding this theory as practical will be known. Once the best reasons for rejecting this theory are clear, then they can be verified, and if I can establish a good rationale for declining these criticisms, then significant progress will be made in telling whether the theory of the Good is practical. This layout can be accomplished with a modest summary and verification of Klosko and Aristotle's prevalent criticisms, as I recognize that to give a comprehensive layout of the scholarship critical of Plato's theory of the Good is impossible in a short tract.

Klosko summarizes the preliminaries of Plato's theory of the Good (2012, 170). Plato holds that for anything to become beneficial or useful, one must know the Form of the Good. If people do not know the Good, then all other knowledge becomes useless (Klosko 2012, 170). Ideally, everyone would have such knowledge, but because that situation is unrealistic, Plato argues that people should obey philosophers, who know the Form of the Good. Nevertheless, Klosko finds it difficult to understand how knowledge of the Form of the Good is beneficial or practical.

Klosko follows Aristotle's criticism of the theory of the Good. In summarizing Aristotle, Klosko writes, "the Form of the Good must exemplify a quality or set of qualities common to all things of which good can be predicated" (2012, 171). Aristotle holds that the theory of the Good is vague because things are called good in various ways: the goodness of white paint differs from the goodness of an athlete. Aristotle argues that there is no single idea of the Good common to all

things (Shields 2006, 411, 413). Plato would respond, however, with the argument that goodness represents the beneficial purpose or product of each thing (*Republic* 7.519b-7.519d). Thus, insofar as white paint produces its purpose, whether in construction or pottery, and athletes do likewise, whether for contests or their health, there is a common goodness to both, which qualifies as the same idea, though not the same physical thing (Cox 2007, 5). Plato categorizes the Good as a single idea, seeing that one kind of quality can be a single idea.

Klosko also writes that "Plato probably believes that the Form of the Good supplies the intelligible principle according to which all things are ordered" (2012, 172). What I believe Klosko means is that the Form of the Good to Plato is the categorical principle by which all things are ordered: comparing particular things to the Form of the Good shows the goodness of particular things. Nevertheless, Klosko misrepresents this principle as ambiguous and nonsensical without describing it in sufficient detail. A more accurate representation than Klosko's point is that the Form of the Good, when applied in an investigation of relational, dependent, or particulars things, makes intelligible the purpose, end, or benefit of these things (Modrak 2006, 137). Plato makes this argument with the analogy of the sun, which, through light, makes possible the sight of the eye: this sight depending on light. Likewise, the theory of the Good shows the benefits of things, for when people understand the goodness in relationships of things, they understand how these things are meant to function in the sensible world, whereof particular things combine and relate (*Republic* 6.508b-6.511e). Hence, Plato argues that with the categorical knowledge supplied by the Good, people understand the goods of particular and practical knowledge which are necessarily heterogeneous.

Additionally, Klosko agrees with Aristotle's argument that the theory of the Good is impractical; the problem with this argument, however, is that Aristotle reconstructs Plato's theory of the Good so as to make its metaphysics seem like it has no practical purpose (2012, 173; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.1096$^{a}$15-1097$^{b}$15). Aristotle divides Plato's theory of the Good into theory and practice, claiming that the former is uselessly abstract for individuals caught in particular circumstances. Aristotle does not believe that politicians need to know the absolute Good when facing specific predicaments: he believes that Plato's theory of the Good should be simplified to increase its applicability. Nevertheless, Aristotle is unclear about how the theory of the Good is uselessly abstract, never addressing Plato's fundamental purpose with the metaphysics of the theory of the Good: to ensure that the application of science and intellect has the same results that science and intellect propose (*Republic* 6.505a; *Republic* 6.508b-6.511e). For Plato, science expresses representations of reality; but, until scientific principles are applied in strategy or policy, the results are unknown. The metaphysics of the theory of the Good studies this problem, and, in this way, has practical utility (Ferejohn 2006, 153). The theory of the Good, in a sense, is a supervisory art because it equips philosopher-rulers with a capacity of ensuring that the hypotheses of mathematics and sciences have good results in political strategy.

Whereas Klosko follows Aristotle's criticism, he forgets to admit that Aristotle implements many tenets or aspects of the theory of the Good in his ethics. For

instance, the overall good judge, who determines the common good that a society should aim at, is little different from Plato's philosopher-ruler who constantly contemplates the Good, and, ultimately, the common good of the Kallipolis (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.3.1094$^{b}$15-1.4.1095$^{b}$5). For this reason, Gunter Figal notes that political thinkers can interpret as closely similar Plato's theory of the Good and Aristotle's discussion of the goodness and ends of political ethics (2000, 85-86). This counterpoint shows some of the inconsistency on Aristotle's part in criticizing the Good and it should inform judgements of accepting these criticisms.

Another hurdle to understanding Plato's theory of the Good is that it has been divided-down by Aristotle, and this division has been accepted and built upon by the scholars who have followed Aristotle's criticisms of the theory of the Good (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.1096$^{a}$15-1.6.1097$^{b}$10; Shields 2006, 403-404). This division is an example of what Christopher Shields means when he says that Aristotle often represents Plato's theories "without the full benefit of the arguments which lay behind them" (2006, 405). Plato's method of induction should be familiar to Platonic scholars and his treatment of the Good in the *Republic* should be understood as an induction, meaning that this theory consists of particulars as a starting-point, which are developed and synthesized into his conclusive and general theory of the Good (Benson 2006, 91). Note that *Republic* Book One uses the term good approximately sixty times in discussing justice, which sets up the induction towards the absolute theory of the Good (*Republic* 1.331c). Plato begins to define the Good with questions and answers throughout *Republic* Book One: he specifies the goodness of a series of things: justice, eyes, doctors, and so on (*Republic* 1.342a-1.342c). After investigating the Good in a variety of species, he confirms that knowledge of the Good, in the abstract, must be beneficial to the philosopher-ruler, for with this knowledge the philosopher-ruler can manage the common good: the many goods adding up to the common good (*Republic* 5.462b-5.462e; *Republic* 5.478e-6.485a). Plato's theory of the Good is not limited to the discussions in *Republic* Book Six, which outline the absolute Good and the Form of the Good (*Republic* 6.508a-6.509b). This argument wholly coordinates with Plato's dialectical methodology of induction, which is evident from any careful reading of the *Republic*.

## Conceptualization of the Good

What is Plato's metaphysical definition of the Good? The literature is riddled with problems about the theory of the Good's construction, especially with regard to its practical function. Hence, an exposition of it will be advantageous to ascertaining its practicality. I thus propose to reconstruct an interpretative account of Plato's theory of the Good from his narrative pieces on the Good throughout the *Republic* and secondary literature on the Good.

The problem that the Good addresses is the subjectivity over what rulers deem good or evil (Kraut 1992, 311). Plato's purpose with the theory of the Good is not simply to keep individual interest in check, but to refute opinions that classify injustices as good and justice as evil (Haarmann 2017, 12). It is highly

dangerous for rulers to judge a thing good without a satisfactory standard to develop such a judgement, and so the theory of the Good acts as a regulatory art over the problems of common opinion (Wolfsdorf 2011, 69).

Plato may be said to treat the Good homonymously, as Aristotle argues (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.1096$^{a}$15-1097$^{b}$10; *Categories* 1.1-1.15; Wedberg 1978, 44). This criticism is incorrect, however, because Plato divides the Good into various categories, treating the subject with fullness; he does not conflate the Good and cause homonymy. First, he divides the Good into physical goods and qualities. He also further divides these goods into things good in themselves, things good for their consequences, and things good in both respects (*Republic* 2.357b-2.357c). For example, Plato's Socrates classifies justice as good in itself and for its consequences. In *Republic* Book Two, Plato's Socrates is committed to testing whether justice belongs to the good by surveying whether or why goodness, in his interlocutors' opinion, follows injustice (*Republic* 2.357c-2.357d). Hence, in Plato's analytics, the series of analyses he syllogizes, the Good is simply a general starting-point for his discussions.

That investigating the Good is a general starting-point or first principle is critical to interpreting Plato's theory of the Good. Plato implements the Good to establish starting-points and end-points for discussions, much like how the organizer of games draws the start-line on a course (Mueller 1992, 184; Morrison 2007, 234-235). The theory of the Good ensures that there is a productive aim in studying a terra incognita, for its priority is to clarify the study's purpose, even if it only does so in outline or approximately (*Republic* 7.519b-7.519d; Sedley 2007, 267). Wherefore, dialectics directs towards the first principle, or from the first principle, defining or verifying the Good of a given subject (*Republic* 6.511b-6.511d). Prima facie, knowledge of the Good resides in the philosopher-ruler to supply starting-points or limitations to a study and the practice of policy.

Plato also hierarchizes the Forms, and among them the Form of the Good has metaphysical priority or superiority (Wolfsdorf 2011, 74). Again, Plato holds that there must be a common goodness to each Form, and this quality is what renders practical or beneficial the knowledge of these Forms (*Republic* 6.505a). Knowledge of these Forms is also incomplete without knowledge as to their goodness, a significant omission to any attempt of attaining sufficient knowledge of a subject (Sedley 2007, 269). Additionally, although there are individual abstractions of the Forms, their knowledge is relational or dependent upon the Good, like how sight is dependent on light (*Republic* 6.508b-6.511e). Together the ideas of the given Forms systematized with the Form of the Good become a formula for knowledge, as the Good reveals the purpose or benefit of these other Forms and what they depend on for their goodness.

With this formula, Plato holds that philosopher-rulers can examine the assumptions and hypotheses of arts and sciences preceding or during their practical application. Defining scientific and intellectual concepts with an eye to their goodness for human affairs, philosopher-rulers instrumentalize the sciences and arts; these faculties cease to be arbitrary or vain in any practical sense (*Republic* 6.511c). Rendering the sciences and arts after this fashion unifies their aims insofar as to achieve the greater good. Hence, knowledge of the Good is

absolutely necessary to the philosopher-ruler's statecraft, insofar as the philosopher- ruler's decision-making is to be informed by sciences and arts and insofar as these faculties are to have a productive end.

The Forms, including the Form of Good, also serve as principles around which to define and categorize things (Dancy 2006, 70). The Forms are eternal, rationalistic entities, in contrast to sensible objects that undergo change, whether by necessity or accident (Ketchum 1987, 297). Plato's epistemic commitment in this regard can be demonstrated by what follows: "justice purely, completely, and always, is what it is. Sensible objects are not like this. Sensible objects are not things precisely because they are at times, in respects, etc., and thus are not at other times and in other respects what they are" (Ketchum 1987, 300). Since these Forms, such as justice, are absolute, they offer grounds to successfully make an epistemic judgement and categorize things (Wolfsdorf 2011, 71; Wedberg 1978, 44-45).

Plato also uses knowledge as a term of art or function (Wolfsdorf 2011, 58). Knowledge, to Plato, is a kind of power or capacity. Capacities belong to things and enable them to function in a given way (Wolfsdorf 2011, 65). Hence, knowledge of something enables its proper function, and this concept is practical as function relates to practice. The practicality of knowledge is evident from Plato's definitions and divisions of virtue, for knowledge of a given virtue enables the function of a given action that requires such virtue. Let the above serve as a kind of legend to understand the concept of the Good. I now move on to the subject of virtue, and justice in particular.

## Justice Theory

How does Plato induce towards his theory of the Good? This question is momentous because it incorporates the practical particulars, that the *Republic* begins with, into the abstract conceptualization of the absolute Good. My answer to this question clarifies that Plato's theory of the Good is not solely about the absolute Good. This answer is not to devalue the absolute Good in Plato's theory; but, to correct the misconceptualizations extant in the literature (Klosko 2012, 170-172).

Again, Plato often treats virtue as a kind of art to view it functionally (*Republic* 1.332d-1.333e). Kosman explicates Plato's treatment of virtue as a good: virtue is a quality inasmuch as it enhances the function of an actor (2007, 118, 119, 121). Kosman adds that virtue is a moral condition (2007, 119). Courage renders goodness at actions that require audacity, just as wisdom renders leaders good at decision-making and justice renders one dutiful in following laws. Kosman adds that justice as a virtue, to Plato, is a quality that enables an entity to do well what that entity is *characteristically* good at. As Kosman notes, this property of function embedded in Plato's idea of virtue is the meaning of Socrates' question to Thrasymachus in *Republic* Book One: "does there seem to you to be a virtue for each thing that has some function assigned to it?" (*Republic* 1.353b). Kosman continues, "a function is an activity that is characteristic of a being; it is

what something is engaged in doing when it is most being itself" (2007, 120). Hence, the virtue of an eye is excellent sight no less than the virtue of the philosopher-ruler is judicious decision-making (*Republic* 1.342a-1.342c; Keyt 2006, 344-345)

Recall that Plato's definition of justice is the division of function or labour. In interpreting Plato's justice theory, Kosman notes that justice is the organizing force of society and is thereby the first principle of a society (2007, 118). Plato's justice theory is interested in organizing the moral habits and modes of individuals to lead them towards the Good. In the *Republic*, Plato accepts that not everyone is capable of ruling to his philosophical standard, and so he sets up a division of labour (Keyt 2006, 345). For example, Plato's Socrates argues that practiced ship-builders should build good ships and spirited guardians should guard well. In this way, people remain productive, produce goods, and avoid the trouble-making of extending their efforts beyond their natural limits or meddling in affairs that they cannot productively contribute to (*Republic* 4.434a-4.434b; Blossner 2007, 349). Plato's theory of justice is a critical particular to his induction towards his theory of the good (Kraut 1992, 315).

Justice as the division of labour is also critical to Plato's theory of the Good because the division of labour contributes to Plato's idea of the greatest good — political unity. Everyone must fulfill their part, and none is to take advantage of another, and so, to Plato, there is an equality of happiness (Miller 2006, 286; Ferrari 2007; Parry 2007). The greatest good is the greatest amount of happiness to each member of the Kallipolis; but, only respecting the whole: no individual is disproportionately happier than another (*Republic* 4.421a-4.421c; White 1979, 26). Hence, to Plato, members of the Kallipolis — rulers, auxiliaries, and producers — will share in pleasure and pain (*Republic* 5.462a-5.462c; Mouracade 2004).

Furthermore, the philosopher-ruler will tend to the *souls* of the Kallipolis' members to direct them towards the Good, and, ultimately, the greatest good (Mouracade 2004, 220). This ruler harmonizes the calculative, spirited, and appetitive parts of each members' *soul* (Miller 2006, 286; Parry 2007, 404). Civil strife and dissent Plato sees as the greatest evil and he derives this dissent from the inner-conflict of *souls* left unchecked (*Republic* 5.462a-5.462c). Just as the philosopher-ruler brings harmony, equality, and peace in oneself, the philosopher-ruler creates this same balance in the collectivity of individuals (White 2006b, 358). Equality here means an equality of happiness. For Plato, political unity is synonymous with political harmony, the equality of happiness, political equality, and peace (Mouracade 2004, 222)

## Education of the Philosopher-Ruler

What role does education play in Plato's induction towards the theory of the Good? Education is another practical particular in this induction for it underlines the necessity and power of rulers understanding mathematics and science to govern goodly. The education of dialectics verifies and applies mathematics and

science, ensuring that their functions in policy correspond with the goodness of human affairs, and hence gain the possibility of becoming advantageous. Plato argues that good political strategy is informed by mathematics and science, and metaphysically verified through dialectics (*Republic* 6.510c-6.551e; White 2006a, 230). Plato's discussion of education shows that his theory of the Good is practical insofar as mathematics and science are useful for rulers and inasmuch as dialectics can practically verify these arts' purpose in political strategy.

To understand the Good, Plato insists on a strict education for philosopher-rulers (*Republic* 7.537b-7.541b). He recommends an education in mathematics and the mathematical sciences, then a study of dialectics, and then a full-force study of the Good (Benson 2006, 89). The first study begins at the age of twenty; the second study begins at the age of thirty; and, the third study begins at the age of fifty (White 2006a, 232). These divisions are not arbitrary: mathematics and the mathematical sciences are introduced at the age of twenty when potential philosopher-rulers are keen of the mind and fully developed bodily; dialectics is introduced at the age of thirty to equip the potential philosopher-rulers with an independent capacity at understanding good and evil; and, the full-force study of the Good is introduced at age fifty because this is when philosophers must fulfill their duty of ruling, a time when they must understand to the best of their ability the public good and the greatest good (Devereus 2006, 336; White 1992, 298).

Since knowledge is a general good but is difficult to attain, Plato is interested in enhancing the cognitive abilities of philosopher-rulers with mathematics and the mathematical sciences. He comments that people with an education about these topics are far quicker cognitively than those without such an education, Plato's Socrates makes this clear in the following lines: "have you ever noticed this, that natural reckoners are by nature quick in virtually all their studies? And the slow, if they are trained and drilled in this, even if no other benefit results, all improve and become quicker than they were?" (*Republic* 7.526b) These arts make easier the vision of the idea of the Good (*Republic* 7.527a). For their cognitive advantages, Plato believes a vigilant education about these arts should be maintained throughout the life of philosopher-rulers (White 2006a, 230; Barker 1964, 193, 229).

Plato then moves on to discuss the practicality of knowing these arts. Plato raises the example of geometry, which is as difficult to know as it is decisive in war (*Republic* 7.525b-7.525c). Plato understands that all military maneuvers depend on geometrical knowledge, whether enveloping the enemy, establishing a strategic position, or simply pitching war camps (Klosko 2012, 175). Plato's Socrates repeats that those generals practiced in geometry are infinitely quicker in cognition than those generals who are not (*Republic* 7.527c; Sedley 2007, 261). Now Plato also mentions the study of astronomy, in a rather riddled fashion following the tradition of his times on this study, but he alludes to the necessity for generals to know the seasons (*Republic* 7.527d). I suppose no one would object if I fill in the details for Plato regarding the practicality of astronomy, or, in modern terms, meteorology. It would be highly dangerous to pitch a tent in December, in a foreign land, without meteorological knowledge: pitch the tent near seashore and a tempest could hit and wide-out the camp. If philosopher-rulers must at times

assume the role of general, then they must know the good of these arts inasmuch as they relate to war (Barker 1964).

Plato is keen on philosopher-rulers having abstract knowledge regarding mathematics and the mathematical sciences insofar as to derive significant meaning from these arts (Benson 2006, 89). The abstractions can be reapplied to the problems and plans of philosopher-rulers: they supply philosopher-rulers with ready hypotheses about a given plan or problem (Muller 1992, 175, 184; Benson 2006, 90). Nevertheless, these arts can only supply hypotheses; Plato thus looks to dialectics for successful rendition and argumentation (*Republic* 6.510c-6.551e; Wolfsdorf 2011, 69; Robinson 1978, 108). Remember that a starting-point in dialectics can begin with social opinion as much as scientific hypothesis.

Now dialectics is not purely rational calculus. Philosopher-rulers are not merely adding together the many goods to determine the greatest good without ethical scrutiny; this is not rational choice theory (Rachlin 1985). Surely, dialectics investigates the advantage of a subject; but, an advantage, a good, or the greatest good is ethically qualified, and a calculation is insufficient to establish these grounds. Whereas calculation is necessary to understand greater than and lesser than while questioning and answering, dialectics is concerned with defining and categorizing the essence of a topic, its ethical nature included (Robinson 1978, 104-108, 111). Dialectics also supplies the dialectician with strategies of question and answer to verify or establish the validity of an argument or concept, which always subjects these arguments or concepts to ethical scrutiny (Ferejohn 2006, 153). Ethics concerns the standards of the Good, and these standards are applied to an argument or concept. Indeed, mathematics and the following sciences allow philosopher-rulers to quantify and apply measures; but, there needs a discussion of the moral desirability or acceptability of a topic (Barker 1964, 60-61).

## Practical Advantage of Knowing the Good

Finally, what are the practical advantages of knowing the Good? This knowledge informs good strategy and policy, reducing the likelihood of mistakes in the policy and strategy formation or implementation process. Through its rigorous and vigilant verification, this knowledge thwarts off the illusions of advantage posed by the constantly changing sensible world (Ferejohn 2006, 153; White 1992, 279; *Republic* 7.534a-7.534b). Although knowledge of the Good has high standards, it involves a formula for philosopher-rulers to govern goodly, and to do so independent of another's judgement: philosopher-rulers, with the theory of the Good, are self-reliant (Modrak 2006, 136). With this formula, these rulers need not imitate the past practices of heroes from myth or leaders from history; they have a method to understand the good independently.

For Plato, the study of the Good is the finest pursuit because knowledge of a thing, without knowledge of its goodness, would be of little to no advantage (*Republic* 6.505a). Hence, Plato's philosopher-ruler is to be prudent about the good of things (*Republic* 6.505b). Furthermore, in following Thales, Plato does not divide his theory into theory and practice (Barker 1959, 23). The practice of

good strategy or good policy cannot be removed from the theories of mathematics or science or the Absolute Good: theory and practice are meant to consist together (*Republic* 7.521b-7.521e; Ferejohn 2006, 153). Plato is interested in enhancing the cognition of rulers through theory insofar as to best ensure the success of their practice.

Understanding the practicality of Plato's theory of the Good may still pose difficulties because of his metaphysical commitments, namely that the sensible world is unknowable (Ferejohn 2006, 153). In Plato's theory of the Good, Plato followed the principle that everything is in a state of flux (Barker 1959, 62), or as Richard Ketchum puts it, what changes is unknowable (1987, 292). Things that change threaten thinkers because they raise uncertainties as to the knowledge of them. In explanation, what Plato would say is that you do not need to know to make mistakes; but, you do need knowledge, qualified by a high standard, to succeed without the hand of fortune (Modrak 2006, 136). In this regard, Plato adheres to Herodotus, who put in the mouth of Solon, "often enough God gives man a glimpse of happiness, and then utterly ruins him" (1968, 26). Hence, as problematic as Plato's standard of knowledge is, it is desirable (Morrison 2007, 238). People without knowledge, even mere lovers of wisdom who fail to own absolute knowledge, are bound to mistake their courses of action and cause instability and injustice in turn. The philosopher-ruler, however, circumvents these problems of ignorance.

It is not that Plato is uninterested in the constructive or productive results from arts or sciences; he simply ranks the knowledge of art or science higher than their production. There must be something that comes before productivity or practice; something that is not one day productive and another day not — such is the formula of the Good (*Republic* 6.509a). Hence, Plato follows the maxim of the mathematician Thales, who warns to *never be sure of suretyship* (*Masque of the Seven Sages* 7.175).[5] Plato does not rest with political assertions regarding the sensible world; he puts his trust in this abstract formula.

Furthermore, philosopher-rulers must constantly verify the *means* to the supposed production of the arts or sciences with absolute knowledge (Ferejohn 2006, 153; *Republic* 7.534a-7.534b; *Republic* 6.504c). Again, the verification process is dialectics, and so Plato's Socrates says "is not dialectics the only process of inquiry that advances in this manner, doing away with hypotheses, up to the first principle itself in order to find confirmation there?" (*Republic* 7.533d; White 1992, 279). Part of the definition of dialectics, then, is the application of science to reality: scientific expressions are tested to see if they represent reality and if they are grounds to proceed with a given strategy.

[5]Thales was one of the seven sages of ancient Greece and has been regarded as the first philosopher. Plato was a student of maxims, and the maxims of this sage profoundly impacted Plato. In Plato's *Protagoras* he argues that the ability of someone to utter wise maxims is a product of their perfect education, and he says that among the people who have made such remarks is Thales (*Protagoras*, 342e-343b). Apropos, Thales' maxim is meant to have practical force: it is a reason for politicians to study science and verify their findings in the moment of practice. Plato has integrated this idea into the practical aspect of his theory of the Good.

One practical purpose of Plato's inductive method is to show the invalidity or triviality of specific goods. Plato's theory of the good is wide-ranging in the goods it discusses; but he does such comparatively to arrive at the best of these goods (White 2006b, 362-363). The sake of this discussion is to equip the philosopher-ruler with a method of determining what is the greatest good, or better put, how political unity is maintained or rendered (Mouracade 2004, 222). Wherefore, Socrates asks Glaucon in *Republic* Book Five: "shall we try to find a common basis by asking of ourselves what ought to be the chief aim of the legislator in making laws and in the organization of a State, --what is the greatest good, and what is the greatest evil, and then consider whether our previous description has the stamp of the good or of the evil?" (*Republic* 5.461e). Plato's inductive method concerning the Good clarifies what the chief aim of legislation should be, which in abstract terms is the greatest good and in particular terms can be solved with Plato's formula of the Good.

Lastly, the Form of the Good can serve as an ideal to live up to. By fashioning after the ideal, philosopher-rulers can preserve or create goodness. Plato also notes that there is no disadvantage into investigating the ideal (*Republic* 5.472d-5.742e). Even if its understanding proves beyond capacity or its finding has little import in practice at a given time, Plato is not intimidated or dissuaded from its study. The Good for Plato is invaluable, for it serves both as a starting-point or end-point and as a frame or point of reference (Morrison 2007, 234-235). Nevertheless, modeling the ideal is not uncritically modeling rulers as portrayed by history or poetry.

To limit Plato's discussion of modeling the overall Form of the Good, he is concerned with rulers imitating other people, and these rulers not knowing the good themselves. Knowledge of the absolute Good may provide a mark to aim at, but philosopher-rulers, with this knowledge, know the mark themselves, they are not merely imitating the good governance or example of past leaders (White 1979, 96; Moss 2007, 415). What comes to mind is Plato's recommendations not to follow the figures of Homer's poetry (Freydberg 2000, 109). Homer's famous portrayal is of Achilles. Mary Nichols writes that Achilles was reputed for his warrior-qualities: speed, agility, and strength (1987, 70). Nevertheless, Achilles' virtue leads to his pride and arrogance, rendering his rage as vicious to his enemies as to his friends. Plato forces upon the reader a counter-intuitive: rulers often mirror successful princes; but, Plato demands that philosopher-rulers scrutinize the good of imitation, of whichever kind, independently. Thus, philosopher-rulers are self-reliant and can thwart off the possible negativity that follows from imitating what is supposedly good, or only partly good.

This account coheres with Plato's recommendation for mathematics, science, and dialectics, which allow philosopher-rulers to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical cases. Rulers could surely model successful governance from history; but, the reapplication of past ideas requires mathematics, science, and dialectics for success in the new circumstances. When the dice are thrown, it is the skill and intellect of rulers that carry their plans to success: Plato's philosopher-ruler does not rely on other governors as models but on the education and knowledge of the Good.

## Conclusion

Did Plato intend his theory of the Good to be practical? Quite possibly the answer to Plato's riddle is that he was so concerned with practicality in his theory of the Good that he raised the standards of goodness, truth, and knowledge to only accept those ideas that would be resilient to the many mistakes found in practical politics (Sluga 2014, 12). Again, the process to understand goodness is dialectics, and its purpose is to produce wise or prudent decision-making, for it is with knowledge of the good that philosopher-rulers govern best (Ferrari 2007, 198). Knowledge of mathematics and the forms supplies philosopher-rulers with formidable strategies to overcome the difficulties of a changing sensible world.

From familiarity with the Forms, philosopher-rulers can develop a formula to apply true knowledge to a changing world: they can test hypotheses and opinions in real life. This verification strategy also renders philosopher-rulers self-reliant, as they need no one else's judgement, whether past or present, to come to knowledge of the good (Nichols, 1987). In part, this idea is Plato's practical purpose with his rejections of imitating figures in poetry.

This essay has also contextualized Plato's metaphysics of the Good to give substance to his positions. It is true that Heraclitus' ontology that the world is in flux underpins Platonic metaphysics; but, this ontology fails to capture the strategic nature of Plato's idea of the Good. I referenced Thales and Herodotus, who also impacted Plato's metaphysics, to fill this gap (*Masque of the Seven Sages* 7.175; 1968, 26). Thales and Herodotus taught to introspect upon one's suretyship, plan well ahead, and prepare for the worst, as the sensible world is constantly changing. From a modest discussion, that Plato's metaphysics prioritizes these ideas is evident.

I have already said that Plato's absolute Good is essentially unity, and the political and practical aspect of this equation is clear from Plato's justice theory. He concludes from his discussion of justice that the greatest good is political unity, and what he means is that harmonizing and balancing an equation about justice, along with a dialectical rendition and verification of the terms in use, will give a formula of understanding the greatest good (White 2006b, 358; Cox 2007, 63-64). This formula is practical for whomever can discover and impute the factors and base their strategies on the resultant insights. Plato allocates so much power to philosopher-rulers because he trusts that they will understand this formula and maintain justice and harmony in the polis (Muller 1992, 175, 184; Benson 2006, 90). This formula is also a part of Plato's inductive argument to establish the theory of the Good, for it compounds the particulars of justice to contribute to a method of understanding the Good in a given situation.

This essay has also surveyed the major criticisms in the literature from Klosko and Aristotle to determine the obstacles to understanding the theory of the Good as practical. One criticism was that the metaphysics of goodness cannot be the organizing principle to categorize things. I clarified that there is no reason why an organizing principle cannot be an idea of a quality (Cox 2007, 5). Related to this criticism is Aristotle's rejection that the metaphysics of goodness are uselessly abstract, for craftsmen and politicians, to Aristotle, need not understand the

absolute Good but only the specific good of their profession (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.1096[a]15-1097[b]15). My response is that Aristotle does not assess the practical purpose of Plato's metaphysics of goodness, which is to ensure that all sciences and arts function towards the Good. Plato never argued that craftsmen need know the absolute Good; he argued that philosopher-rulers need to know the absolute Good to verify the purpose of mathematics and the sciences when applied in strategy to a changing world (Sluga 2014, 12). Presenting these criticisms serves to ensure that political theorists do not merely assume that Plato's theory of the Good is impractical without knowing the prevailing reasons for this rejection. With this acknowledgement and my endeavours to overcome these criticisms, political theorists can judge whether Plato's theory of the Good was really impractical. If political theorists decide that it is, then they miss a critical aspect of Plato's motivation with his political philosophy: to practically direct people towards goodness. The concluding takeaway is that this theory is practical insofar as it equips rulers with a formula to understand, with a high standard of knowledge, the greatest good.

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# Go(Φ)d is Number: Plotting the Divided Line & the Problem of the Irrational

*By Sandra Kroeker*[*]

*Plato believed that behind everything in the universe lie mathematical principles. Plato was inspired by Pythagoras (571 BCE), who developed a school of mathematics at Crotona that studied sacred geometry as a form of religion. The school's motto was "God is number," or "All is Number". Pythagoras believed that numbers represented God in pattern, symmetry, and infinity. When one of its students, Hippasus told the world the secret of the existence of irrational numbers, Greek geometry was born and Pythagoras' idea of divinity in numbers died because how could God not be perfect and symmetrical? In Plato's Republic he discusses something called The Divided Line, which is a map, of sorts, for reaching what he calls the highest Good, which is the ultimate truth where one realizes the true state of the universe and can see the world for what it really is. Many mathematicians have attempted to plot Plato's Divided Line only to come across a litany of problems and conundrums. Some have said that it the Divided Line cannot be plotted and is merely an allegory not meant to be plotted. This paper discusses some of the conundrums preventing the plotting of Plato's Divided Line (not an exhaustive list), including Whole 'vs' Separate, Equality 'vs' Ontological Dissimilarity, Linear 'vs' Non-linear, and Infinity 'vs' Finite. This paper also explores a new understanding of the Allegory of the Cave in light of 'the problem of the irrational.' In exploring the link between the Divided Line and the 'the problem of the irrational,' I was able to plot it. It was found that the Divided Line is not a line in the linear sense, but a spiral, the Golden Ratio! This paper is an example of a new category of scholarly inquiry I call "Math Theory" based on scholarly mathematical axioms in theory, rather than including actual maths. In my papers I use existing mathematical equations and place them in an encompassing theory, rather than finding new formulae to fit an existing theory.*

**Keywords:** *Pythagoras, divided line, math theory, highest good, all is number*

## Introduction

In this paper I plot Plato's Divided Line by exploring its connection to the problem of the irrational. The problem of the irrational is the existence of irrational numbers, which was highly controversial at the time of the Pythagorean school because the school's motto was "God is number" (Aczel 2000, p. 19) or "all is number" (Boyer 1991, p. 49). The school saw only whole numbers as representing God because numbers represented God in pattern, symmetry, and infinity (Aczel 2000), not irrational numbers that are random and chaotic, with no symmetry (Fossa 2005). Irrational numbers include numbers with decimals having no intelligible pattern (Aczel 2000, p. 18), like pi. Therefore, irrational numbers were

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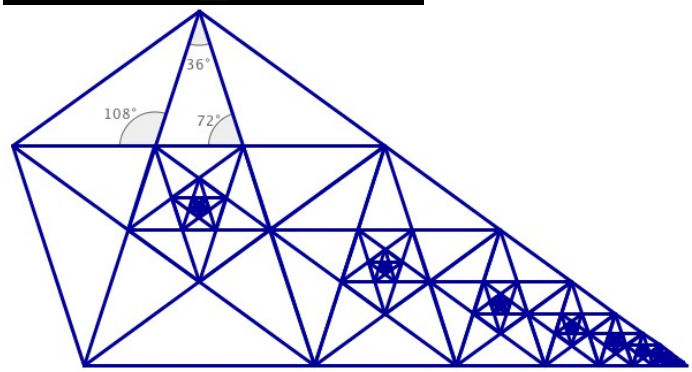
problematic, and their existence seemed to suggest that God was imperfect, so they kept the discovery of irrational numbers a secret (Aczel 2000). Hence, the "problem of the irrational" (Benjafield 2005, p. 6). Due to the controversial nature of irrational numbers, I postulate that this is why Plato did not reveal specifically, that the Divided Line is actually the Golden Ratio.

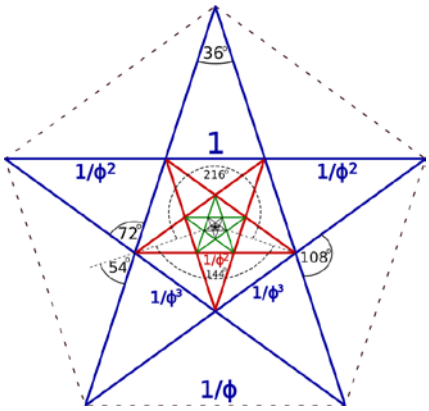
Many mathematicians have attempted to plot Plato's Divided Line only to come across a litany of problems and conundrums (Balashov 1994, Benjafield 2005). Some have said that it simply cannot be done. This paper discusses some of the conundrums involved in plotting Plato's Divided Line (not an exhaustive list) and explores its link to 'the problem of the irrational.' In overcoming some of these obstacles, I then show how and why the Divided Line has to be the Golden Ratio. Lastly, I will explore some reasons why this connection was or is not specifically stated by Plato, or anyone.

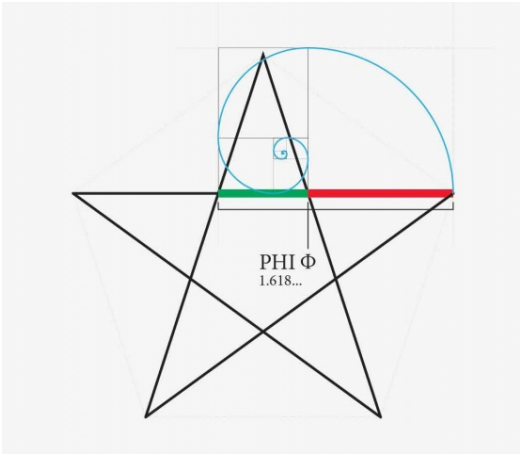
Plato believed that behind everything in the universe lie mathematical principles (Cornford 1965, Johnson and Reath 2007). Plato was inspired by Pythagoras (571 BCE), who developed a school of mathematics at Crotona that studied sacred geometry as a form of religion. "Both Pythagoras and Plato suggested that all citizens learn the properties of the first ten numbers as a form of moral instruction" (Schneider 1994, p. xxiii). The basic shapes that make up what are now called Platonic solids were revered so highly that it can be difficult to separate the math from the religion (Aczel 2000). In Plato's *Republic* he discusses something called The Divided Line, which is a map, if you will, for reaching what he calls the highest Good. The highest Good is the ultimate truth where one realizes the true state of the universe and can see the world for what it really is (Cornford 1965, Johnson and Reath 2007).

What is fascinating about the problem of the irrational and Pythagoras' idea that God is number is that there is an irrational number hiding right inside his own formula. For example, "[w]hen the Pythagorean formula is applied to a triangle with two sides equal to one, the result is that the hypotenuse is given by the equation $c^2 = 1^2 + 1^2 = 2$, so that $c = \sqrt{2}$" (Aczel 2000, p. 18), which is an irrational number.

What is also curious about the school of Pythagoras and the connection to irrational numbers is that the school was represented by the symbol of the five-pointed star within a pentagon which is inset with another five-pointed star within a pentagon and so on (Fossa 2005, Wheeler 2005).



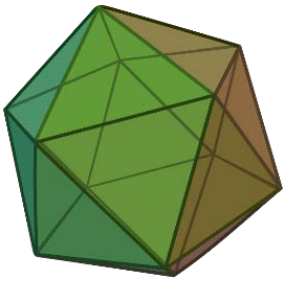




This symbol represents phi or the golden ratio, which is also an irrational number (Aczel 2000). The Golden Ratio, Spiral, Section, or Mean is represented by the equation: phi equals the square root of five plus one over two (Balashov 1994). This equals roughly 1.618. If the Pythagoreans wanted to keep the existence of irrational numbers a secret, why have one as their school's symbol? It interesting that an irrational number cannot be expressed by one *number* but can be expressed in one *symbol*. This symbol or pattern neatly sums up the ratio in one, elegant and simple design. But, first, a brief history of phi.

**A Brief History of Phi**

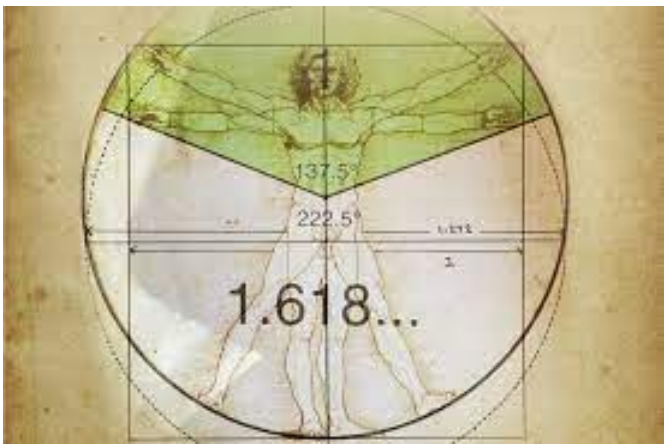
Some say that the Ancient Egyptians used phi and pi in the construction of the pyramids (Meisner 2012). This would date the sequence and its use to approximately 2575–2465 BC., when it was postulated that the pyramid of Khufu was under construction (Hemeda and Sonbol 2020). Others believe that Phidias (500 BC – 432 BC), used phi in the construction of the Parthenon (Fett 2006, Meisner 2012). Plato (circa 428 BC – 347 BC) is referenced next because of what he stated in the dialogue Timaeus (55C) about the Platonic solids or polyhedrons. It is said that Plato, like the Pythagoreans, believed it to be "key to the physics of the cosmos" (as cited in Meisner 2012, para. 4). Both the "Pythagoreans and Platonists were obsessive [about] models of harmony and proportions…but…of utmost importance" (Wheeler 2005, p. 3) was the 5th Platonic solid which "represented the kosmos" (Wheeler 2005). This fifth Platonic solid, called an icosahedron is also a representation of the irrational number phi (Fossa 2005, Wheeler 2005).



The Golden Spiral was also used by Euclid (365 BC – 300 BC) in Proposition 11 of Book II where he states" *To cut a given straight line so that the rectangle contained by the whole and one of the segments equals the square on the remaining segment*" (Porubský 2023, para. 4).

Fibonacci (circa 1170-1250 AD) is the most recognized for his sequence, which can be described as the equation Xn+2= Xn+1 + Xn (Grose 2023, para 1). The sequence looks like this: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, and so on infinitely and "each number is the sum of the two that precede it" (Ghose 2023, para. 1).

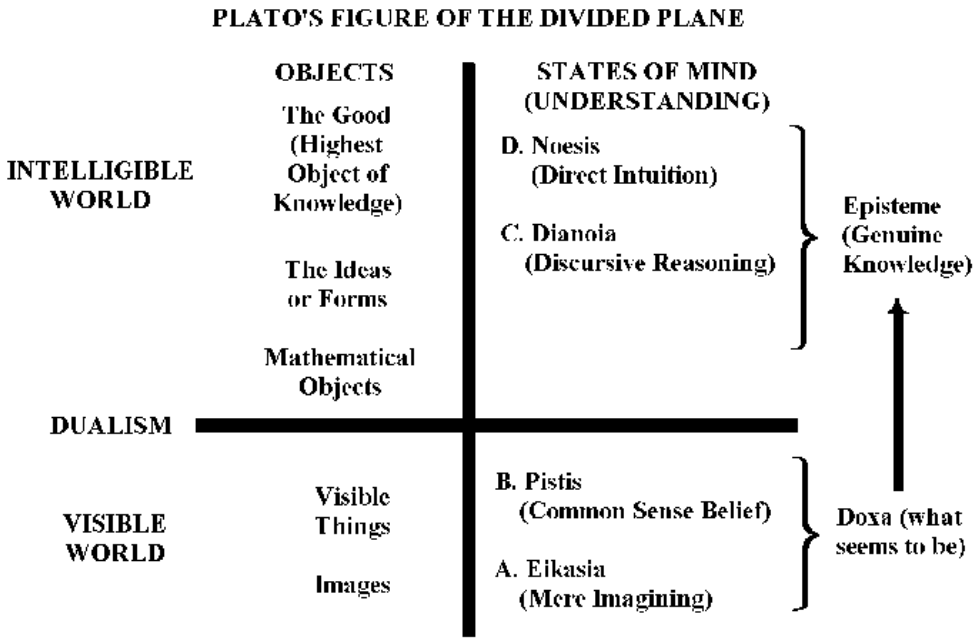
This brings us to DaVinci and his art, such as the Vitruvian man, which is an example of how these proportions work in humans.

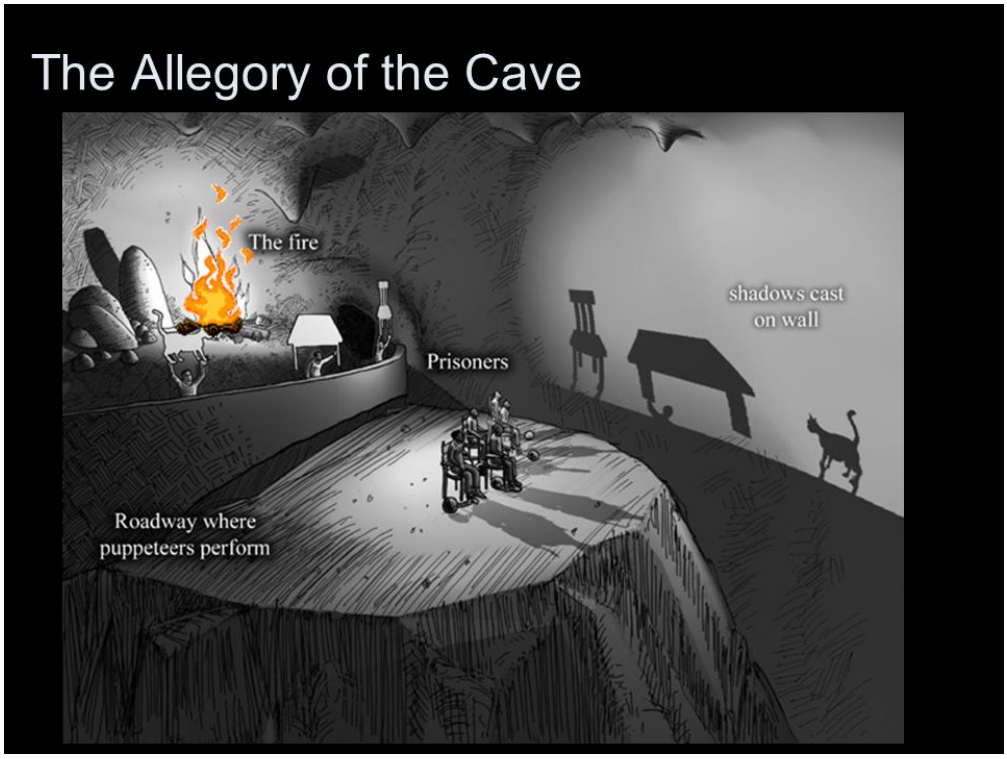


For example, the ratio of the width of the mouth to the width of the nose is the Golden Ratio, and the "total height of the body and the height from the toes to the navel" (Davis and Altevogt 1979, p. 341), is also the Golden Ratio or Section. This is where I will leave off with the history of phi. But, regarding the history of irrational numbers, when their existence was revealed to the world, Greek geometry was born and Pythagoras' idea of divinity in numbers died (Aczel 2000). Or did it? Plato was born in Greece about 100 years later. Plato was a "third generation Pythagorean" (Fossa 2005, p. 134).

## Problems Plotting the Divided Line

As stated before, Plato believed that behind everything in the universe lie mathematical principles, these he refers to as 'Forms' (Aczel 2000, Cornford 1965, Johnson and Reath 2007, Sheldrake 1988). The belief that behind everything is a mathematical equation, however, remains strong today. Einstein's famous $E=mc^2$ is evidence to the truth in this statement. Some mathematicians have tried to tie all the different mathematical principles into one all encompassing principle called the Grand Unified Theory (Einstein 1956) or the Unified Field Theory (Hawking 1988). This journey is similar to those who try to construct Plato's Divided Line mathematically. This is not an exhaustive list, but many problems arise when it is attempted and most say it cannot be done (Balashov 1994, Personal communication C. Hayes October 2010). In order to properly explain this journey, I had to develop my own chart or graph comparing the Divided Line with the Allegory of the Cave. I believe the Divided Line to be the mathematical explanation of the Allegory of the cave.





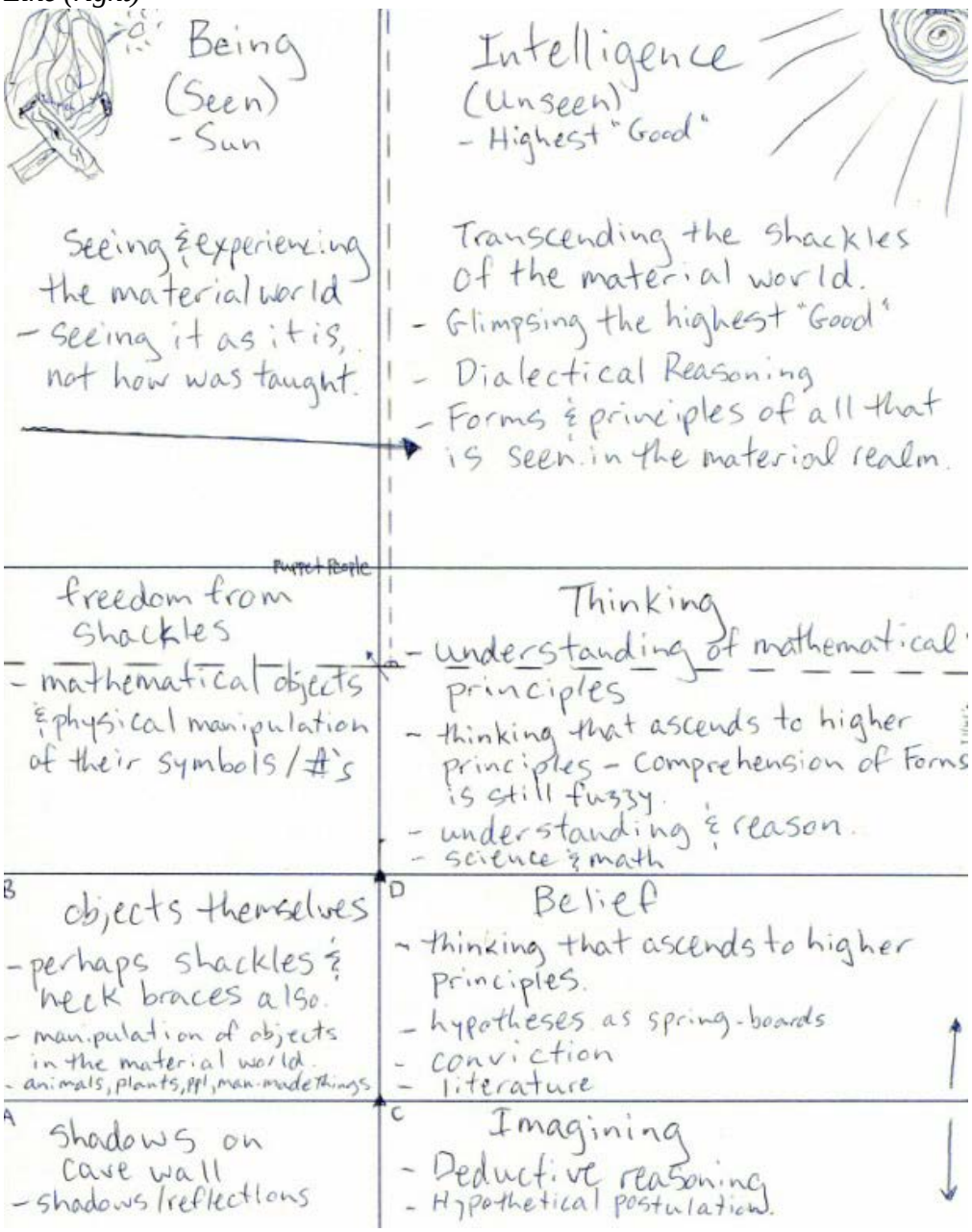

Above are diagrams found on the internet of both Plato's Divided Line and Allegory of the Cave. Below is my amalgamation. The left column is the Allegory of the Cave explanation and the right column, the Divided Line (see Figure 1).

Following Plato's Allegory of the Cave through the diagram in Figure 1, "A" represents shadows and reflections, like those seen on the cave wall; "B" represents the objects themselves that can be physically manipulated. This section also includes persons, animals, man-made things, plants etc. Moving from the material realm over to the intelligible realm, "C" represents deductive reasoning or hypothetical postulation. Assumptions are used in drawing conclusions at this stage (Johnson and Reath 2007). "D" represents studying literature and drawing conclusions from 'higher' principles. Here, hypotheses can be used as "springboards" to 'higher' understanding and reasoning which is the next level of clarity (Balashov 1994, p. 2). In the next level of clarity, science and mathematical principles are utilized in the material world's 'equivalent.' Mathematics and manipulation of its symbols and numbers is the physical representation for the higher equations which represent the Forms. These equations, however, are not completely understood or synthesized, just utilized (Johnson and Reath 2007). Level: "C" is the secular mathematics that is taught in grade school and high school that only manipulate the numbers without understanding them in their larger context. The assumptions are carried over to the university level.

The 'highest' level of the material realm is referred to as 'Being' and it represents seeing the world as it really is, and not how it is taught. Realizing this, one can move to the 'highest' Good or level of intelligence. This is where dialectical reasoning can be utilized and where the 'Forms' or guiding principles behind all physical objects can be understood or even synthesized. Now that the

Divided Line has been defined, I will move to resolving some issues or problems faced while trying to plot it.

**Figure 1.** *A Chart Comparison of Plato's Allegory of the Cave (left) & the Divided Line (right)*




*Source:* Kroeker 2009.

**The problem of whole 'vs' separate parts.** One problem includes, how can the line be a whole line at the same time having mutually exclusive sections in their respective 'boxes?' For example, the Golden Ratio works by the principle that "the ratio of its parts is equal to that between a part and the whole" (Balashov 1994, p. 294). Des Jardins (1976) states that "since the whole cannot exclude one

of its own parts, it cannot take part in any relation founded on mutual exclusion" (p. 494). This is an example of Russel's paradox. A simple example of this paradox can be found in a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to Titus: "All Cretans are liars, one of their own poets has said so" (as cited in Aczel 2000, p. 179). So, if this statement is true, then the poet is also lying, meaning the statement is entirely false. Paradoxes seem to not have a resolution, what causes paradoxes are dualistic or binaristic thinking. Binaries create paradoxes because life is not all or nothing. Categories in a binary are not mutually exclusive. The binaries or paradoxes that come to light when trying to plot the Divided Line are the reason why there is trouble plotting the Line. Since my previous research involves the breaking down of binaries, binaristic thinking, and resolving dualisms, perhaps there is a resolution after all to whole 'vs' parts. For example, I am a whole person made up of different parts and each of these parts have their own functions, but all work for the whole. The interpretation that the separate boxes in the Divided Line are mutually exclusive may not be correct. Plato does not seem to say this in the *Republic*. Perhaps the problem of plotting the Divided Line can be solved through resolving the dualisms that come about when trying.

**The problem of equality 'vs' ontological dissimilarity.** According to Plato's Divided Line, the subsections A and B relate to their equivalent sections in the intelligible realm (c and d) in a ratio that equals A + B (Balashov 1994). Therefore, A + B = C + D or A/B = C/D (Personal communication C. Hayes, October 2010). This relationship can also be interchanged showing that B = C (Balashov 1994). This implies equality of the sections, not only static equality, but unlimited or extended equality (Sayer 1983). But this is where the conundrum begins because Plato says that as one ascends, clarity increases. This implies ontological superiority as one climbs up the Line, not equality. Plato also states that the intelligible realm is superior to the material realm. Therefore, how can A, B, C and D all be equal if ontological superiority of the Highest Good is implied?

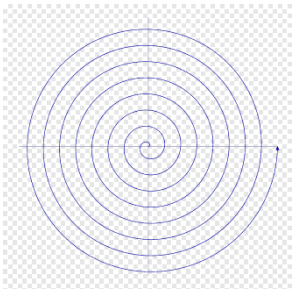
Another question related to this, that arises when trying to plot the Divided Line is: How is ontological superiority displayed? Does one ascend or climb up a line? Does that mean the line is vertical or is it horizontal? If it is true that 'as one ascends, clarity increases,' then it suggests that the line is vertical, rather than horizontal. When one normally thinks of a number line, (one from an English-speaking background), it is usually pictured as a horizontal line moving from left to right. Because ascension implies rising to a higher place, in my own diagram (Figure 1), I represent the Divided Line as a Rectangle, both vertically and horizontally, to resolve this issue.

The idea is that the line is to be divided into two unequal sections and then each section divided again using the same ratio (Balashov 1994). The two major, unequal sections represent the material realm of the seen, or "being" from the world of the unseen, or the "intelligible" (Johnson and Reath 2007, p. 54). It is important to note that the two major realms are ontologically unequal as the intelligible realm is considered superior to the visible/material realm. This makes sense because the physical world is subject to decay (as according to the second law of Thermodynamics), whereas the intelligible realm is not (first law of Thermodynamics). The ontological ranking is represented by the size of the 'box'

in Figure 1, the larger the area, the more ontologically superior that realm is. It is also divided in half horizontally; the lower half is illusion and the upper half, truth (see the broken line in Figure 1). Therefore, the line is not just horizontal or vertical, but both, making it possible that the Divided Line is not a line in the 'traditional' sense.

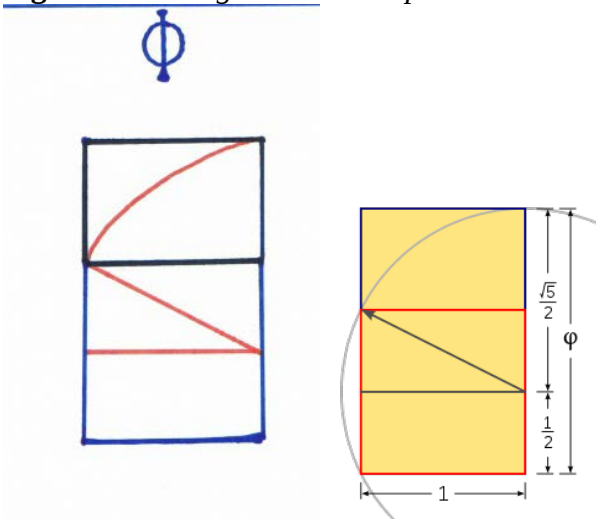
If, however, the idea is that the line is to be divided into two unequal sections and then each section divided again using the same ratio (Balashov 1994) and if phi works by the equal proportion of the smaller to the larger section as the larger to the entire line ["the smaller is to the larger as the larger is to the whole" (Benjafied 2005, p. 6)], then it would not be irrational to suggest that the Divided Line is not a line at all, but a spiral; the Golden Spiral. This makes sense because equality and ontologically dissimilar ideas can be represented here. For example, the ratio is an equal proportion, suggesting equality, but the ratios can be expressed as being smaller or larger examples of the proportion, implying ontological dissimilarity. By stating that the Line is not a linear line, but rather a pattern or a spiral, aids in solving the conundrum of the Divided Line because this way the proportions in the diagram can create a movement along the Line, as well as unfold on an equal plane, thus addressing the problem of ontology. All proportions represented would be inferior to the "Line" itself, which could be the location of the Highest Good. If the Highest Good is the line itself, this would make the Highest Good ontologically superior, as well as equal to all the proportions on the line, thus resolving the binary of equality and ontological dissimilarity.

**The problem of linear 'vs' non-linear.** A major obstacle to seeing the superposition of both equality and ontological superiority is due to binaristic thinking. We tend to think of things in a linear fashion or hierarchy, when in reality, the relationship is neutral. If one is to reach the Highest Good, it seems as though you are to make progress towards something; thus, ascension is assumed. Referring to something as the "highest" Good, it is misleading because it makes one think it should be plotted linearly. Of course, calling it a "Line" also implies linearity. However, it is possible to ascend on a spiral. As one accrues knowledge, they move along the spiral, starting with 0, 1, 1, 2, 3 etc…If the spiral gets big enough, all sections or portions on the spiral-line are contained within and can be seen together on a grid, rather than separated linearly on a straight line, thus resolving the linear/non-linear dichotomy involved in the plotting of the Divided Line because it is both and they are not mutually exclusive categories.



The diagram or chart built from Plato's Divided Line, however, does not look like a line or spiral, but a rectangle. Euclid, however, shows "how to cut a line segment in this manner appears earlier in an equivalent form stated in terms of rectangles" (Porubsky 2011, para. 4). Therefore, the way the Golden Spiral, or in this case, the Fibonacci sequence starts off can be represented inside a rectangle (see Figure 2). This demonstrates how the Golden Spiral can start off as a linear line or a basic two-dimensional rectangle (also see the link to an animation displaying this at the bottom of Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** *Starting the Golden Spiral within a Rectangle Using Euclid's Formula*




* The black rectangle is the golden proportion to the blue rectangle.
* I may need help with finding permission to use the pictures inserted that were not drawn by me.
Also see https://qph.cf2.quoracdn.net/main-qimg-93ccb33bb44fa2660bc8aaaccae98278.

If the Divided Line, however, is the Golden Ratio, this opens other problems. For example, this brings us back to the "problem of the irrational" because when using irrational numbers, they cannot be represented by one number (Benjafield 2005, p. 6). It is unclear whether rational or irrational numbers should be used in its construction (Balashov 1994, Benjafied 2005, Personal communication C. Hayes November 2010). Perhaps irrational numbers *are* to be used when constructing the Divided Line mathematically. But unfortunately, using an irrational number, like phi, will produce an answer that is always slightly off because it cannot be calculated or manipulated without rounding (Balashov 1994). If the Divided Line, however, is the Golden Ratio, this opens other problems. For example, using an irrational number, like phi, will produce an answer that is always slightly off because it cannot be calculated or manipulated without rounding (Balashov 1994). This might not be a problem, however, because Plato states that geometry or mathematics "are only *approximately* true of perceptible things" (University College London).This will be addressed at the end of the next section (see My response to the conundrum of infinity 'vs' finite p. 12).

**The problem of infinity 'vs' the finite.** Another issue with using phi to plot the Divided Line is the extended equality suggested by Sayer (1983) because this implies an infinite characteristic to the Divided Line. Dreher (1990), interprets

Plato's progression of knowledge as just this, as a never-ending attaining where "any cognitive success achieved by the mind intensifies the passion for further inquiry" (pp. 159–160). This is a stance I agree with, but perhaps this is not what Plato is saying in the *Republic* because he *has* an ending to the Divided Line, that of the realm of the Highest Good. This implies attainability of the highest knowledge or that the process of knowledge can be completed (Balashov 1994). If there is a limit to knowledge, then this means that the Line is not infinite and may not be represented by the phi sequence or the Golden Ratio. Plato himself states:

> Now in reasoning about all these things, a man might question whether he ought to affirm the existence of an infinite diversity of Universes or a limited number; and if he questioned aright he would conclude that the doctrine of an infinite diversity is that of a man unversed. (Plato in Timaeus, 55c)

Therefore, Plato does seem to say that the Divided Line is complete and not infinite. This throws a wrench in the Divided Line as Phi theory, but Plato only discusses "rational intuition (Noesis) and knowledge (Episteme)" in the *Republic* (Cornford 1965, p. 223). Perhaps this is key. When does intelligence give way to understanding (Katanóisi)? When does understanding give way to wisdom (Sophia)? Perhaps the Line *is* unfinished?

My response to the conundrum of infinity 'vs' the finite and the Divided Line is this: Even though an infinite, irrational number will produce an answer that is always slightly off because it cannot be calculated or manipulated without rounding (Balashov 1994), the concept of infinity *can* be represented by one finite symbol; ∞ for example. The irrational phi or Golden Spiral can also be neatly expressed as the pentagram (as stated earlier). Phi can also be found in all kinds of natural phenomena like weather, plants, and animals (see Figure 3). Plants and animals have a limit or a boundary to their 'bodies,' yet the Golden ratio can be seen in their construction and design. The problem of infinite/finite is here too because plants, animals, and weather patterns are not infinite, but eventually dissipate or die. However, then the next plant, animal or weather pattern comes along with the dimensions of phi…This pattern seems to go on until infinity. Here is the problem of binaries and binaristic thinking again because the universe is full of both finite and infinite characteristics, not just one or the other. Therefore, I argue that infinity and the finite are not mutually exclusive concepts, thus resolving the binary of infinity 'vs' the finite.

**Figure 3.** *Examples of Phi in Nature*


Mathematics itself is the perfect example of how infinity and the finite are interconnected and how they interact. Maths lie await in potentiality until a human mind manifests it into the finite material world. Mathematics, therefore, shows that not all things can be reduced to a physical explanation (take that Aristotle)! To bring the argument between infinity 'vs' finite to a close, Cantor proved conclusively, using infinite set theory, that "there are different orders of infinity. There is the order of infinity of the rational numbers, and there is another order of infinity that characterizes all the real numbers" (as cited in Aczel 2000, p. 116). He even postulated that one was more ontologically superior to another and even suggested that there might be another order of infinity between these (Aczel 2000). Therefore, infinity(ies) have boundaries. The human mind being another example, as well as the pentagram, icosahedron, ∞, Φ, π, √2, etc. Balashov (1994) may conclude that there is no "textual evidence" that the Divided Line is the Golden Section, making it a "no-go" (p. 294), but I say if we read between the lines, we can find the spiral. In conclusion, if we can resolve all the binaries that come about while plotting the line, then it is possible that the Divided Line could be the Golden Spiral.

## Lack of Historical Connections between the Divided Line & the Golden Ratio

Balashov (1994) also concluded that there is a lack of historical evidence that Plato had any "acquaintance" with the Golden Spiral at the time he was writing the *Republic* (p. 294). Resolving this, will be the last inquiry of this paper. Going back to Plato's Solids or polygons and their mathematical relationships as the "key to the physics of the cosmos" (as cited in Meisner 2012, para. 4), why would Plato not reveal specifically, that the Divided Line is the Golden Spiral? Wheeler (2005) states that "The Divided Line symbolism of the Pythagoreans (of which Plato only parrots in the Republic) is missed by altogether most (if not all) 'Platonists' who

fail to see the root meaning to be gleaned from the unity and proportions of totality" (p. 4). Therefore, because Plato only repeated what the Pythagoreans said about the proportions and did not specify the connection to the Divided Line, the connection between them went right over the heads of the Platonists.

One obvious answer to why the search for the connection between Plato and phi has not been found is that the Golden Spiral, Section, Ratio, or Mean was not called this at the time Plato lived (Meisner 2012). It was not even referred to as phi until the 1800s, when Mark Barr used it to symbolize the Golden Ratio (Mann 2019). Therefore, the lack of historical connections could be that of semantics, or due to the fact that there was no name for it in Plato's time.

*My* answer, however, to why the connection between the Divided Line and the Golden Spiral was not obvious historically is because of politics. To explain this, I will need to go back to what Plato said in the Allegory of the Cave.

In the Allegory of the Cave section in his book the *Republic*, Plato states that:

> [W]e must conclude that education is not what it is said to be by some…the entire soul
> must be turned away from this changing world until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good…There is nothing wrong with… the power of vision, but it has been forced into the service of evil, so that
> the keener its sight, the more harm it works" (Cornford 1965, pp. 232–233).

Plato here is claiming that we are following or living a life that is based on a 'meaningless illusion;' influenced by those who are leading us astray from true reality. He believes we have not been educated properly regarding the truth (Johnson and Reath 2007). Plato seems to say that everything we are taught is based in falsehood and lies.

In the Allegory of the Cave, Plato discusses the puppet people. These are the ones holding the objects that get reflected onto the cave wall. The puppet people are the gatekeepers of knowledge. These gatekeepers do all they can to keep the truth hidden. There are a couple quotes from the Gnostic Gospels that say what Plato is trying to say regarding how we are taught. This is what Gnosticism would say about what we are taught in the illusion, and it helps explain the role of the 'puppet people.' The *Gospel of Philip* states:

> The rulers wanted to fool people, since they saw that people have a kinship
> with what is truly good. They took the names of the good and assigned them
> to what is not good; to fool people with names and link the names to what is not good…
> For, they wished to take free people and enslave them forever (Meyer 2005, p. 52).

There is a similar passage in the *Gospel of Thomas* 39 that states:

> The Pharisees and the scholars have taken the keys of knowledge and have hidden them. They have not entered, nor have they allowed those who want to enter to do so (Meyer 2005, p.14).

This is what Plato is trying to say about education and how what we are taught is closely guarded. It is hard to accept that what we have come to know is based on misleading information and half-truths. So, let us explore this further regarding the 'problem of the irrational.'

When Hippasus of Metapontum, one of the students at the school of Pythagoras discovered irrational numbers in the pentagon (Fossa 2005), it was commonly understood back then, that "Hippasus was punished by the gods for having made public his terrible discovery" (von Fritz 1945, p. 260). Likewise, when Galileo discovered that the Earth went around the sun (heliocentrism), he was hounded by the Roman Catholic church for two decades (Wolf 2016). The reason Galileo was not sentenced to death was because he had powerful friends advocating for him (Wolf 2016). When Spinoza suggested the concept of pantheism, he was excommunicated because it went against Jewish Orthodoxy (Aczel 2000). These examples are only a drop in the bucket, but they are good examples of the gatekeeping of knowledge and the keeping of certain information from seeing the light.

In conclusion, Plato did not come out and say the Divided Line was actually the Golden Spiral because it did not have a name during his time, and he probably felt like he had to hide this information to avoid the 'puppet people' gatekeeping knowledge. Afterall, Socrates was sentenced to death by poisoning for corrupting the youth with his ideas. Plato witnessed this horror because wrote for Socrates. Plato most likely wanted to avoid persecution or death. Persecution and death are powerful motivators for secrecy or opaqueness. This is why the Golden Spiral has not been formally associated with the Divided Line.

## Overall Conclusion

In the past, the Divided Line has not been plotted because of misunderstandings involved in binaristic thinking. The world divided into categories such as Whole 'vs' Separate, Equality 'vs' Ontological Dissimilarity, Linear 'vs' Non-linear, and Infinity 'vs' Finite is an illusion and problematic to furthering knowledge. The gatekeepers refereeing knowledge promote binaristic thinking and therefore keep learners shackled. If we could transcend the need to see the world in binaries, we can do amazing things, like Plot Plato's Divided Line (and solve the measurement problem in quantum physics, see Collapse Ontology: Implications of Quantum Physics on Research in the Social Sciences Kroeker 2019). Since the Divided Line as the Golden Spiral has not yet been falsified. It is quite probable that it is not a line in the linear sense, but rather a spiral.

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